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**The Jews of Shanghai in the Period of Modern China**

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## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne .....

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# 1. Introduction

When I first encountered the topic of the Jewish presence in Chinese territory, I felt Socrates's saying "I know that I know nothing" lingering in the back of my brain as the more I knew about the Jewish presence all over the world, I was realizing how little I know about its complexity. The theme first touched me through the work of Professor Xu Xin, from the Nanjing University, who dedicated an online seminar to the topic of Jews in Modern China. In the seminar the Jewish settlement in China was presented since the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE going for over 1,000 years to the present times. This was the catch that brought me to my never ending fascination by the richness of the Jewish life in the world, with a particular interest in the Chinese-Jewish relationship.

Even though the theme was surprising to me, the world's scholars have been interested in the Jewish presence in China since the Christian missionaries in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Interest in the studies of the Jewish life in China started to flourish at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the economic development of the Chinese region. The scholars' interests cover Jewish history, culture and religion in China from its beginning to the present times with a particular interest in the period of the World War II. The topic is researched from both directions; Chinese scholars (e.g. Xu Xin, Pan Guang, Xun Zhou, Song Lihong) and scholars from outside of China (e.g. Jonathan Goldstein, Chiara Betta, Irene Eber, James Ross, Naoki Maruyama).

Scholars from all around the world did a respectable job researching the topic; however, during my readings I found European input lacking in the area and especially the lack of knowledge in general in terms of the Chinese-Jewish relationship. That was one of the reasons I decided to dedicate my bachelor thesis to the topic of Jews in China. I narrowed it down to the period of Modern China and the City of Shanghai. As discovering the richness of this topic, I decided to focus on the Baghdadi Jews in Modern-day Shanghai.

The aim of this thesis is to introduce the fascinating presence of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai that existed since the 1840s to the year 1949. The research extends from the history of the Baghdadi Jews' origin, their journey to Shanghai and their history in Shanghai; important persons for the Baghdadi Jewish community; the religious, social

and political life of the community; their identity; and their relationships with the surrounding communities.

For researching the thesis I used sources from local Chinese scholars as well as from scholars outside of China. The first of the sources was the previously mentioned online seminar *Jewish Diaspora in Modern China* taught by Professor Xu Xin. This seminar gave me initial information about the character, history, development and contributions of the Chinese Jewish Diaspora from its beginnings to the present time. The sources that give general background information about the Baghdadi Jewish history from outside the Chinese territory are the articles found on the website *Jewish Encyclopedia*, *Jewish Virtual Library* and *My Jewish Learning*. The Baghdadi Jewish history in China and particularly in Shanghai is discussed in the work of Pan Guang (whose book *The Jews in China* includes an extensive library of photography and various photocopied documents), Chabad's project focused on the Jewish history in Shanghai, the website *Jewish Communities of China*, and the primary source on the history and the character of the community *Israel's Messenger* (I worked with the volumes from the years 1904 and 1905). The history of the Jewish communities in Shanghai during the World War II is studied in detail by Irene Eber. The compilation of articles edited by Jonathan Goldstein *The Jews of China. Vol. One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives* is an excellent source in the area of Jewish life in Shanghai, the Baghdadi Jewish families and the identity of the Baghdadi Jewish community; especially the articles by Chiara Betta, Joan G. Roland, Maruyama Naoki and Lane Earns. Among other sources dealing with the identity is the work of Jonathan Goldstein concerned with the identities of Jews living in the East and Southeast Asia, Chiara Betta's article about Oriental and British identity and Sarah Abrevaya Stein's article focused on the relationship between the Baghdadi Jews and the British Empire. Among the sources used in this thesis is also *The Scribe* journal dedicated to the topic connected to Jews with Iraqi origin. Biographical data about the Sassoon family was acquired from the *Texas Archival Resources Online* (TARO) – project at the University of Texas, Austin. All of the journals and articles were obtained online on the respective websites stated in the bibliography, or in the JSTOR archive, or in the libraries with available e-sources – The Library of Palacky University in Olomouc and The National Library of the Czech Republic.



## 2. Jews in China

The discourse on Chinese history offers various views on the assessment of the modern period's beginning – the two major opinions work with: the 1840s corresponding to the First Opium War (1839-1842)<sup>1</sup> and the years 1911/1912 reflecting the end of the Chinese Empire ruled by the last dynasty of emperors Qing and the concurrent rise of the republic.<sup>2</sup> The end of the modern era in China has not yet been established. However, the period of interest for this thesis ends in 1949 when the Communist Revolution started and a radical change in the leadership of the country followed.<sup>3</sup>

The discourse of Jewish history in the territory of China operates with the year 1840 as the beginning of the modern period. Professor Xu Xin distinguishes two periods in the Chinese Jewish history, the turning point being the significant change in the character of the Jewish settlement between the pre-modern period and the modern period. According to professor Xu Xin, the major change in the character of the settlements is the factor of assimilation - Jews migrating to China in the pre-modern era assimilated with the society which presents a problem to track the history of Jewish people as a separate group of the society; and the Jewish people coming in the modern era preserving their culture, tradition and values which distinguishes them as a clear separate group status in the society.<sup>4</sup>

As it was mentioned above, the interest of this thesis ends with the year 1949 due to the reasons connected to the development of Jewish life in Shanghai. The change in the Chinese political system also meant a major change in Jewish life in China - Shanghai's Baghdadi Jewish community ceased to exist.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rana Mitter, *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2008), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Mirsky and Frances Wood, *The Britannica Guide to Modern China: A comprehensive introduction to the world's new economic giant* (London: Constable&Robinson Ltd, 2008), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Mitter, *Modern China*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Xin Xu, 'Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions,' *Nanda Review* 1 (Winter 2009), 144.

<sup>5</sup> Xu, 'Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions,' 158.

## 2.1.Pre-modern Period

According to Chinese Jews themselves, the migration to China began between 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE; however, this tradition is often questioned due to lack of evidence.<sup>6</sup> The first written evidence of Jewish presence in China is a business letter written in Judeo-Persian language from 718 CE; other pieces of evidence include a page of Hebrew prayers, references written by Arab travelers, Western travelers, Jesuit missionaries and also the Chinese official records.<sup>7</sup>

A large number of Jews came to China for business purposes; some of them travelled across China, some of them settled and created a community – e.g. in Kaifeng, Ningbo, Ningxia, Yangzhou and Hangzhou.<sup>8</sup>

Kaifeng is the best known Jewish center and for a long period of time it was a place of blossoming Jewish life. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews of Kaifeng were mainly of Persian origin; adapting rather quickly, they interacted peacefully with the local people. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century there were major changes in Chinese society resulting in the openness of many areas to all people equally, including Jews. Jews attended Chinese schools and participated in political matters.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were disputes between Chinese authorities and the Catholic Church; therefore, the Qing dynasty emperors were becoming anti-Christian and anti-foreign. The “Rites Controversy” ended the patience of Chinese rulers when Pope Clement XI forbade Chinese Christians to practice Chinese rituals. The government started to expel missionaries. This sealed the isolation of Jews in the Chinese territory who lost the contact with the world through the expulsion of Catholic missionaries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kaufmann Kohler, et col., ‘China,’ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4338-china> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Xu, ‘Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions,’ 144.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-146; Julius J. Price, ‘The Jews of China,’ *The Monist* 26, No. 1 (January 1916), 118.

<sup>10</sup> Xu, ‘Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions’, 147.

## **2.2. Modern Period in Shanghai**

Baghdadi Jews were in the first wave of Jews coming to China in the 1840s. They came to Hong Kong and later to Shanghai for business purposes focusing on the opium trade between India and China. The second wave of Jewish immigrants came from Russian territory to northern China, centered in the newly established city of Harbin, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, fleeing from the rising antisemitism and pogroms; and in the 1920s, Jews escaping the pogroms and persecution in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. In the 1920s and the 1930s the Jewish population of Northeast China started to gradually move southwards to Shanghai and other cities. The third wave came before and during the World War II (1937-1941) – European Jewish refugees came to Shanghai.<sup>11</sup>

Shanghai was an important center of Jewish life during the modern period, especially shortly before and during the World War II. The Jews of Shanghai are the main concern of this thesis; therefore, they are going to be discussed in more detail in further chapters as well as the pre-war and war years that are inevitably connected to the topic.

## **3. Baghdadi Jews**

The term “Baghdadi Jews” suggests a common origin of the Jewish immigrants; however, the story is more complex as it involves the city of Baghdad, the city of Bombay in present-day India and the city of Shanghai in China.

