THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE OF THE JEWS OF EGYPT

TO AUSTRALIA, 1948 – 1967:

A model of acculturation

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has tried to construct a comprehensive analysis of a clearly defined community of Egyptian Jews in Australia and France, based on the oral history of Egyptian born migrants. Built around the conceptual framework of forced emigration, integration and acculturation, it looks at the successful experience of this particular migrant group within both Australian and French societies.

Like the other Jewish communities of Arab lands, the Egyptian Jewish community no longer exists, as it was either expelled or forced into exile in the aftermath of the three Arab-Israeli wars (1948, 1956, 1967). This thesis argues that the rise of an exclusively Arab-Islamic type of nationalism, the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and the escalating Arab-Israeli conflict constituted the fundamental causes for the demise of Egyptian Jewry. As a consequence, almost half of the Jewish population of Egypt went to Israel. The rest dispersed throughout the Western world, mainly in France, North and South America. In Australia, a small group of around 2,000 found a new home.

Apart from those who migrated to Israel, the majority of Egyptian Jews experienced a waiting period in Europe before they were accepted by any of the countries of immigration, a period facilitated by international and local Jewish welfare agencies. My interviewees chose Australia mostly to be reunited with family members. They first had to overcome the racial discrimination of the 'White Australia' Immigration policy towards Jews of Middle Eastern origin, a hurdle surmounted thanks to the tireless efforts of some leaders of the Australian Jewish community. With their multiple language skills, multi-layered identity and innate ability to interact with a variety of ethnic groups, they succeeded in establishing themselves in an unfamiliar country that initially welcomed them reluctantly. As such, they can be said to have successfully acculturated and integrated into Australian society, whilst retaining their own cultural diversity.

The more numerous Egyptian Jews living in France also successfully acculturated. As a larger group, they were better equipped to assert themselves within the older Jewish/French community and retain their distinctive Sephardi culture.

Studies such as the present one provide insight into the process of integration and identity reconstruction, as well as the diverse strategies used to ensure a successful acculturation, and the value of a multi-layered identity.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AAHA   Amicale Alexandrie, Hier et Aujourd'hui

AHC   Adelaide Hebrew Congregation

AINB   Association Internationale Nébi Daniel

AIU   Alliance Israelite Universelle

AJE   Association of Jews from Egypt, UK

AJOE   Association des Juifs originaires d'Egypte

AJT   Australian Jewish Times

AJHS   Australian Jewish Historical Society, Journal & Proceedings

AJWS   Australian Jewish Welfare Society

AJW&RS   Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society

ALP   Australian Labor Party

ASPCJE   Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Culturel des Juifs d'Egypte

COJASOR   Comité Juif d'Action Sociale et de Reconstruction

DPs   Displaced Persons

ECAJ   Executive Council of Australian Jewry

ESPCI   Ecole Supérieure de Physique et Chimie Industrielle

FSJU	Fonds Social Juif Unifié
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
HLM	Habitation à loyer modéré
HSJE	Historical Society of Jews from Egypt
IAJE	International Association of Jews from Egypt
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRO	International Refugee Organisation
JIMENA	Jews indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa
JDC	American Joint Distribution Committee
JNF	Jewish National Fund
£E	(Livre Egyptienne) Egyptian Pound
LICA	Ligue Internationale Contre l'Antisémitisme
LISCA	Ligue Internationale Scolaire Contre l'Antisémitisme
MDLN	Mouvement Démocratique pour la Libération Nationale
MELN	Mouvement Egyptien pour la Libération Nationale
NAAFI	Navy Army Air Force Institute
NCJW	National Council of Jewish Women
OFPRA	Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides

SSJ	Service Social des Jeunes
SJN	Sydney Jewish News
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UJE	Lycée de l'Union Juive pour l'Enseignement
WCJE	World Congress of Jews from Egypt
WJC	World Jewish Congress
WIZO	Women's International Zionist Organisation

GLOSSARY

Aliyah (literally 'going up') – Immigration to Israel.

Ashkenazi (literally, German) – Jews originating from Central and Eastern Europe.

Barmitzvah – Religious ceremony to mark a Jewish boy's religious maturity at the age of thirteen.

Batmitzvah – Religious ceremony to mark a Jewish girl's religious maturity at the age of twelve.

Betar – Youth organisation of the Zionist Revisionist movement.

Bey - Turkish governor – Title granted to high government officials and public servants.

