and "wrong" insufficiently characterize the tension between Mabo’s parents. The question of how to balance the claims made by the traditions of one’s society against the need to keep pace with the inevitable pull of the modern world along with the impact of these choices is a grievous issue faced by many people in African communities and nations.

The film focuses on a djeliba, a master griot who comes to Mabo’s home to initiate him into his family’s history. Mabo’s school performance declines as he becomes engrossed with the djeliba’s narratives about his ancestor Sundjata Keita who founded the great 13th century Malian trading empire. The griot and schoolteacher each struggle to win Mabo to his side, illustrating the problematic tensions of accounting for history—producing multiple levels of time and space, such as the urban and the rural, the past and the present, the authentic and the inauthentic, the griot and the schoolteacher, Mabo’s mother and his father, and the conflict of how to account for what was, what is, and what will be. Choosing to side with either Mabo’s father or mother provides a simple and less-than-satisfactory answer. Though Kouyate’s sympathy lies with Mabo and his father, the filmmaker also recognizes that this sympathy is not without its problems. This is illustrated at the end of the film when the djeliba is compelled to leave the house because of the protests of Mabo’s mother.

Keita is a film about the conflict between the old and the new legacies, questioning the implications of social identity in a world that has become much more integrated, if not competitive. Will Mabo follow the path suggested by the djeliba or by the school system? This is left unanswered, perhaps in recognition that there are no easy and persuasive answers. The film itself, by dramatizing the tensions between stability and change, is an important document for students of culture.


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Dr. Weissbach’s work on the various structures of Jewish worship in Kentucky is a fascinating look at a neglected topic. Scholars of Jewish life in America have concentrated primarily on urban experiences, paying scant attention to those communities which have flourished in more rural locations. The Synagogues of Kentucky attempts to rectify this omission by tracing the various Jewish congregations through time using the structures that were designed, built, or modified to function as houses of worship,
community centers, and symbols of a Jewish presence. Weissbach proceeds from the assumption that, "the outward appearance of a synagogue, its interior configuration, the specific uses for which it is designed—all these manifest the thinking that went into planning the building and affect outlook and the actions of those who make use of it" (36). Thus, by closely examining the synagogues of Kentucky, Weissbach attempts to discover something of the lives of the people who built and used these buildings.

Weissbach outlines the history of every Jewish synagogue which has served the Jews of Kentucky since the founding of the first congregation in Louisville in 1842. Thus, Weissbach's book serves as a unique source for scholars of religious architecture, American Jewish life, and the history and settlement of Kentucky. He presents pictures of every one of Kentucky's synagogues, eighty-two in all. These synagogues range from the long-gone structures which served Kentucky's earliest Jewish settlers to the modern buildings constructed by professional architects for contemporary congregations. Weissbach accompanies the photos with a variety of data, including census records, local business directories, congregation records, and oral histories. Seven separate tables present this information into handy, readable charts. The book is indeed an exhaustive record of temple structures.

Additionally, the variety of sizes, styles, organizations, and placements of Jewish synagogues in Kentucky evidences the multiplicity of Jewish life in this state. Weissbach goes beyond mere identification to reflect on and interpret the variables reflected in the wood, stone, and brick of the synagogues, including the size and wealth of the congregation, their adherence to the Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform branches of Judaism, the prevailing architectural styles in public and sacred buildings, and the changing nature of the synagogue as a place of community. Weissbach provides an excellent case study of how anyone interested in religious architecture can and should relate that interest to the wider context in which these buildings occur.

Of special interest to those who might wish to use the book as a guide for pursuing similar studies is the chapter entitled "Discovering Kentucky's Synagogues: An Essay on Bibliography and Methodology." In this chapter, Weissbach presents his investigative techniques and sources and provides suggestions for others who might engage in similar projects. Perhaps most interesting is Weissbach's discussion of some of the problems and mysteries that arose during the course of his research.

The Synagogues of Kentucky is a valuable addition to the history of Kentucky, the history of Jews in America, and to the study of religious architecture in general. By focusing on what some might consider the "fringe" of all these areas, Weissbach manages to shed a great deal of light on them all.