### **3.1. In Baghdad**

The history of Baghdadi Jews began with the establishment of the Iraqi capital city by the Abbasid dynasty of Caliphs in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. During the centuries of Jewish presence in Baghdad gradual rising and abrupt falls occurred - caused by changes in rule over the city. A slow improvement from the 10<sup>th</sup> century under the Abbasid Caliphs leading to a peak point of prosperity in the 12<sup>th</sup> century meant a rich cultural life, and a stable financial background. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century there was a Mongol conquest during

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 151.

which the favorable position of Jews was preserved – e.g. the chief vizier being of Jewish origin. Later Mongolian conversion to Islam in the 14<sup>th</sup> century meant reinstatement of previous discriminatory laws against Jews established by the Muslim rulers. After another Mongol conquest of Baghdad at the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century many Jews fled from the country and the Jewish community decreased to an insignificant number.<sup>12</sup> During the 15<sup>th</sup> century a battle between the Ottomans and the Persians over the rule in Iraq presented a variety of changes to the Jewish community. In general, these changes originated either from the oppression by the Persians or from the favors presented by the Ottomans. In this period of contrasting attitudes and support some of the Jewish merchants started the trade with other countries and thus managed to expand their wealth. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the situation improved and the Jewish community of Baghdad registered growth in such an extent as to influence life in Baghdad. Another wave of deterioration came between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, even though some of the Jewish bankers were involved in government economy. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a rebellion in Baghdad against its governor and the new ruler who obtained power. This created a new oppression wave against the Jewish community. Financially stable individuals and families decided to flee from the Ottoman Empire, often to the countries in East Asia with which they were engaged in trade and they built manufactories there, e.g. Calcutta, Bombay, Singapore, and Canton. The international trade of Baghdadi Jews was supported by the British authorities present in India which led to the settlement of many merchants there.<sup>13</sup>

### **3.2. In India**

The community of Baghdadi Jews in Bombay was established around 1730 and over a century it continually grew into a community of over two thousand Jewish inhabitants – becoming the biggest Baghdadi Jewish community in India. A big change to the dynamics of the Bombay community brought David Sassoon who arrived in 1833 from Basra, originally from Baghdad, and gradually built up an impressive trade company. In

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Encyclopedia Judaica: Baghdad, Iraq,’ *Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of Aice*. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/baghdad> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Richard Gottheil, and M. Franco, ‘Bagdad’. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2348-bagdad> (accessed July 19, 2018).

fifty years this company provided work for most of Jews living in Bombay who also came from Bagdad with the vision of stable work position provided by the Sassoon firm. In 1861 the Magen David synagogue was built including a religious school and a ritual bath.<sup>14</sup> The Sassoon family played a significant role in the Baghdadi Jewish community in Bombay and also in Shanghai, therefore, a separate chapter is dedicated to the family in the following part of this thesis.

The second biggest Baghdadi Jewish community was founded in Calcutta. Life in Bombay's and Calcutta's communities was centered around the merchant social class. Because there were no ordinations in the Baghdadi Jewish communities in India, religious life was dependent on communication with religious leaders of other communities – particularly with Baghdad's community, and after the World War I with the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of England. Traditions and customs were preserved and followed in the form in which they came from Baghdad. In both Bombay and Calcutta Baghdadi Jews served actively in public affairs.<sup>15</sup>

During their settlement in India, the Jewish population was exposed to British cultural influence and as a result they actively worked on assimilation with the society, e.g. adopting the British life style including the clothing style, joining British social clubs, etc. The Indian independence, proclaimed in 1947, was no cause for celebration for the Baghdadi Jewish community because of their interest in becoming assimilated with the British society in India. The new national state changed its laws and regulations concerning the import and export which caused a deterioration of the financial situation of the Baghdadi Jewish community and the number of residents gradually decreased.<sup>16</sup>

The term "Baghdadi Jews" presents a problem involving the development of the name in terms of inclusion of people from a larger scope of geographical origin after their migration to India. "Baghdadi Jews" was meant only for Jews originally from Baghdad; however, the term was later adjusted to all Arabic-speaking Jews, i.e. Jews from the Ottoman Empire, Syria, Aden and Yemen, and also Jews from Persia and Afghanistan, who moved to India.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Joan G. Roland, 'The Baghdadi Jews of India,' *My Jewish Learning*.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jews-of-india/> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3. In China

The First Opium War (1839-1842) was a conflict between China and the British Empire over the British opium trade. The war was won by the British Empire and as a result China had to open ports to foreign trade and establish free trade. The ports opened were: Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Amoy, Foochow, Shanghai and Ningpo.<sup>18</sup> The opening of the Chinese ports was a great opportunity presented to foreign traders - before the war trade for foreign business was allowed only in the Canton port.<sup>19</sup> This opportunity was also used by Jewish traders, e.g. the Sassoon family.

Most of Baghdadi Jews coming to China were engaged in the opium trade between India and China in the earliest stages of their presence in China, mainly in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The interest of their trade gradually shifted to the speculation market and investments in real estate due to its profitability.<sup>20</sup> The opium trade was deemed illegal in 1917 which meant its closure; however, it did not affect the Baghdadis' entrepreneurship significantly as the companies already worked in other branches of business.<sup>21</sup> Both Hong Kong and Shanghai, the two commerce centers, hosted Baghdadi Jewish communities. The Shanghai's community was more prominent than the one in Hong Kong. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century meant a period of business opportunities and financial growth for the Baghdadi Jewish communities. The influx of Jewish immigrants in the 1920s and the 1930s, not of Baghdadi origin, changed the character of Jewish life in China; however, Baghdadi Jews kept their positions and preserved their unique cultural characteristics distinct to the rest of the Jewish population in China.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 'Opium War,' *National Army Museum*, <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/opium-war-1839-1842> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> 'The Old China Trade: Before 1842,' *Penobscot Marine Museum*, <http://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/pbho-1/maine-and-orient/old-china-trade-1842> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Chiara Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai,' *Modern Asian Studies* 37, No. 4 (October 2003): 1007.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1008.

<sup>22</sup> Xu, 'Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions', 147.

## 4. The Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai

### 4.1. History

The beginning of Baghdadi Jewish presence in Shanghai is closely connected to the Sassoon family trade; Elias David Sassoon created one of the centers of the family's trade in Shanghai in 1845. Although the Sassoons' company brought other Baghdadi Jews to work for this new center in the 1850s, it was not until the 1880s when the employees decided to move to Shanghai with their families and only then the community was officially established. The earliest Baghdadi Jewish settlers in Shanghai chose the International Settlement of Shanghai for their residence, most of them in the British concession. The city of Shanghai was divided into several areas after the end of the First Opium War and the opening of the city to the foreign influence – among other states claiming a certain amount of land were France, Germany and the United States.<sup>23</sup>

Chiara Betta offers an opinion that highlights the role of the Sassoon family in the establishment of the Jewish community in Shanghai: “It is highly arguable that if the Sassoon firms had not expanded their business to Shanghai, very few Baghdadi Jews would have had any incentive to seek fortune in the city.”<sup>24</sup>

The significant role of the Sassoon family in the history of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Shanghai did not end with the mere establishment of a business branch there. David Elias Sassoon took care of the small community's social and religious needs - the community established a burial society, cemeteries, synagogues and schools with the major help of the Sassoon family.<sup>25</sup>

The newly established communal life followed the customs of Judaism (kosher food, festivals, services, etc.) and kept in contact with religious communities in Baghdad which supervised the religious life of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai. The workers coming to Shanghai under the wings of the Sassoons' company soon

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<sup>23</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1001-1004.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1003.

<sup>25</sup> 'The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day,' *Jewish Communities of China*. <http://www.jewsofchina.org/the-chronology-of-the-jews-of-shanghai-from-1832-to-the-present-day> (accessed July 19, 2018); Lane Earns, 'The Shanghai Nagasaki Judaic Connection, 1859-1924,' in *The Jews of China. Vol. One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (New York: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 158.

established families by arranging their marriages with other Baghdadi Jews settled in other cities in China but also in Singapore, Subaraya, Rangoon, Calcutta and Bombay.<sup>26</sup> The marriages inside of the Baghdadi community contributed to the preservation and enhancement of the local Baghdadi identity. Intermarriages with local Chinese people were uncommon until the 1920s. A known example of intermarriage was Silas Aaron Haroon who married a Buddhist Eurasian. The gradual growth of the Jewish population in Shanghai led to the official establishment of the Shanghai Jewish Community in 1887. The first synagogue – prayer hall – was Beth El used since 1898 and the second synagogue, the Shearith Israel Synagogue, was in use by the more orthodox community members.<sup>27</sup>

Some of those Baghdadi Jewish workers who transferred to Shanghai under the employment of the Sassoons' company left the company and became independent entrepreneurs themselves, e.g. Silas Aaron Haroon and Sir Elly Kadoorie, the two founders of the most successful companies in Shanghai along with the Sassoons themselves, but also businessmen in smaller range as Benjamin David Benjamin and Isaac Ezra.<sup>28</sup>

Chiara Betta states that until the 1880s when Baghdadi individuals started setting up new companies, the community was made up almost only by the employees of the Sassoons' company.<sup>29</sup> Betta suggests that the Sassoons' company served as a reference point to all Jews travelling to Shanghai. The Sassoons were helping other Jews arriving in the city with proper reference materials; however, the help did not extend to poor Jews who searched for alms in the Baghdadi communities across Asia.<sup>30</sup> This task was partially taken on by a special organization, the Jewish Benevolent Fund, that was established to deal with the collection of money from Baghdadi firms as well as from individual members of the community, and its redistribution among the “distressed

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<sup>26</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1002.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1003; Sarah Abrevaya Stein, 'Protected Persons? The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora, the British State, and the Persistence of Empire,' *The American Historical Review* 116, No. 1 (February 2011): 81.

