

Descended from Jewish Seed

Genetics and Jewish History in India: the Bene Israel and the Black Jews of Cochin

*By Tudor Parfitt**

Of all the Jewish communities in the world, the history of the Bene Israel of western India is perhaps the most totally obscure. After the Bene Israel, the Black Jews of Cochin might come second in obscurity. A distant joint third might be the Ethiopian Jews — the Falashas — and the Jews of Kaifeng, about whom written documentation dates back many centuries.¹

The earliest sources that offer a more or less detailed account of the Bene Israel are much later than the earliest texts we have on the Falashas and Chinese Jews, and consist of the writings of Christian missionaries and Jewish travelers who visited the community in the early nineteenth century. Hitherto a lack of data has in fact prevented us from saying anything objective about the actual origin or early history of the Bene Israel.² According to the most widespread Bene Israel tradition, which was recorded by the historian of the community and one of its members, Haim Samuel Kehimkar, their ancestors were shipwrecked near the village of Navgaon on the Konkan coast of Western India in 175 BCE after they fled Palestine during the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes.³ Only seven men and seven women survived, and they became the ancestors of the community. There is no evidence for this of any kind. This legend of origin has much in common with many other legends of origin both in India and elsewhere in the world — even down to the numbers involved — and must be taken as mythic.

Interestingly enough, the legend of origin of the Bene Israel resembles that of the Chitpavans, a group of Maharashtra Brahmins. The legend told on the Konkan coast states that the Chitpavans are descended from fourteen foreigners who perished in a shipwreck but then were restored to life by Parashurama, one of Vishnu's incarnations, who taught them Brahmin rites.⁴ According to this theory, then, the Bene Israel settled in the area in remote times and stayed. What we do know is that by the early nineteenth century they existed as a community, and by this time were known as Shanwar Teli (Marathi 'Saturday oilmen'), because they constituted a sort of caste — a rather bizarre one — of oil pressers who apparently abstained from work on Saturdays.⁵ Already, by the time they were first encoun-

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tered, their caste integrity was dissolving and they appear to have started moving from the Konkan villages to the towns of Pen, Panvel, Thana, and Bombay, and were becoming artisans of all kinds. Nonetheless — and this is significant for our present purposes — they remained endogamous. At the present time, the Bene Israel community is principally to be found in Israel where some of them still wear Indian dress and play cricket, but there are still about 4,000 members of the community in India. The majority live in Mumbai (Bombay), but there are also Bene Israel communities and functioning synagogues in Pune, Thane, and Ahmedabad.

No doubt the particular obscurity of the Bene Israel community's origins contributed substantially to the difficulties they encountered as they endeavored to gain recognition as Jews both in the Jewish world at large and, particularly, in Israel. Rabbinical courts in Baghdad and Jerusalem ruled in 1914 that intermarriage between Jews and the Bene Israel was forbidden⁶ and until fairly recently the dominant view among the Baghdadi Jews of India was that the Bene Israel were not really Jewish.

In 1944, however, one of the two Chief Rabbis of Palestine, Rabbi Meir Hai Uzziel, declared in a responsum that the Bene Israel were, "descended from Jewish seed, and I have found support in a responsum by Hai Gaon⁷...in a letter by Maimonides to the scholars of Lunel."⁸ In a 1951 responsum, Rabbi Uzziel noted that, whereas there was perhaps reason to believe that the Bene Israel had at some time intermarried with gentiles, this should not be allowed to affect their status as Jews on the grounds, "that we have never rejected any Jew because of his gentile appearance or the color of his skin."⁹ In 1964, the conflict between the Bene Israel community and the rabbinate reached its zenith following a refusal by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yitzhak Nissim, to allow Bene Israel individuals to marry other Jews, unless they were able to provide proof of Jewishness and no intermarriage over several generations. The main argument of the Chief Rabbi and of those who supported his point of view was that in the past the Bene Israel had been ignorant of Jewish laws relating to divorce and levirate marriage, and their failure in the past to follow such laws would have led to *mamzerut* (more or less the same argument was used later against the Falashas). A number of Bene Israel organizations led a campaign, which included a sit-down strike in front of the Jewish Agency and the burning of an effigy of Yitzhak Nissim. The campaign received the general support of the Knesset and other secular bodies and, as a result, the problem was resolved to the satisfaction of the Bene Israel. As Prime Minister Eshkol put it, the rabbinate could not be allowed to be an obstacle in the way of the principle of the ingathering of the exiles.¹⁰ However, despite the support they received, the scars of this encounter remained.¹¹ This confrontation was repeated in 1997 when the Chief Rabbi of Petah Tikvah again raised doubts about