B'nai Brith (literally, Sons of the Covenant) – International Jewish service organisation.

B'nei Akiva (literally 'Sons of Akiva') – Religious Zionist youth movement.

Capitulations (chapter) – Regime of extraterritorial jurisdiction that shielded foreign nationals from the law of the land.

Dhimmi – Legal status of Jews and Christians in Muslim lands, denoting the relationship between protector and protected.

Diaspora – Greek word meaning 'dispersion', applied to Jewish settlement outside of Israel.

Dror –- Marxist Zionist youth movement.

Effendi –- Title of respect or courtesy in Turkey

Einsatzgruppen ('Mobile Killing Squads') -- paramilitary units which operated behind the Nazi Eastern Front, created by Himmler.

Emigré – Emigrant, especially political exile.

Fellah – Egyptian peasant.

*Gabbai (*literally, collector) – Communal official.

Hagana – Underground military organisation of the Yishuv in Palestine.

Hara or haret-al-Yahud – Separate Jewish quarters.

Haret-al-Yahud al-Qara'in – Karaites's quarters.

Ha Shomer Ha-Tza'ir (literally, The Young Guard) – Communist Zionist youth movement.

*Heder (*literally, room*)* -- Religious elementary school.

Intifada – (literally, shudder, awakening) Palestinian uprising.

Jizya -- Poll tax imposed by Muslim rulers on their Jewish and Christian subjects in exchange for protection and freedom of religion.

Djihad – Holy struggle.

Karaite – 'Readers of the Scriptures'. Jewish sect believed to originate in Bagdad in the eighth century. Karaites only follow the Written Law and deny the Rabbinical-Talmudic tradition.

Keren Yayesod – Palestine Foundation Fund, later United Israel Appeal.

Keren Kayemet le-Israel – Jewish National Fund.

Khawagat – Respectful or disdainful title in Arabic to designate Europeans.

Khedive – Turkish Vice-Roys who ruled Egypt between 1867 and 1914

Ladino or judesmo (known also as Judeo-Spanish) -- Ancient form of Castillian mixed with Hebrew and Turkish words and often written in *Rashi* script.

Laisser-passer -- Travelling permit granted to stateless.

Madrassah -- Koranic school.

Mamluk – (literally slave) Member of military body (originally Circassian slaves) that ruled Egypt from 1254-1811.

Millet – (people or nation) Ottoman Turkish term for a legally protected religious minority.

Minyan – Quorum of ten male adult Jews required for communal prayer.

Misrahim -- Oriental Jews.

Misr al-Fatat or 'Young Egypt' – Militant nationalist movement founded in 1933.

Mukhabarat – Egyptian secret police.

Nizam jadid (literally new system) – new army created by Muhammad Ali.

Pasha – Turkish officer of high rank, e.g. military commander, governor of province, politician or notable.

Pessah – Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, commemorates the exodus from Egypt.

Rabbanites (Rabbinites) – Name given by the Karaites to their Rabbininal opponents.

Reconquista – Reclaiming of Muslim Spain by the Christians.

Rehla bodun ragaa (literally'journey without return') – Egyptian stamp affixed on travelling documents of Jews after 1956.

Romaniot – Greek Jews.

Rosh Hashana – (literally, Head of the Year) Jewish New Year.

Saint-Simonien – Disciple of the collectivism doctrine of Saint-Simon, French philosopher and sociologist (1760-1825).

Saraf – Moneychanger.

Sephardi (literally Spanish) – Jews originating from Spain, Portugal, the old Ottoman Empire and the Orient.

Schlecht – Derogatory Yiddish term for an Ashkenazi, meaning bad or evil.

Sepher Torah – Scroll of the Law containing the five Books of Moses.

Shari'ah – Body of Islamic Law, also known as the Law of Alla'h, that governs both the secular and religious life of the devout Muslim.

Simhat Torah (literaly 'Rejoicing in the law' – Holy Day on which the annual completion of the reading of the Torah is celebrated.

Tarboush – fez, Turkish head-dress.

Umma – The community of all Muslims

Wafd – Delegation.

Yishuv – Jewish community in Palestine pre 1948.