<sup>28</sup> Joan G. Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparison of Economic Roles,' in *The Jews of China. Vol. One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (New York: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 148-149; Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1005.

<sup>29</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1003.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1004.



Jews”.<sup>31</sup> A special passage of the fund’s establishing statutes was devoted to the case of poor Jews from abroad: “6. It is desirable that no charity should be given to poor Jews coming from abroad by any individual member of the Community,... 7. The Sub-Committee be requested to give only such sums to poor Jews from abroad as will enable them to pay their passage to the first port if deemed advisable, unless the Sub-Committee be satisfied that such party or parties are really deserving of more relief.”<sup>32</sup>

In the following years the growth of Baghdadi Jewish wealth, in the three biggest companies (the E. D. Sassoon & Company, the Hardoon Company and E. S. Kadoorie & Company) and smaller businesses, went hand in hand with the growth of Shanghai in size but also as a rich commercial center in China. It became the biggest trade center in the Far East. This development was possible only due to international trade taking place in Shanghai. The growth was a stable process, even the conflicts in the area, such as the Sino-Japanese clashes in 1927 and 1932 did not interfere with it.<sup>33</sup>

The Baghdadi Jewish community grew as a whole in both incoming wealth and increasing population which was at its peak in the 1920s with around 800 members, as other families both from Baghdad and India arrived. The financial growth allowed the community to build two new synagogues, the Ohel Rachel Synagogue in 1920 and the Beth Aharon Synagogue in 1927.<sup>34</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Jews from Northern China were coming to Shanghai, thus Baghdadi Jews started to communicate with them and to support them as their coreligionists. In the 1920s and the 1930s the migration wave from the north grew bigger and the Russian Jewish community soon outnumbered the Baghdadi Jewish population.<sup>35</sup>

In 1931 the Japanese invaded the Northeast of the Chinese territory, the region of Manchuria, which heralded other Japanese invading actions in the territory leading to conflict with British and the American forces.<sup>36</sup> This invasion caused a wave of Jewish migration from the region of Manchuria southwards to Hong Kong and Shanghai. This

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Jewish Benevolent Fund,’ *Israel’s Messenger* 1, No. 1 (April 1904): 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> ‘The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.’

<sup>34</sup> Earns, ‘The Shanghai Nagasaki Judaic Connection, 1859-1924,’ 158.

<sup>35</sup> ‘The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.’

<sup>36</sup> ‘Japanese Invasion of Manchuria: 1931,’ *The Loyal Edmonton Regiment Military Museum*.

<https://www.lermuseum.org/interwar-years-1919-1938/japanese-invasion-of-manchuria-1931> (accessed July 19, 2018).

wave was a part of a large amount of Russian Jewish refugees who fled earlier in the 1910s from Russian pogroms, oppression and the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. A small part of this Russian Jewish migration wave was moving to Shanghai already in the 1920s but only after the Manchuria invasion the Jewish settlements in Shanghai experienced a significant change. The amount of Russian Jews escaping the Japanese occupation was far larger than the numbers of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai. The population of the Baghdadi Jewish community was at its peak of 800 members. The newly established Shanghai Russian Jewish community gathered over 5,000 members in 1931 - the year of its creation. The rich Baghdadi Jewish families engaged in the aid to the Russian Jews arriving in Shanghai.<sup>37</sup>

The rapid change of the situation in 1937 when the Japanese invaded China presented a great obstacle to the trade of Baghdadi Jews who suffered a business loss. After the fall of Shanghai in 1937 the situation was critical for the whole city but it was not until the second battle taking place in Shanghai in 1941, a surprise attack on the British and American naval base without an official war declaration<sup>38</sup>, that Baghdadi Jewish businessmen suffered a loss of their property at the hands of the Japanese occupying forces. The situation worsened in 1941 due to the Japanese occupation of the International Settlement which was left intact until then - Japanese forces were situated in the Chinese part of Shanghai.<sup>39</sup>

From 1938 to 1941 the third wave of Jews came to Shanghai, fleeing from Europe; starting from 1938 as a preventive measure until 1941 as a last resort. The mass of people arriving to Shanghai numbered around 20,000 Jews from Germany, Austria and Central Europe.<sup>40</sup> The main cause of such a great influx of European Jewish refugees was the relatively open access without a visa or further documentation necessary for emigration to other countries.<sup>41</sup> In this period both the Baghdadi Jewish community and the Russian Jewish community joined their forces and aided the

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<sup>37</sup> Xu, 'Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions', 149.

<sup>38</sup> 'Second Sino-Japanese War,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War#ref338768> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Guang Pan, ed., *The Jews in China: Youtai ren zai Zhongguo* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2005), 25; Irene Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-Existence, and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 34.

<sup>40</sup> 'Shanghai Jewish History,' *Shanghai Jewish Center: A Project of Chabad*. <http://www.chinajewish.org/SJC/Jhistory.htm> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Xu, 'Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions', 149.

European refugees in many aspects, e.g. financial support, building schools and establishment of new cultural organizations.<sup>42</sup>

The Sassoon and Kadoorie families, with additional support from abroad, played an important role in supporting the European refugees arriving from 1938 onward; they led several charity organizations, e.g. the Shanghai Hebrew Relief Society and the Free Loan Society. Another committee for redistributing the help was formed under Baghdadi supervision - the Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai. This committee was in contact with the local Chinese authorities, Japanese authorities and several other organizations from abroad such as the Joint Distribution Committee in New York and Paris, the London Council for German Jewry and others.<sup>43</sup>

After the second battle in Shanghai in 1941, the Japanese administration became more focused on Jews and Jewish communities. A “designated area for stateless refugees” was created and the European refugees, who had come to Shanghai after 1938, had to resettle into its boundaries, the area was called the Hongkew ghetto.<sup>44</sup> The Russian Jewish community was intact due to the Russian-Japanese pact of neutrality. The Baghdadi Jewish community was challenged in a matter that was once prestigious but changed into unenviable matter – the British Protected Person status. Some Baghdadi Jews were interned in Japanese camps due to the possession of a British passport, which was the reason for a number of Baghdadi Jews to give up their passports and become “stateless”; however, they were not sent to the Hongkew ghetto.<sup>45</sup>

The end of the war known in the world’s context as the World War II (1939-1945) with its regional distinction as the Pacific War (1941-1945) and in the East Asian historical context as the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) was followed by the Chinese civil war (1945-1949), the war between the Nationalists and the Communists. The establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 by the victorious Communists<sup>46</sup> caused Baghdadi Jewish businessmen to shift their businesses to Hong Kong or completely retreat from China. The businessmen remaining in Hong Kong

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<sup>42</sup> ‘The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.’

<sup>43</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 20-21.

<sup>44</sup> Xu, ‘Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions’, 150.

<sup>45</sup> ‘The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.’

<sup>46</sup> ‘Chinese Civil War,’ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Chinese-Civil-War> (accessed July 19, 2018).

prospered as the city was the only connection of Chinese territory to the world up until the 1970s.<sup>47</sup>

## 4.2. Important Baghdadi Jews

### 4.2.1. The Sassoons

The Sassoons were the most important family of Baghdadi Jews that stood behind the trade leading to the Jewish settlement in China to the extent of being called “the Rothschilds of the East”.<sup>48</sup>

The founder of the traders’ dynasty was David ben Sassoon (1792-1864) who had the position of chief treasurer in the office of Baghdad’s governor. However, due to the loss of political fortunes followed by Daud Pasha’s (Ottoman Baghdad’s governor) oppression he moved from Baghdad to Basra in 1828 and in 1833 to Bombay. There he established the family business David Sassoon & Company which grew exponentially to an international level with branches in Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, and in several other places. The company was involved in various business opportunities – the most prominent of them was dealing with silk and cotton, and later the lucrative opium trade between India and China.<sup>49</sup> It was David Sassoon who sponsored the establishment of the Magen David Synagogue in Bombay. He was a cog in the machine of migration process from Baghdad - many Jews came to Bombay to work for the Sassoons’ company. David Sassoon financed many charitable causes, e.g. the support of Jews in need, the support of the newly arriving Baghdadi Jews to India, etc. One of the noble tasks was also the building of several schools, medical institutions and social clubs.<sup>50</sup>

Exposed to the British community in Bombay, the family adapted to their life style. David’s first son Sir Albert Abdullah Sassoon (1818-1896) was educated in a British school. He succeeded his father as the head of David Sassoon & Company after

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<sup>47</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Jacobs, Goodman Lipkind and J. Hyams, ‘Sassoon,’ *Jewish Encyclopedia*. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13218-sassoon> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.; Stein, ‘Protected Persons?’, 81.

