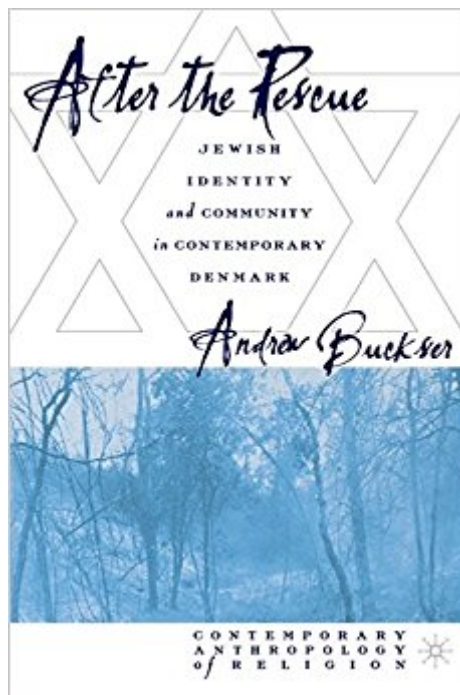




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After The Rescue: Jewish Identity And Community In Contemporary Denmark



Synopsis

In October of 1943, the Danish resistance rescued almost all of the Jews in Copenhagen from roundups by the occupying Nazis. In the years since, Jews have become deeply engaged in a Danish culture that presents very few barriers of antisemitism or prejudice. This book explores the questions that such inclusion raises for the Danish Jews, and what their answers can tell us about the meaning of religion, ethnicity and community in modern society. Social scientists have long argued that modernity poses challenges for traditional ethnic communities, by breaking down the networks of locality, kinship, religion and occupation that have held such communities together. For the Danish Jews, inclusion into the larger society has led to increasing fragmentation, as the community has split into a bewildering array of religious, social, and political factions. Yet it remains one of Scandinavia's most vital religious organizations, and Jewishness remains central to self-understanding for thousands of its members. How this has happened - how the Jewish world has maintained its significance while losing any sense of coherence or unity - suggests a new understanding of the meaning of ethnic community in contemporary society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'[C]omprehensive, nuanced, and beautifully written. Buckser skillfully weaves data from historical sources with rich ethnography and succeeds in depicting [the Jewish community of Denmark] sensitively and as objectively as is humanly possible. In doing so he provides valuable guidance for how to conduct research when challenged by enormous scale and social complexity, conditions

common to late modern urban society'. - Leonard Plotnicov, Professor of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh, and Editor of Ethnology

ANDREW BUCKSER is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Purdue University. He is the author of a number of works on religion and culture in northern Europe, including *Communities of Faith: Sectarianism, Identity, and Social Change on a Danish Island* (1996). Dr. Buckser received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1993, and he has conducted extensive fieldwork in Western Jutland and Copenhagen.

This description of contemporary Jewish life and identity in Denmark is extremely well written, thoughtful, and powerful. The author explores various aspects of Jewish life (religious, communal, social, international, etc.) and charts the various sub-groups within Copenhagen's fractured Jewish community. These discussions are deftly embedded in historical context -- the author describes the various waves of Jewish immigration to Denmark over the past few centuries, and of course also places his analysis within the shadow of the 1943 rescue of Danish Jewry from the Nazis. The entire book is nuanced and sensitive. The author allows his informants to speak for themselves and tell their own stories, but also shares plenty of his own observations and insights. The book is peppered with many interesting anecdotes and stories, some poignant, some disturbing, others humorous. The author seems hopeful that Jewish life in Denmark will persist well into the future -- I am not so sure. I'm not sure I buy the whole "symbolic ethnicity" stuff. Anyone interested in contemporary Jewish identity, contemporary Denmark, or good ethnographic analyses of communities, will find this book incredibly enriching and rewarding.

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