Yom Kippur – *Day of Atonement*

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LIST OF CHARTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to explore key aspects of the modern history of Egyptian Jews by looking at three distinct topic areas. The first part of the work will shed light on the last three chapters of their lives in Egypt: a golden age under the protection of the colonial powers of England and France from the early 1900s until 1937, a gradual decline due to the abolition of foreigners' privileges under the Capitulation regime, the rise of Arab nationalism and the increasing problems in Palestine and finally the crisis period that followed the outbreak of the three successive Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1956 and 1967, all leading to the almost total demise of Egyptian Jewry by the early 1970s. The second part, which is the core of this thesis, will focus on the migration experience of a small group of Egyptian Jews to Australian shores, including the government policies related to their immigration and integration into Australian society while the third part will consist of a comparative case study addressing some of the more crucial themes linked to the migration experience of a select number of Egyptian Jews to France.

At first, this research project was undertaken for personal reasons, as I am also a Jew from Egypt, having arrived in Australia in 1958 and gone through very similar experiences to most of my compatriots. I strongly believed it was important to record the peregrinations of my group, since the Egyptian diaspora has truly come to an end, without any sign of a return community to Egypt, even after the signing of the 1979 peace accord between Egypt and Israel.

Together with a friend and compatriot, Lana Woolf née Golliger, I initially undertook this project as a community-minded mission and not as an academic task.[1] At that point in time, the purpose was to create a record of the experiences of the Egyptian Jews of Sydney. It was

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[1] Lana Woolf and myself are both Egyptian-born of ethnically different Jewish backgrounds. We still have ageing parents with an amazing memory of their past history. The urgency and importance of the task of recording their story and the story of other Egyptian Jews with equally fascinating experiences, were compelling factors in our determination to create, through a series of personal interviews, a record of the history of those Jews. We devised a questionnaire and made the initial contacts. Most of the time, we were both present during the Sydney interviews while only one of us would conduct the actual interview. The rest of the work, such as recording, transcribing, and assessing the collated data was always my responsibility. When I decided to develop this project into a thesis for a PhD and expand my research to include the Egyptian migrants in Melbourne and Adelaide as well as a comparative case study of a similar group in France, I took charge of every step of the research. M/s Woolf was most cooperative, and continued to assist me with the interviews whenever her professional commitments as a high school teacher allowed her to do so.

felt that such a record would constitute a testimony to the richness of their past as well as recognition of their distinctiveness in the context of the broader Australian Jewish community. This record was meant to be mainly for the benefit of their descendants as well as prospective researchers in the future. The project was based on the assumption that every personal story was important and contributed to the development of an overall picture of the Jews in Egypt and from Egypt, especially in view of the fact that they were now dispersed all over the world and the Jewish presence in Egypt has dwindled to insignificance.

I gradually came to the conclusion that to do justice to the diversity and vibrancy of this particular diaspora and its exilic experiences, I needed the endorsement and the assistance of a university body. In view of the end of a continuous and significant Jewish presence in Egypt for the first time in twenty-five centuries, and the realisation that it will probably never be revived, the importance and urgency of the undertaking became paramount. As foreseen, once the project developed into serious academic research, under the auspices of the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney, with the supervision of Associate Professor Suzanne D. Rutland, it gained more recognition within the group of Egyptian Jews and contacts with prospective respondents, both in Australia and overseas, were greatly facilitated.

The first task was to contextualise the diaspora that Jews had built for themselves in Egypt and establish what happened to that diaspora after 1948. On the dawn of the modern era, Egyptian Jewry had experienced cycles of golden and dark ages, of prosperity and decline, of honour and degradation. These cycles were repeated under every known ruler of Egypt, whether Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Ottoman or Mamluk. The relationship between the Jews and 'the dominant other' was mostly one of symbiosis and the Jewish condition often mirrored the general political, economic and social situation prevalent at the time in that part of the world. In spite of the numerous vicissitudes it endured, the community succeeded in maintaining its Jewishness while espousing outward signs of the dominant culture. Under medieval Islam, in a society that was mainly defined by religion, Jews remained marginalised as *dhimmis*, protected but nevertheless second-class citizens, always at a distance from mainstream society but at the same time strengthened in their identity as Jews. Since the mid-nineteenth century, their status was greatly enhanced under the protection of the European colonial powers. However, the transformation of Egypt into a modern nation state increasingly destabilised the foundations of Jewish life in that country. The Jews of

Egypt had to respond to the dilemmas introduced by modernity with its long list of 'isms', such as, colonialism, liberalism, nationalism, secularism, Arabism, Islamism, communism, and Zionism. All these ideologies were pulling the fabric of their society in conflicting directions. They had to contend with a growing sense of alienation, with challenges to their national identity, and with political forces that eventually forced them into exile and dispersion. This study will investigate every one of these issues with the view of understanding the underlying reasons for the demise of the Jewish community of Egypt and assessing its integration and acculturation into such diverse diasporas as Australia and France.