<sup>50</sup> Roland, ‘The Baghdadi Jews of India.’; Joan G. Roland, ‘Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparison of Economic Roles,’ in *The Jews of China. Vol. One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (New York: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 142.

the death of David Sassoon in 1864. He was a philanthropist who supported the development of Bombay, particularly education. Sir Albert Sassoon ennobled by Queen Victoria in 1872 for his contributions and work in Bombay. During his lifetime he visited Britain where he settled toward the end of his life and where he also died.<sup>51</sup>

Another example of the inclination toward British influence was Sir Edward Albert Sassoon (1856-1912), the son of Albert Sassoon, who moved to Britain where he established his own branch of the European Sassoon family that enjoyed much respect in the society. In 1899 he became a member of British Parliament.<sup>52</sup>

The Sassoons' settlement in China began in 1843-1844 with Elias David Sassoon (1819-1880), David Sassoon's second son, who travelled to Canton to search for new opportunities presented by the newly opened ports in China after the First Opium War. Elias David established two offices in China: Hong Kong's office in 1843 and Shanghai's office in 1845. These became the main centers of the Sassoons' trade in China.<sup>53</sup> In 1867 Elias David founded E. D. Sassoon & Company, competing with the original firm David Sassoon & Co. in the Chinese trade. The new firm was active in general trading (gold, metal, spices, silk and cotton) and the opium trading; only later it focused on banking and property which led to its prosperity overshadowing the parent company.<sup>54</sup>

Sir Victor Sassoon (1881-1961), the grandson of Elias David and inheritor of his father's Edward Elias Sassoon's knighthood in 1924, fought in the First World War where he was hurt in 1916 in a plane crash suffering life-long health consequences. In 1927 he decided to center his business interest in Shanghai where he put real estate and banking in the center of his interest along with other Baghdadi Jews who saw the new opportunities in these business branches.<sup>55</sup> He became one of the leaders of the Shanghai Jewish community.<sup>56</sup> He was staying in Shanghai until 1941 when he was

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<sup>51</sup> Jacobs, Lipkind and Hyams, 'Sassoon'; Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,' 143.

<sup>52</sup> H. Rabinowicz 'The Sassoon Treasures,' *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57, No. 2 (October 1966): 138; Jacobs, Lipkind and Hyams, 'Sassoon'.

<sup>53</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1001-1003.

<sup>54</sup> Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,' 144, 147-148.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Harbin, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Surabaya* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 139.

<sup>56</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 33.

forced to leave due to the war. After the political storm of the Communist Revolution in 1949 he sold his properties in China and left Chinese soil.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.2.2. The Hardoons

The founder of the Hardoon family was Silas Aaron Hardoon (1851-1931). His family moved from Baghdad to Bombay with the prospect of getting a job in the David Sassoon & Co. After reaching adulthood Silas Aaron obtained a job in the Sassoons' company in Bombay and Calcutta<sup>58</sup>, following the steps of his father, from where he was transferred in 1870 to Hong Kong and in 1874 to Shanghai. Silas Aaron gained experience and in 1882 he decided to leave the Sassoons' company to start a business on his own in cotton dealing; however, due to not being fortunate enough he returned to the Sassoon family to seek employment. He eventually fought his way to a partnership in the company in the 1890s. This confidence in his abilities pushed him to the founding of his own firm – the Hardoon Company in 1900. He subsequently left the Sassoon family business for good in 1911. Although Silas Aaron focused on real estate, he was active in the opium trade until 1918 which helped him to finance his advancement in the real estate business.<sup>59</sup>

He was among the first Jews committing to intermarriage with a local Chinese woman – Liza Roos (1863-1941; also known by her Buddhist name as Luo Jialing).<sup>60</sup> She married Silas Aaron in 1886 in a Buddhist and also Jewish ceremony. During her life she supported Buddhist activities in Shanghai. With his wife they adopted eleven children of various backgrounds.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1920s Silas Aaron was known as the “richest person East of the Suez Canal” rivaling the Sassoon family. By the time of his death in 1931 he was deemed to be the wealthiest foreigner in Shanghai with the fortune of 150 million dollars left to his

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<sup>57</sup> ‘Sir Ellice Victor Elias Sassoon papers and photographs: A Guide to the Collection,’ *Texas Archival Resources Online*. <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/smu/00208/smu-00208.html> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Stein, ‘Protected Persons?’, 81

<sup>59</sup> Roland, ‘Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,’ 148; Chiara Betta, ‘Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,’ in *The Jews of China. Vol. One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (New York: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 219.

<sup>60</sup> Stein, ‘Protected Persons?’, 81.

<sup>61</sup> Betta, ‘Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,’ 219.

family.<sup>62</sup> His success is usually ascribed to the overall fortunate financial opportunities of Baghdadi Jews in China; however, Chiara Betta argues that the main factor that differentiated Hardoon from the rest of the Baghdadis, who established their own small companies in China, was his interest in Buddhism and the local culture to which he was closer than other Baghdadis, also through his marriage. This interest in the culture opened the doors of many prominent members of the local Chinese society to him.<sup>63</sup> For example, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China, visited Hardoon's garden in 1912.<sup>64</sup>

Considering his role in the religious life of the Jewish community, he sponsored the building of the Beth Aharon synagogue in 1928.<sup>65</sup> He also introduced Jewish charity customs to the local Chinese in his frequent fundraising activities and funding to famine affected areas.<sup>66</sup>

Hardoon's inclination toward his Baghdadi origins and prospective Chinese acculturation is apparent from his life style that differed considerably from the other Baghdadis in Shanghai – clothing style choice, social life, marriage etc.<sup>67</sup> This fusion of cultures was also manifested at his funeral which brought together a rich variety of customs as well as the attendees themselves. The ceremony held in his residence, where he was also buried, was a combination of Jewish and Buddhist customary rites.<sup>68</sup>

#### **4.2.3. The Kadoories**

Sir Elly Silas Kadoorie (1867-1944) was also originally an employee of the Sassons arriving to Shanghai in 1880. After he left the Sasoons' firm, he did business in banking, real estate and Malayan rubber trade in his newly established firm E. S. Kadoorie & Co. with his brother Sir Ellis Kadoorie. In 1901 he co-established the China Light and Power Company Limited, active in Shanghai and Hong Kong, which later grew to CLP Groups becoming a part of the leading world's companies dealing with electricity. He was one of the influential leaders of the Baghdadi Jewish community in

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<sup>62</sup> Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia*, 139.

<sup>63</sup> Betta, 'Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,' 219-220.

<sup>64</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 41.

<sup>65</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1003.

<sup>66</sup> Xu, 'Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions', 151.

<sup>67</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1011.

<sup>68</sup> Betta, 'Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,' 225.

Shanghai and president of the Shanghai Zionist Association from 1915 to 1928. The whole family was known to be active supporters of the Zionist movement since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>69</sup>

Sir Kadoorie's local public service, later involving the Kadoorie family as a whole, based in several charitable projects and philanthropy, e.g. building schools for the poor local Chinese inhabitants<sup>70</sup>, was recognized and honored by the British, French and Chinese authorities. He received the British Empire's honorary knighthood in 1926. Amidst the turmoil of the World War II he was taken to a Japanese war prison where he died in 1944.<sup>71</sup>

Sir Elly Silas Kadoorie's brother Sir Ellis Kadoorie (1865-1922) moved from Baghdad to Hong Kong in 1880 sharing his path and employment in the Sassoon family's company with his brother. Sir Ellis became knight of the British Empire in 1917. Sir Elly Silas Kadoorie's sons were Sir Lawrence (1899-1993), who was knighted in 1974, and Sir Horace (1902-1995), who received his knighthood in 1989 for his help to Nepalese soldiers in Hong Kong adjusting into the society.<sup>72</sup> The brothers settled in Hong Kong where they followed their father's steps in business and expanded it further in banking, textile industry, hotel management in their Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotel group and also in electric utility company, the China Light and Power Company Limited. They were able to focus on all these ventures after they gained experience under the lead of Sir Victor Sassoon.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4.2.4. The Ezras

Isaac Ezra (died in 1892) was another example of a successful individual who started as an employee under the Sassoons from 1868 to 1879 in several of the Chinese ports before settling in Shanghai. In 1879 Ezra started a career as a broker and merchant.

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<sup>69</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 35.

<sup>70</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Léo-Paul Dana, 'The Mizrahim: Anglicized Orientals with transnational networks and "ethics capital"', *Entrepreneurship and Religion*, Edited by Léo-Paul Dana (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2010), 68.

<sup>72</sup> 'Sir Horace Kadoorie,' *Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden*. <https://www.kfbg.org/eng/horace-kadoorie.aspx> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>73</sup> Dana, 'The Mizrahim: Anglicized Orientals with transnational networks and "ethics capital"', 68-69; Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,' 149.



Isaac Ezra was naturalized in 1872 by the British authorities in India extending his status to his descendants.<sup>74</sup>

His son Edward Isaac Ezra (1882-1921) inherited the business and started to deal with opium which brought him wealth and a social status high enough to be accepted into the British Shanghai Club which was a club created by and for high British society present in Shanghai.<sup>75</sup>

#### **4.2.5. Nissim Elias Benjamin Ezra**

Nissim Elias Benjamin Ezra (1883-1936), often shortened to only N. E. B. Ezra, was also one of the Sassoons' employees who moved from India to Shanghai.<sup>76</sup> N. E. B. Ezra was not related to the Ezra family mentioned above, as far as I could establish. He was the founder of the Shanghai Zionist Association in 1903 and served as its Honorary Secretary from 1903 to 1936.<sup>77</sup> He also served as the editor-in-chief of the Association's publication *Israel's Messenger* that he founded together with M. Myers and I.A. Levis.<sup>78</sup>

#### **4.2.6. Benjamin David Benjamin**

Belonging among the earliest arrivals of Baghdadi Jews to Shanghai in the 1870s Benjamin David Benjamin (1844-1889) was expected to work for the Sassoon family as it was almost the tradition of Baghdadi Jews. Benjamin changed his focus to stock exchange in 1874 and soon he recorded a great quick success. He became one of the prominent members of the Baghdadi Jewish community.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Stein, 'Protected Persons?', 91.