the Jewishness of the Bene Israel and ordered his employees not to validate new marriages for them.¹²

Given that, to all appearances, the Bene Israel traditionally were Indians, spoke Marathi, worshipped in something they called a *masjid*, and had no historic contact with Jews that we knew of, it was tempting to believe that the Bene Israel were Muslims, perhaps Muslim sectarians, who had for some unknown reason lost contact with Islam. Perhaps, indeed, they had something to do with the Indian Muslim communities calling themselves Banu Israil who live in a number of loci in India notably Aligarh and Sambal on the Ganges and who variously claim descent from the Lost Ten Tribes or from Abdullah bin Salam — a Jew mentioned in the Quran.¹³ The chief difference, it might be argued, was that the Bene Israel of Bombay for some reason had more or less lost touch with Islam while the others maintained a strong but odd Islamic identity. In 1998, I visited Aligarh. In a separate quarter of the city,¹⁴ there is a community of Banu Israil who traditionally did not intermarry with other Muslim communities. This community preserves, probably fancifully, a memory of having migrated as Jews from Medina in the Hijaz following a very specific route which included a sojourn in Amman. I collected DNA from the small group, but the results were neutral: there was nothing in this group to connect them to any group other than the general family of mankind.

At the same time, we initiated DNA research on the Bene Israel. That research has finally given us some data on the basis of which it might be possible to make some substantive comments on the origins of the community. What has been shown is that, genetically, the Bene Israel can be differentiated from the other Indian groups from which we have samples including neighboring populations in Maharashtra, Goa, and Gujarat.

First, a few words about the background of the tests. We studied the Y chromosome. All human cells, other than mature red blood cells, possess a nucleus containing genetic material (DNA) arranged into 46 chromosomes, grouped into 23 pairs. In 22 pairs, both members are identical, one deriving from the individual's mother, the other from the father. The 23rd pair, which determines gender, is different in the sense that, while in females this pair has two like chromosomes called X, in the male it has one X and one Y, two dissimilar chromosomes. During the production of sperm and egg, the paired chromosomes separate. However, before the separation occurs, they swap pieces of their DNA. In men, unmatched X and Y chromosomes, practically, do not exchange DNA, hence a man's Y chromosome represents a unique record of his paternal inheritance, since the Y chromosome that a father passes to his son is a more or less unchanged copy of his own. However, small changes (polymorphisms) do occur, and studies recording the frequency of different combinations of polymorphisms in the Y chromosome

(haplotypes) when passed down from generation to generation can contribute to our understanding of human history.

Dr. Neil Bradman, Dr. Mark Thomas (UCL), Professor Carl Skorecki (the Rambam Medical Centre in Haifa), and myself conducted a previous study, which attracted a good deal of international attention. We looked at the Y chromosomes of Jewish priests (Cohanim) from all over the world, since their position is inherited through the male line.¹⁵