Based on a detailed study of a sample group of Egyptian Jews who migrated to Australia, using oral history as a research tool reinforced by historical data, I tried to construct their social profile as a migrant group, showing how and why they integrated the way they did, how successful was their integration and how they reconstructed their identity to fit into their new context. Finally, by comparing and contrasting the Australian and French migration experiences, I hoped to demonstrate that the Jews of Egypt shared some remarkable attributes, such as an astonishing level of multilingual skills and therefore an innate ability to interact with people from different backgrounds as well as an ability to accommodate a multi-layered identity. My thesis was that this study would demonstrate firstly that the advancing tide of an exclusivist Egyptian nationalism had or should have somewhat forewarned and prepared them for their eventual exodus. Furthermore, because the Jews of Egypt, as part of a Levantine society, had personally experienced cultural pluralism as a way of life, they already possessed the necessary skills to achieve a smooth integration in whatever country or culture they would later implant themselves after their forced emigration. I raised some pointed questions on the degree of their acculturation to the dominant culture. How did their multilinguism serve them in the monolingual Australia of the 1950s and 1960s? How did they negotiate the different layers of their plural identity in their new country and did they retain a core identity in the process? According to my investigations, no other researcher until now has done a scientific study of Egyptian Jews in Australia based on those themes.

Before entering into the body of my topic, it was important to delineate the conceptual framework around which this study has been constructed by clearly defining such terms as forced emigration, assimilation, integration, acculturation and multiculturalism, in order to establish their relevancy to the present study. For instance, the act of forced emigration can be understood to refer to people or a group of people who are either physically expelled from

their native country by authority or compelled to leave their country because of political persecution, conflicts, economic problems, religious or ethnic discrimination, as opposed to voluntary emigration where there is an element of choice.[2] This phenomenon can also be defined as an 'exodus' that, in the biblical sense, is more that just 'a mass departure': it is 'a journey by a large group to escape from a hostile environment.'[3] The people who make up this group become refugees forced into seeking residence in any nation state that would accept them within its borders.[4] My study will show that this was the case for Egyptian Jews.[5]

Once they are settled in that nation state, the newcomers are faced with a number of different strategies destined to make them feel part of their new country such as assimilation, integration, and acculturation.[6] It is necessary at this point to outline the differences between the three strategies.[7] In the words of historian Marion A. Kaplan, in her gender analysis of the Jews of Imperial Germany, assimilation is 'assumed to be the process engaged in by a minority whose goal is fusion with the majority'.[8] In the Jewish context, Kaplan uses the term 'assimilation' 'to indicate the loss of a Jewish ethnic and religious identity', the discarding of Jewish ties:[9]

> "Assimilation" is an appropriate description for a small group of consciously and totally "Germanised Jews ...who lived in total estrangement from anything Jewish and who sought relationships only with Christians and other Jews like themselves,[10]

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[2] The notion of forced emigration would thus be closer to the notion of exile, defined in *Websters' Third New International Dictionnary of the English Language,* Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam & Co., 1976, as 'a forced removal from one's native country.'

[3] *WorldReference.com English Dictionary, adapted from Worldnet 2.0 Copyright 2003 by Princeton University.*

[4] According to Unesco's definition, migrants, as opposed to refugees, 'are people who make choices about when to leave and where to go, even though these choices are sometimes extremely constrained'.

[5] Forced expulsion of an ethnic group has sometimes been considered as a form of ethnic cleansing. See definition of ethnic cleansing in *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:* 'ethnic cleansing can be understood as the forced expulsion of an "undesirable" population from a given territory as a result of religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or as combination of these.'

[6] According to the definition found in *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia,* the term **diaspora**... is used (without capitalisation) to refer to any people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands; being dispersed throughout other parts of the world, and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture.'

[7] *Websters' Third New International Dictionary* definition of assimilation is a 'socio-cultural fusion wherein individuals and groups of differing ethnic heritage acquire the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of an embracing national culture'.