<sup>75</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1005.

<sup>76</sup> Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia*, 166.

<sup>77</sup> Maruyama Naoki, 'The Shanghai Zionist Association and the International Politics of East Asia Until 1936,' in *The Jews of China. Vol. One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (New York: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 252.

<sup>78</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 40.

<sup>79</sup> 'Select Biographies,' *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews: A Collection of Biographical Reflections by Dr. Maisie J. Meyer*. <https://maisiemeyer.wordpress.com/discover/> (accessed July 19, 2018).

## 4.3. Community

### 4.3.1. Religious Life

One of the religious concerns, which was taken care of first, was funeral and burial according to the proper rules and orders. A cemetery for Baghdadi Jews was created in the same year as the burial brotherhood in 1862. The land on which the cemetery was built was donated by the Sassoon family. The next cemetery was built in 1919 and it was a shared place for the Baghdadi Jewish community and for the Russian Jewish community.<sup>80</sup>

The foundation stone to a stable practicing religious life in Shanghai was also laid by the Sassoon family when the family sponsored the establishment of the Beth El Synagogue in 1887. The synagogue was only a praying hall situated close to the traders' offices. It was substituted by the Ohel Rachel Synagogue also sponsored by the Sassoons, by Sir Jacob Sassoon to be precise, and it was dedicated to his late wife Lady Rachel Sassoon.<sup>81</sup> Greek revival style was chosen by the community as the architectural style for the new synagogue which concluded its construction in 1920.<sup>82</sup>

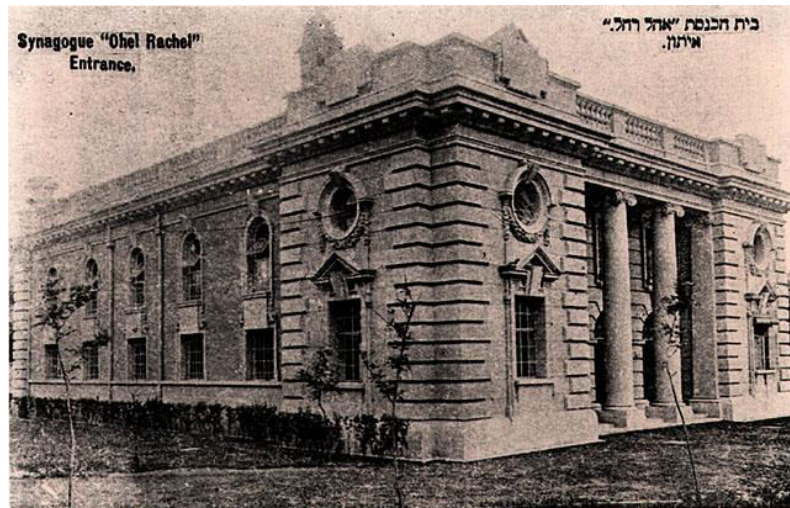


Figure 1: Ohel Rachel Synagogue<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 17 and 147.

<sup>81</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1003.

<sup>82</sup> Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia*, 140.

<sup>83</sup> "'Ohel Rachel" Synagogue, built in 1921 in Shanghai, China,' *Beit Hatfutsot: The museum of the Jewish People*. <https://dbs.bh.org.il/image/ohel-rachel-synagogue-built-in-1921-in-shanghai-china> (accessed October 31, 2018).

The Ohel Rachel Synagogue's (Figure 1) consecration was performed by the first community's first rabbi, Rabbi W. Hirsch, in 1921. Later in 1932, a religious leader by the name Reverend Mendel Brown was invited. Brown became an unofficial rabbi of the community, and director of the Shanghai Jewish School.<sup>84</sup>

Another Baghdadi Jewish praying hall, the Shearith Israel Synagogue, was established by D. E. J. Abraham in 1898.<sup>85</sup> The Shearith Israel was replaced by the Beth Aharon Synagogue (Figure 2) in 1927 funded by one of the important and affluent members of the community - Silas Aharon Hardoon supported the construction of the synagogue in the name of his father Aharon Hardoon.<sup>86</sup>



Figure 2: Beth Aharon Synagogue<sup>87</sup>

The traditions and customs of the Jewish community were preserved by the Baghdadis in Shanghai; however, the time gradually weakened their observance. The Erev Sabbath closing of the businesses was not strictly observed by all Baghdadi Jews; however they took part in Sabbath services and Sabbath rest observation, they also

<sup>84</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 147.

<sup>85</sup> 'The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.'

<sup>86</sup> Betta, 'Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,' 225.

<sup>87</sup> 'Beth Aharon Synagogue.' *Virtual Shanghai*. <https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Data/Buildings?ID=1729> (accessed October 31, 2018).

celebrated all the Jewish festivals and kept giving tithes. They never forgot their Jewish identity in the Sephardi tradition inherited from their ancestors in Baghdad with which they stayed in constant contact due to religious decision making and advice giving, even more so after the 1923 when the community's rabbi W. Hirsch departed.<sup>88</sup>

One of the preserved traces of the Sephardi tradition followed by the Baghdadi Jewish community was the *Book of Prayer and Order of Service* which was edited by the Ohel Rachel Synagogue in 1933 according to the *Custom of the Sephardi Jewish Congregation*.<sup>89</sup>

#### **4.3.2. Social Life**

The social life of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai was predominantly communal as they never integrated into the local Chinese society, even though they constituted an important part of the economic life of the city. They rather kept themselves to British life ideals in general.<sup>90</sup>

An integral part of the social life in the Baghdadi community of Shanghai was the education of its youth as since the 1880s the community grew from few male individuals to whole families. The sons of the prominent families were educated in British schools and their religious education was implemented by individual home classes. Even in the educational sphere the intent for British acculturation was present and highly supported by the wealthiest families of the community.<sup>91</sup>

The members of the Baghdadi community who were less fortunate in the financial situation sent their children into the communal educational system. This communal system was oriented toward Jewish education as well as secular education. It was supported by the community which was apparent by the building of Talmud Torah Hebrew School in 1902 which developed quickly and was renamed to Shanghai Jewish School. The language used in the teaching process was English in both secular and religious departments of the studies. This school served the Baghdadi community as well as later the Russian Jewish community. Learning in this school was meant mainly

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<sup>88</sup> Yating Tang, 'Reconstructing the Vanished Musical Life of Shanghai Jewish Diaspora: A Report,' *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13, No. 1 (June 2004): 104.

<sup>89</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 42.

<sup>90</sup> Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,' 152.

<sup>91</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 150.

for the poorer parts of the communities. During the time when European refugees resided in Shanghai, the Shanghai Jewish School accommodated also their children's needs; however, due to large numbers of pupils another school was founded in 1939 – the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association, also called Kadoorie School after its founder Sir Horace Kadoorie.<sup>92</sup>

In 1898 Baghdadi Jews became active members of the Anglo-Jewish Association as they established a new branch of the Association in Shanghai.<sup>93</sup> It was an organization founded in 1871 to support facilitation of Jewish schools in the British Empire.<sup>94</sup>

Baghdadi Jews led culturally rich life closely related to their connection and attempts for acculturation to the local British communities, beginning in India with a continuation in China. One of the examples was horse-racing which was a sport organized in Shanghai by the local foreigners from 1844, practically since the beginning of their presence on Chinese soil they kept the races bloom to a high level of recognition from the International Settlement in Shanghai. Horse-racing was a fascinating activity also for the local Chinese people and many were interested in taking part in it; however, they were excluded from the foreigners' races thus they established their own clubs from 1911. Horse-racing served as a hobby to a vast majority of the higher class population extending to a display of wealth and prestige of the families involved in the local business competing on the course like on the market. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a high point of horse-racing in Shanghai including the participation of prominent business owners like Sir Victor Sassoon, and the Ezra family, the sons of Isaac Ezra.<sup>95</sup>

The horse-riding club founded by the British community in Shanghai in the 1860s did honor to the British Empire history as it lasted through the initial dissatisfaction of the local Chinese population, local political rebellions and revolutions, Japanese occupation and Communist interventions. The club was a symbol of colonial thriving of the British Empire expanding their culture to their colonial territories. The

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Jacobs and N. E. B. Ezra. 'Shanghai,' *Jewish Encyclopedia*. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13501-shanghai> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>94</sup> 'About the AJA,' *AJA: The Anglo-Jewish Association*. <https://www.anglojewish.org.uk/> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>95</sup> Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,' 150.

Paper Hunt Riding<sup>96</sup> Club for ladies was established in 1929.<sup>97</sup> Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai were also invited to become members of the club, even though the decisive factor was their financial background and social status. An exemplary case was Isaac Hayim Toeg who participated in hunts with the club in the 1930s.<sup>98</sup>

Baghdadi Jewish participation in social events connected to or organized by the local Chinese population occurred in not very frequent cases; for example, Sir Victor Sassoon participated in a charity event funding medical relief for Chinese writers and artists. This event was organized by Song Qingling, the wife of Dr. Sun Yat-sen.<sup>99</sup>

The Baghdadi Jewish community led a rich social and cultural life often in direct connection to, or with an intention to blend in, the local British community contributing to the image of the Baghdadi Jews as eager candidates for absorption by the colonial society.

#### **4.3.3. Political Life**

Baghdadi Jews only modestly participated in politics. It was usually limited to individuals rather than a larger participation on the Baghdadi part; appearances in public affairs were always cultivated mainly by the Sassoon and the Haroon families, participating as official members of the municipal councils in Shanghai in order to maintain amicable relationships with local authorities.<sup>100</sup> For example, the director of David Sassoon & Co. always held a position of an honorary member of the Shanghai Municipal Council, Moses Ezra served as a mayor of the French part of Shanghai's International Settlement, etc.<sup>101</sup>

Baghdadi Jews present in the whole British Empire usually actively supported the political movements involved in the world's Jewish interest – e.g. the Zionist movement. The establishment of the Shanghai Zionist Association was first discussed in 1903 and

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<sup>96</sup> 'Paper Hunt Riding' is a game of horse riders chasing one of their colleagues who acts as a prey and leaves colored paper to indicate his/her trail.

<sup>97</sup> Joseph Swan, 'The Paper Chase,' *Northeast Historic Film*.

<http://www.movingimagesincontext.org/collections/branch/paperchase/> (accessed July 19, 2018).

<sup>98</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 42.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>100</sup> Earns, 'The Shanghai Nagasaki Judaic Connection, 1859-1924,' 158.

<sup>101</sup> Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,' 151.

in the same year it was approved by the community and established by N. E. B. Ezra. In 1905 the Association had almost 100 members.<sup>102</sup>

Since 1918 the leaders of the Zionist Association, N. E. B. Ezra and E. Kadoorie, worked on Chinese and Japanese acceptance and support of the Balfour declaration issued by Britain in 1917, in both cases they won the favor of the official authorities – Dr. Sun Yat-sen for the Chinese part and Foreign Minister Uchida Kosai on the Japanese part.<sup>103</sup> Another important person to support the Shanghai Zionist Association was Mrs. Raymond Elias Toeg in the 1920s and the 1930s; she assumed E. Kadoorie's position in the leadership of the Association.<sup>104</sup>

From 1917 to 1927 the Zionist Association was strengthened by the Russian Jews arriving in Shanghai. The Association then changed its character to encompass the newcomers. The Association created a new organization Kadimah meant only for Russian Jews in Shanghai and another organization called Ezra meant for Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai.<sup>105</sup>

The Zionist Association was in direct contact with the World's Zionist Organization and they were represented in the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel 1903. Another venture established by the Shanghai Zionist Association in 1920 was the China Jewish Colony. They also supported Jewish emigration to Palestine. They funded two settlements in Palestine, one of them named after Kadoorie's late wife Laura, and an agricultural school, Beth Sepher Kadoorie.<sup>106</sup>

Beth Sepher Kadoorie was one of two agricultural schools active in the British Mandate of Palestine. The school was established in 1933 in Lower Galilee and since its establishment held a strong reputation also due to the achievements of the students in the field of agriculture, military (Palmach) and academic life. Famous names such as Yigal Allon, Yitzhak Rabin and Haim Guri feature among its alumni. The school remains active as a boarding school offering not only high school education but also grammar and middle school studies.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Naoki, 'The Shanghai Zionist Association and the International Politics of East Asia Until 1936', 252.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 256 and 260.

<sup>104</sup> Pan, ed., *The Jews in China*, 44.

<sup>105</sup> Naoki, 'The Shanghai Zionist Association and the International Politics of East Asia Until 1936', 256.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 252 and 257.

<sup>107</sup> 'Kadoorie School,' *Israel Philatelic Federation*,

<http://israelphilately.org.il/en/catalog/articles/725/Kadoorie%20School> (accessed October 31, 2018);

A part of the activity of the Shanghai Zionist Association was the bi-weekly and later monthly published newspaper *Israel's Messenger*, published from 1904 to 1941, which did not serve only as a herald of the Association but it was also a medium reflecting the life of the Shanghai's community in its wide aspects, as the cover of the periodical announces: "A fortnight Journal for the Jewish home – containing interesting articles & news from Books, Periodicals, etc."<sup>108</sup>, or the heading of another page, "A fortnightly Jewish Paper Devoted to the Interest of Jews and Judaism in the East."<sup>109</sup>

The establishment of *Israel's Messenger* was met with a wide appreciation among the members of the community for it was the first newspaper for Jews and about Jews published in Shanghai. The newspaper became famous among Zionists in the whole of Southeast Asia as well as it attracted the interest of the world's Jewish communities.<sup>110</sup>

Presently, *Israel's Messenger* serves as an important source for scholars of Jewish life in Shanghai, even though it should be approached carefully due to the self-image that was altered according to the will of the organization and the Jewish community in general.<sup>111</sup>

#### **4.4.Identity**

The Baghdadi Jewish identity was that of a Baghdadi origin with the Jewish hereditary identity connected together. Ever since their settlement in British territory they tended to look at British culture as the higher one that was desired by many. However, through their desire and their attempts, they tried to exchange their Baghdadi identity for a British identity, while never leaving the Jewish part. Apparently they felt the ties with the place of their origin but the desire to distance themselves from the Baghdadi roots was strong as well.<sup>112</sup>

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'Kadoorie Agricultural Youth Village,' *The Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel*, <https://shimur.org/sites/kadoorie-agricultural-youth-village/?lang=en> (accessed October 31, 2018).

<sup>108</sup> *Israel's Messenger* 1, No. 2 (May 1904).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> *Israel's Messenger* 1, No. 1 (May 1904), 1.

<sup>111</sup> Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia*, 166.

<sup>112</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1013 and 1023.



“‘Oriental in origin and appreciation’ and at the same time ‘English in their objects and associations’.”<sup>113</sup> Chiara Betta argues that there was an inner tension underlying the relationship between Baghdadi Jews and the British which made complete acculturation and inclusion into the British society impossible.<sup>114</sup>

The self-perception of Baghdadi Jews changed with the time shifting from the Judeo-Arabic cultural identity to a more internationalized identity, as it may be seen on the example of David Sassoon wearing traditional Baghdadi attire and one of his sons already adopting Western clothing style, as seen in Figure 3. The life style was in general becoming anglicized; however, there were Baghdadi customs that were kept, e.g. the hookah. The perception of the Baghdadis depended also on the context of the interaction.<sup>115</sup>



Figure 3: David Sassoon (seated) and his three sons, Bombay, India, mid-19th century<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 1008.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 1009-1010.

<sup>116</sup> ‘In 1832, David Sassoon established David Sassoon and Sons Company (The “Old Sassoon group”) in Bombay. David Sassoon (seated) and his three sons, Bombay, India, mid-19th century.’ In Guang Pan, ed. *The Jews in China: Youtai ren zai Zhongguo* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2005), 29.

Their language was Judeo-Arabic which remained their mother tongue with the second language being English that they learnt in India. Judeo-Arabic remained the prevalent language until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its written form still served as a mean for recording business transactions at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the gradual business development and the process of Anglicization caused the English language to surpass Judeo-Arabic.<sup>117</sup>

While still living in India, Baghdadi Jews began the process of Anglicization by shifting from their Judeo-Arabic identity to a Judeo-British identity. This process resulted into the acceptance of the British life style and social models. The members of affluent families were sent to get an education in British schools where they should not only receive the education but also learn British proper manners and get accustomed to the British life style that possessed much respect among Baghdadi Jews across British territories.<sup>118</sup> The process of Anglicization depended on social classes; the higher classes were more inclined for British acculturation than the employees of firms with lower statuses.<sup>119</sup> Acculturation that took place in Shanghai was also of the British character as there were relationships with the local British population and the Chinese surroundings did not play a significant role as the Baghdadis like the British stayed away from the locals in the social sphere at least until the 1920s.<sup>120</sup>

The roots of Baghdadi Jews were intricate as the majority originated in Baghdad under the Ottoman Empire; many of them moved to India under British rule and emigrated to Shanghai which was influenced by various communities and influencers of wide range of nationalities. An example for the problematic assessment of the Baghdadis' identity was the inheritance proceedings after Silas Aaron Hardoon's death when the British Supreme Court in Shanghai had to resolve whether he was a subject to Chinese, British, Jewish, Iraqi, or private international law.<sup>121</sup> However, the case of Silas Aaron Hardoon is rather specific as he was nurturing his oriental origin and he was active in the local Chinese life contrary to the rest of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1011-1012.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 1013.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 1018-1019.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Stein, 'Protected Persons?,' 81.

<sup>122</sup> Betta, 'Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,' 220.