[8] Marion A. Kaplan, 'Tradition and Transition – The Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration of Jews in Imperial Germany – A Gender analysis', *Yearbook of the Leo Beck Institute,* Vol. XXVII, 1982, p.4 and p.5.

[9] For instance, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), a German Jew, was one of the main proponents of the assimilation of the Jews in the German cultural community.

[10] Ibid., p.3.

Kaplan's concept can apply to any Jewish diaspora, whether in Egypt, France or Australia. As will be demonstrated later in this work, assimilation was the policy of conformity advocated by the Australian government towards its non-British migrants of the immediate postwar period.[11] The understanding was that those migrants were to shed their cultures, traditions and languages and through socialisation away from their own ethnic group, and eventually, intermarriage, become undistinguishable from the host population.

Integration is also a social process of entering a host society engaged in by a minority but on a more egalitarian basis. The Oxford Dictionary defines integration as 'the bringing into equal membership of a common society those groups or persons previously discriminated against on racial or cultural grounds.'[12] For instance, from the mid-1960s to 1973, the Australian government policy in respect to its non-British migrant population gradually abandoned a failing assimilation strategy for the concept of integration. This new policy recognised the diverse needs of the migrant population and did not advocate the necessary loss of 'any individual's original language and customs but nevertheless, saw their principal value in their utility as a means to full participation in an integrated Australian culture.'[13]

From 1973, the notion of 'multiculturalism' was introduced to foster full integration whilst allowing each ethnic group to retain their unique cultural identity. Thus, the term has come to describe the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society. As noted by Rutland, in a multicultural society, 'newcomers are encouraged to maintain and promote their ethnic heritage' with the view that 'a pluralistic approach will enrich the Australian way of life and cultural heritage.'[14] For migrants such as the Jews from Egypt, considering the intrinsic multicultural and multilingual aspect of their identity, it is clear that this new policy promoted an even greater sense of comfort and belonging to Australian society. The acceptance of diversity leads to the next step in the process of socialisation of minority groups, which is acculturation. Acculturation refers to the concept of mutual contribution of both minority

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[11] Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia – The post-war migrant experience,* Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books Australia, 1984, pp.17-22.
[12] *Oxford English Dictionnary,* Second Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
[13] Australian Government immigration policies as set out by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.
[14] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora,* p. 370. Rutland quoted Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia: the post-war migrant experience,* Victoria: Penguin Australia, 1984, p. 34, where Wilton and Bosworth stated that the Whitlam era 'symbolised the acceptance that multiculturalism had replaced assimilationism or even integrationism as the basis of a national immigration policy.'

migrant groups and the dominant host society to the makeup of a common national identity.[15] Kaplan, on the other hand, defined acculturation as:

> the acceptance of many of the customs and cultural patterns of the majority of society and the simultaneous commitment (conscious or unconscious) to the preservation of ethnic and/or religious distinctiveness.[16]

Thus, Jews in Imperial Germany 'acculturated' by accepting 'the standards of the dominant culture' while recognising and maintaining ethnic separateness. It is the same process by which the group of Egyptian Jews became Australian or French and remained Jewish at the same time.

The present research and subsequent evaluation of the collected data have been conducted keeping in mind those definitions of the conceptual framework. The themes of assimilation, integration, acculturation and multiculturalism are central to postwar Australian history. This thesis aims to shed more light on the macro-situation through a micro-study of Egyptian Jews in Australia.

The first chapter of this thesis reviews what has been written on Egyptian Jews after their dispersion throughout the Western world and particularly Australia and France. Although their 'second exodus' has been the subject of a number of academic monographs and theses in Israel, Europe and the Americas, the specific character of their dispersion after 1948 has only interested a handful of scholars of Jewish history. The body of literature covering this topic is not extensive.[17] The state of research on Egyptian Jews in Australia is understandably even more restricted in view of their small number and low profile. The few historians who dealt with this issue did so briefly, in the context of a broader study of Sephardim in Australia. In France, where the size of the Egyptian diaspora is much more important, personal migration stories have been the object of several memoirs but, even there, it seems that only a few researchers engaged in a serious and systematic study of the Egyptian Jews as a distinct migrant group.