When it came to the self-perception of Baghdadi Jews, it is necessary to mention their inner feelings toward their Jewish legacy which was not by any means forgotten amidst the cultural diversity surrounding them. They kept the traditions and religious rules in their everyday life as any of the modern Jewish communities around the world did. After a brief reading of any issue of *Israel's Messenger* one can safely spot the Jewish togetherness and the solidarity towards other Jewish communities – the articles in newspaper, which varied enormously in their themes, as mentioned previously, included a strong feeling for the events, problems and victories of Jewish communities around the world, e.g. in Tsarist Russia, the U.S. and Europe, but also in the whole Asian region hosting a large amount of Jewish communities. The themes of Jewishness extended also toward the religious side of the spectrum – sayings of rabbis from the Talmud, lectures by rabbis from European and American communities but also in the practical string of matters, in every issue there was a calendar of Shabbat services and the relevant portion of the Torah to be read during the week. Even though the newspaper held its ground when it came to spreading the Zionist goals and the contemporary events in the world context concerning this matter, the publication was the “Jewish Paper Devoted to the Interest of Jews and Judaism”<sup>123</sup>. In the light of the research of *Israel's Messenger*, it is obvious that the Jewish element of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Shanghai was the strongest inner identification.

Concerning further Baghdadi Jewish self-perception: the community is also called the Sephardi Jewish community according to the liturgical tradition they followed. Baghdadi Jews started to call themselves Sephardim in the 1910s as a distinction from the Russian Jews but also to highlight their European origin – the Sephardi community originating in the Iberian Peninsula. Researchers assign the Baghdadis also as belonging to the Sephardi tradition, even though there is no evidence of a direct connection to the original Sephardi community from the Iberian Peninsula, except the story passed in the Sassoon family deriving their family origin from the Ibn Shushan family from Toledo in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Israel's Messenger* 1, No. 2 (May 1904).

<sup>124</sup> ‘Sassoon,’ *Beit Hatfutsot: The Museum of the Jewish People*. <https://dbs.bh.org.il/familyname/sassoon> (accessed July 19, 2018); Dan Rottenberg, *Finding Our Fathers: A Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1986), 333.

When it comes to acculturation into any society, the role that is discussed the most is the role of women. They usually manage the domestic life which directly influences the process of acculturation, or preservation of the original culture, traditions and customs. The Baghdadi Jewish women were as inclined to the British culture as the Baghdadi men; however, their contact with the local British population was rather sporadic and the occupation of men being usually in the trading business on international scale provided men with a wider outlook resulting in a stronger need to adapt in order to have better opportunities in the business. The process was also slower in Shanghai where there was only a small number of women from the 1850s to the 1880s who were only sporadically in contact with the surrounding international environment so that they nurtured and preserved the Baghdadi culture in their homes.<sup>125</sup>

The British community in Shanghai was not spared of the antisemitism sprouting in the societies worldwide mainly at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Latent antisemitism was one of the factors that made full inclusion of the Baghdadis into the British community impossible – even though they were allies, supporters and mutually advantageous partners; they remained strangers in the eyes of the local British community.<sup>126</sup> One of the striking examples is the ban on Jews joining the British Country Club which led to the establishment of the Jewish Country Club built on a property owned by the Kadoorie family.<sup>127</sup>

The unspoken consensus present in the Baghdadi's society since their sojourn in India was to come to British culture and their population as close as possible. In many areas Baghdadi Jews were successful as they lived in a British territory with a British community and worked close to each other in an international environment. However, the attempts for a complete inclusion were never successful as the British always saw them as “trusted allies, but still strangers”.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Betta, ‘From Orientals to Imagined Britons,’ 1017.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 1022.

<sup>127</sup> Robert Cairns, ‘Colorful Jewish community contributed much to Shanghai,’ *The Scribe*. <http://www.dangoor.com/issue76/articles/76096.htm> (accessed July 19, 2018); Betta, ‘From Orientals to Imagined Britons,’ 1016.

<sup>128</sup> Betta, ‘From Orientals to Imagined Britons,’ 1022.

#### **4.5. Relationship with the Local Chinese People**

Baghdadi Jews had an important role in the development of Shanghai as a modern commercial center. The relationship between Baghdadi Jews and the local Chinese people was that of a mutual advantageous development, even though direct contacts were rather sporadic.<sup>129</sup>

In times of need the affluent Baghdadi families often extended their hands toward the local Chinese people, for example Sir Elly Kadoorie collected money locally and even abroad to help to locals during famines, and also funded building of schools for the poorer local inhabitants.<sup>130</sup>

After the siege of Shanghai by the Japanese forces in 1937 thousands of local Chinese people escaped to the International settlement, as these parts of the city remained intact till 1941, where they received the help of various degrees from the international settlers, and where the Baghdadi Jews also participated.<sup>131</sup>

During the World War II when the European refugees came to Shanghai in masses and Baghdadi Jews collaborated with Russian Jews, the help of the local Shanghai authorities was also needed and gratefully accepted.<sup>132</sup>

The relationships between the local Chinese people and Baghdadi Jews were in many instances mutually enriching as well as graciously one-sided in the time of need.

#### **4.6. Relationship with the British Empire**

The relationship with the British Empire in the affairs connected to China is based on two pillars – the relationship between Baghdadi Jews and the British settlers in India in the 1840s, and the relationship between Baghdadi Jews and British settlers in Shanghai.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> ‘Shanghai Jews as seen by Chinese,’ *The Scribe*. <http://www.dangoor.com/71page18.html> (accessed July 19, 2018); Roland, ‘Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,’ 152-153.

<sup>130</sup> Dana, *Entrepreneurship and Religion*, 68.

<sup>131</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 16-17.

<sup>132</sup> ‘Shanghai Jews as seen by Chinese.’

<sup>133</sup> Betta, ‘From Orientals to Imagined Britons,’ 1005.

In India in the 1840s there was an interest of the Baghdadi Jewish traders toward the extension and strengthening of British colonization in Singapore and the Chinese ports which led to support and avid collaborations in related matters.<sup>134</sup>

The relationship between Baghdadi Jews and British settlers in Shanghai developed on the basis of a symbiosis – mutual profitability. The local British authorities were inclined to act independent of official British policies in Europe which was manifested in their leniency toward the Baghdadi Jewish community. At the same time the Baghdadi Jewish elite supported these local British authorities. In the early stages (1869-1904) the main allies were the Sassoons and in the later period it was Edward Ezra, the son of Isaac Ezra, and Maurice Benjamin, the son of Benjamin David Benjamin. The common interest was to preserve the status quo of Shanghai's International Settlement. The British authorities in Shanghai also offered the status of a British subject to many Baghdadi Jews as a source of protection and support as until 1918 the Baghdadi Jews were officially subjects of the Ottoman Empire, which might have presented problems in the international spheres they were living in.<sup>135</sup>

#### **4.6.1. British Protected Person**

Even though the official relationships with the Shanghai's British authorities were friendly, the relationships with the local British community in Shanghai differed as in the 1920s and the 1930s the Baghdadis were still not completely accepted in the society by the local British population.<sup>136</sup> The attitude of the British toward Baghdadi Jews depended for the most part on the financial status, status in the social classes and also geographical origin of each individual.<sup>137</sup>

The majority of Baghdadi Jews received the British Protected Person status during their stay in India where the founders of the families received the protected status extended to their descendants. The Baghdadis in India fought for the status due to their desire to differentiate themselves from the local Indian Jewish communities.<sup>138</sup> The

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1006.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 1016.

<sup>137</sup> Stein, 'Protected Persons?', 86 and 97-98.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 91.

status of British Protected Person was held mainly by the prominent members of the Baghdadi Jewish community, e.g. David Sassoon.<sup>139</sup>

The status brought many advantages to the holders, e.g. legal protection, tax relieves, etc. The relationship between the Protected Person and the country issuing the status is mutually advantageous – legal advantages for the Protected Person and financial advantages for the country issuing the status.<sup>140</sup>

This Protected Person status should have related to the country of origin; however, it was more complicated for the Baghdadis – Baghdad was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and there was not any agreement with China which could serve as a protection measure for the Empire's subjects in the territory of China. However, the Protected Person status could have been given by the French because of the Franco-Ottoman alliance from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and France had an extraterritorial agreement with China.<sup>141</sup> The British protection was a recent possibility for the Baghdadis – the British authorities agreed with the French authorities to carry the protection over employees of the Sassoons' company to the British side. Before the passage of new laws in 1948, the Protected Persons were referred to as British citizens even though they were not officially so in the eyes of the law.<sup>142</sup>

As it was mentioned above, the local British authorities tended to apply laws and decision making more independently and it also concerned the matter of the British Protected Person status. The European British authorities were dissatisfied with these practices and thus the local British authorities lost their decision making power over the Protected Person status matters in 1906. The official policies of the British strictly limited the conferral of the protected status to all Baghdadi Jews, especially the inherited statuses of Baghdadis who did not live in British territory themselves, i.e. those living in Shanghai and other non-British territories.<sup>143</sup>

The decision of the British authorities struck Baghdadi Jews across the whole British territory. Denying them the protected status not only stripped them of the

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<sup>139</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1006.

<sup>140</sup> Stein, 'Protected Persons?,' 89.

<sup>141</sup> 'Ottoman Empire: France and Austria-Hungary,' *Encyclopedia.com*.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/ottoman-empire-france-and-austria-hungary> (accessed July 19, 2018); Stein, 'Protected Persons?,' 88.

<sup>142</sup> Stein, 'Protected Persons?,' 90.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

advantages held by the status but to some extent also of their identity - the Baghdadis often considered themselves an extended part of the British society. The stories of Nissim Jeremiah, Simon Abraham Levy and D. Silman Somekh serve as evidence of the denied status perceived as a disheartening experience close to a betrayal.<sup>144</sup>

These new restrictive rules slowly eased over the time; however, even during the time of their full force the local British authorities were granting exceptions to Baghdadi Jews. During and after the World War I as well as after the end of the Ottoman Empire there was a big wave of Jewish migration to British territory. This mass of migrants eventually caused even the local British authorities in China to adhere to the restrictive policies. However, the restrictions on statuses were still prone to be reconsidered based on the financial statuses and social classes of the applicants, e.g. the children of Silas Aaron Hardoon received the protected status.<sup>145</sup>

## **4.7. Relationships with other Jewish immigrants in Shanghai**

### **4.7.1. Local Chinese Jews**

The Baghdadi Jews of Shanghai tried to initiate contact with and to restore the Kaifeng Jewish community – it was established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and it gradually ceased to function in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Baghdadi Jewish community established a Rescue Society in 1900 to start communication with the Kaifeng Jews. Eight of the Kaifeng Jews came to Shanghai in 1901 and in joined efforts with the Shanghai's community created a Talmud Torah school in 1902, known also as the Shanghai Jewish School.<sup>146</sup> However, the revival of the Kaifeng community as it was hoped for did not occur due to “the lack of unity, foresight, and leadership” of the Shanghai's Jewish community according to N. E. B. Ezra.<sup>147</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century all the holy scriptures were sold and in 1914 the site of the synagogue was sold.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>146</sup> Jacobs and Ezra. ‘Shanghai.’

<sup>147</sup> Roland, ‘Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century,’ 150.

<sup>148</sup> Xu, ‘Jewish Diaspora in China and Their Contributions’, 147.



#### 4.7.2. Russian Jews

The arrival of the Russian Jews who fled from imperial Russia in the 1910s meant a meeting of two contrasting groups of people differing mainly in their financial status. These financial differences often resulted in misunderstandings and difficult relations; however, the close proximity within the borders of one city and the shared hereditary identity engraved in the minds of both sides were strong enough to make both groups cooperate on various levels in the society. The Baghdadi Jews did not close their door to the ones in need as they supported the arriving Russian Jews in various aspects – financially and socially.<sup>149</sup>

There were problems on the individual level on both sides: For the Russian Jewish population it was the geographical origin of their counterparts which awoke derogatory names used in the context; for the Baghdadi Jewish population it was the financial and social status of the arriving Jews who could disrupt the peaceful structure of Jewish life in Shanghai. These problems were not resolved even in the late 1920s. However, it is important to state that these conflicts did not involve the whole two communities.<sup>150</sup>

One of the possible meeting points was the religious life which differed from the base as the Russian Jews adhered to Ashkenazi religious tradition and the Baghdadi Jews followed the Sephardi religious tradition. However, the differences in their traditions did not allow any fundamental clash between both sides.<sup>151</sup>

Education, which is an inherently important part of Jewish life of any tradition, went hand in hand as the Shanghai Jewish School built by Baghdadi Jews served as a common school for students from poorer backgrounds from both Baghdadi and Russian communities.<sup>152</sup>

The Baghdadi and the Russian youth were also in close contact in several organizations, such as the 5<sup>th</sup> Shanghai Jewish Boy Scouts Troop, the 9<sup>th</sup> Shanghai Girl Guide Troop, the Jewish Company of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, the Jewish Recreation Club, and the B'nai B'rith Shanghai Lodge. This frequent meeting between

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<sup>149</sup> 'The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.'

<sup>150</sup> Betta, 'From Orientals to Imagined Britons,' 1011.

<sup>151</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 146-147.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151.

the youth heralded the later closer relationships between Baghdadi Jews and Russian Jews as they grew up in the more open environment of the international commerce center of Shanghai.<sup>153</sup>

The Baghdadi Jewish community, which was already supporting their coreligionist coming from the north, joined forces with the same Russian community and together they helped their brethren fleeing from pre-war Europe. The joined communities were involved in building schools, offering financial support and establishing new organizations that aided in the social and cultural sphere of the European refugees' lives.<sup>154</sup>

The arrival of the Russian Jewish population to Shanghai was abrupt due to the changing political situation and increasing oppression. The challenge of adaptation was a matter of both sides – the Russian Jewish side and the Baghdadi Jewish side. The Russian Jewish population had to adapt to the new environment in all aspects of life. The Baghdadi Jewish community had to adapt to the arrival of a mass of population sharing only the Jewish identity. The clashes at the beginning of their relationship were to be expected due to the major differences between the two groups. However, through their co-habitation in Shanghai they developed a mutual understanding and later they were capable to join hands during World War II.

#### **4.7.3. European Jewish Refugees**

When the arrival of the European Jewish refugees began in 1937, the Baghdadi Jewish community had already been accustomed to the cohabitation with a large group living according to a different tradition yet they lived in mutual harmony for the most part; therefore, religious factors were not a problem.

Baghdadi Jews and Russian Jews collaborated in the effort to aid the newly arriving coreligionists from Europe. Baghdadi Jews themselves contacted authorities and organizations from abroad in an effort to help more effectively. They used their own aces – the Sassoon and the Kadoorie families – in the joined efforts to support the European refugees since the early arrivals in 1938. The Baghdadis also established

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<sup>153</sup> 'The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.'

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.; Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 20-21.

various organizations and committees that were helping the cause directly in Shanghai.<sup>155</sup>

Further help directed to the social needs of the newcomers was in education – they shared the Shanghai Jewish School with both Baghdadi Jews and Russian Jews and later they were given a separate school – the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association – when the numbers of students grew and the old school did not provide enough space.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 20-21; ‘The Chronology of the Jews of Shanghai from 1832 to the Present Day.’

<sup>156</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 150-151.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to introduce the fascinating Baghdadi Jewish presence in Shanghai. What originally began with a hint of a surprise and uniqueness was, through research – in the areas of the Baghdadi Jews' origin, their journey to Shanghai and their history in Shanghai; the religious, social and political life of the community; their identity; and their relationships with the surrounding communities – deemed definitely neither unique nor surprising in comparison to the patterns in migration processes in general.

The migration starts and ends due to the change in the surrounding environment and not due to an independent decision. The Baghdadi Jewish migration from Baghdad started as an escape from the oppression. Their presence in Shanghai was framed by two important events that changed the course of life and history in the whole of China. The migration to Shanghai beginning in the 1840s was induced by the result of the First Opium War. The end of the Baghdadi Jewish settlement in Shanghai was a direct consequence of the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

A communal sense is one of the recurring patterns in a migration process. There is a tendency to create a community in the new environment as soon as it is possible. The community takes care of all members' requirements – the social, religious and political needs and interests. As soon as the settlement of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai grew to whole families, the Shanghai Jewish community was officially established in 1887.

After arriving to an unfamiliar environment migrants tend to search for allies in the local society and to keep friendly or neutral relationships with other parts of the society. In the case of Baghdadi Jews there was the strong British part of the society to whom they inclined as to allies and comrades in the Chinese environment. The relationships with the local Chinese people were rather friendly – as Baghdadi Jews offered financial support in times of need. In special cases there were more complex connections with the surrounding Chinese society, e.g. Silas Aaron Hardoon and his wife.

There tends to be a strong sense of solidarity among migrants toward new people with whom they share some features – origin, religion, life style, political affiliation etc.

The Baghdadi Jewish community was cooperating with the arriving Russian Jews. The community was also helping other Jewish migrants coming to Shanghai, socially and financially; additional Baghdadi Jews coming through or to Shanghai and later European refugees during World War II.

The aforementioned points show that the Baghdadi Jewish migration and life in Shanghai was not unique or unbelievable as the same patterns can be reflected on the lives of other migrants all over the world. However, the history of the community and the journey Baghdadi Jews undertook deserves the attention of scholars and researchers as it is a complex phenomenon.

Jews have been travelling and moving between countries and continents for hundreds of years. They have kept their traditions and customs wherever life sent them but they have also learnt and accepted features of the places where they have been living. This may also be found in the Baghdadi Jewish community in Shanghai – they travelled from Baghdad to India and from India to Shanghai; they travelled over the course of the 18th, 19th and 20th century; they kept and nourished their Jewish identity; and they learnt to live and to cooperate with the local British settlers, local Chinese inhabitants and other Jewish communities in Shanghai.

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## **Annotation**

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This thesis aims to introduce the Baghdadi Jewish presence in Shanghai in the period of Modern China, since the 1840s to 1949. The work includes the history of the Baghdadi Jewish community, the life of the community in the aspects of society, religion, politics and identity. The last part attempts to discuss the interactions of the community with the surrounding environment.

## **Anotace**

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Tato teze se snaží o představení přítomnosti Bagdáďských židů v Šanghaji v období moderní Číny, od 40. let 19. století do roku 1949. Tato práce zahrnuje historii této Bagdáďské židovské komunity, život této komunity v aspektech společnosti, náboženství, politiky a identity. Poslední část práce se snaží diskutovat o interakcích této komunity s okolním prostředím.