Chapter II outlines the methodological strategies employed to construct the thesis including a description of the different approaches to the evaluation of the data, bearing in mind the basic

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[15] *Oxford English Dictionnary.*
[16] Kaplan, *The Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration of Jews in Imperial Germany,* p.4.
[17] Shimon Shamir, 'Notes on researching the Modern History of Egytian Jewry', in *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Centre in Cairo,* no. 23, June 1998, p.3.

social concepts that have just been outlined. Oral history as a research tool is discussed with the view of identifying its inherent strengths and weaknesses, as well as explaining why it was particularly appropriate for this study. The use of archival records and secondary sources was also essential for comparing and contrasting the results of the collected data.

Based on primary and secondary sources, Chapter III proceeds to establish the history of the Jews of Egypt in the modern period, starting with the landing of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. Following a thematic approach, this section concentrates on the rise and fall of Egyptian Jewry, looking at the way the Jews of Egypt responded to the clashing ideologies of the interwar period and focussing on the chain of events that led to their mass exodus starting from 1948 and ending with the near-total demise of a viable Jewish community in Egypt.

Both Chapters IV and V deal with the oral history data, using a quantitative and qualitative approach by linking the questions to the findings. Chapter IV compares and contrasts elements of the Australian participants' stories and their personal perspective of the events that so dramatically changed their lives, to the official version of those same events. The analysis of their demographic, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics leads to a reconstruction of their experience as Jews in Egypt, evoking both the privileges they enjoyed earlier and the discrimination they suffered later. It also helps to define their identity as a pluralistic, multicultural and multilingual group. Chapter V examines the religious divisions of the sample group into Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Karaites, again comparing and contrasting their differences and similarities. It also looks at the themes of inclusion versus exclusion, and allegiance versus alienation, in terms of the participants' own perception of their place in an independent Egyptian nation and their level of involvement in the political scene.

In Chapter VI, the events of the three successive wars that triggered the exodus of Egyptian Jews are evaluated in relation to the participants' personal experience, clearly showing that the majority was more or less coerced into leaving the country, either through direct expulsion or economic strangulation. Some of the questions raised in this chapter are: did the participants expect that rejection, was it justified and how prepared were they for emigration?

Chapter VII proceeds to explore the process of migration of the sample group and the different stages of the journey to Australia. It outlines the impact of the restrictive 'White

Australia' policy and the various difficulties it imposed on Jews of Middle Eastern origin. It also sheds light on the crucial role played by Jewish institutions and their leaders in securing landing permits for Egyptian Jews. It evaluates their difficult beginnings in Australia, their gradual integration and contribution to both mainstream society and Jewish community. Chapter VIII elaborates on the concept of plural identities, revealing how Egyptian-Jewish migrants negotiated the various layers of their identity in Australia. It also assesses their interaction with other Jewish ethnic groups and their commitment to Jewish communal issues, linking up with the broad concepts of forced emigration, integration, acculturation and identity.

The analysis of all those aspects of migration, led me to widen the scope of my research in Australia with a comparative study of the immigration experience of a select number of Egyptian Jews to France, contrasting the two geographical, social and cultural contexts, again using oral history as a research tool. The differences and similarities between the two experiences will be discussed, taking into consideration the difficult socio-economic conditions both in Australia and France in the 1950s and 1960s, and the critical role played by international and local Jewish organizations in the migration and integration process of the Jewish refugees from Egypt. The crucial themes of culture, integration and acceptance by the host society, are central to this chapter as well as the themes of memory and transmission of the group's cultural heritage to the next generation.

In Australia, the Jews of Egypt have not particularly attracted the attention of sociologists as a migrant group. Within the context of Australian Jewry, their story is largely unknown. Therefore, my in-depth analysis of their migration experience in Australia, looking at their demographics, ethnic, national and religious profile, western education, multilinguism and other facets of their multi-layered identity, covers an area of the rich Australian history of migration that has remained unexplored.

Apart from the personal aim of preserving historical data and memoirs of a community which has almost disappeared, the objectives of this thesis are to evaluate the migration experience of a particular ethno-religious group, by looking into the history of the Jews of Egypt, past and present, and compare certain aspects of their experience with that of a similar group in France. At the same time, my work intends to shed more light on certain key issues of Australian immigration. The topics of forced emigration, memory, resettlement, and

reconstruction of identity of a minority migrant group into the dominant society, all fit into the realm of important concepts of social sciences. Through the use of my two sample groups as a successful example of a 'second time around' acculturation, I hope to contribute to the body of research on the exile and migration of minorities and on the policies that regulate the process of assimilation and integration of those minorities into the host society.