Somewhere between thirteen and fifteen centuries BCE, the Israelites left Egypt and spent years languishing in the desert areas of the Sinai, Negev, and Trans-Jordan. The Bible tells us that during this period the tribe of Levi was selected for certain religious duties that included carrying the Ark of the Covenant. Both Moses and his brother Aaron were members of this tribe and descendants of Aaron in the male line were designated as Cohanim or Priests. In 587 BC, the temple of the Israelites in Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and many of its inhabitants were taken into captivity 'by the waters of Babylon.' Until this cataclysmic national event, the sources paint a confused picture of the relationship between Levites and Cohanim. In some sources, the term 'son of Levi' is synonymous with priest and the impression is given that any Levite may officiate as priest. In others, a sharp distinction is drawn between Levites and 'sons of Aaron.' There are also indications that foreigners such as Gibeonites were given some of the Levites' Temple functions and perhaps even became Levites. Other non-Levitic temple servants — 'the sons of Solomon's servants' — may also have assimilated to Levites. After the return of the captives from Babylon, a very much clearer distinction was made between priestly Cohanim and non-priestly Levites and every effort was made to keep non-Levites out of Temple service.

Levitical status like priestly status has been passed from father to son to this very day. It is true that a Jew is partly defined as being someone born of a Jewish mother, but priestly status and Levitical status pass down the male line. Priestly status is thus transmitted exactly like the Y-chromosome. Our study showed that while Levite Y-chromosomes are diverse, the Cohen Y-chromosomes are remarkably homogeneous. Specifically, among the Cohanim, it was found that more than 50% of the sample had one specific haplotype (the specific set of markers in each cell that are passed on from the sperm which became known as the Cohen modal haplotype). The Cohen Modal haplotype is, then, that combination of genetic markers on the Y chromosome in the sperm of Cohanim that distinguishes them, more or less, from other sperm producers.

The DNA material of the Bene Israel collected by Neil Bradman and myself was compared with DNA collected from throughout India by myself and others, including two SOAS doctoral students, Sarah Stewart and Yulia Egorova. The conclusion about the 'genetic difference' of the Bene Israel in comparison with other Indians was drawn most sharply on the basis of the fact that a particular combination

of polymorphisms haplogroup (hg) 28, which is very wide-spread in India, is hardly found among the Bene Israel. In fact, we only found one singleton with hg28 among the Bene Israel. In addition, the tests demonstrated that the Bene Israel have affinities with Ethiopian and Yemeni datasets. Furthermore, the gene diversity is significantly lower in the Bene Israel than in the other Indian groups examined.

Of the Indian datasets, only the Bene Israel have the Cohen Modal haplotype (CMH) chromosomes. Haplogroup 9, which comprises the CMH, is present at high frequency among the Bene Israel, as well as among the Ethiopian and Yemeni groups, but at much lower frequency among the Indian groups. Finally, haplogroup 21, which may be viewed as a North African and Mediterranean haplogroup, was absent among the Bene Israel, although it is present in Jewish populations. This might have suggested an Arabian origin for the community since the haplogroup is absent in Arabia. However, the presence among the Bene Israel of the CMH — which is absent in Arabian populations — prevents this conclusion. It suggests rather that the Bene Israel were an ancient Jewish population dating to a period before haplogroup 21 entered the gene pool. This clearly suggests that the Bene Israel are a very ancient, probably Jewish, group.

The radical difference of the Bene Israel from other Indian communities and the presence of a haplotype which may be viewed as a marker for Jewish communities when found in fairly high concentrations suggests strongly, in the first place, that the Bene Israel are indeed what they say: a group founded by people who originally migrated from the Middle East. In addition, the presence of the Cohen Modal Haplotype among the community strongly suggests that there were Jews among the founding group.

A further piece of research, which involved myself and Yulia Egorova in collaboration with a team of geneticists headed by Professor Karl Skorecki at the Technion in Haifa, has just revealed the following results about the mysterious Black Jewish community of Cochin.

The Jews of Cochin are considered the oldest Jewish community of India and are certainly the best known to the outside world. They are perhaps the most famous of the far-flung Jewish communities and their splendid synagogue in Cochin's Jew Town enjoys deserved international renown. One of the unique features of the Cochin Jewish community was that it was divided into a number of apparently discrete groups: the so-called White Jews, the Black Jews, and the *Meshuhrarim* (Heb., freed or manumitted slaves).

A considerable body of literature exists on the stratification of Cochin Jewry.¹⁶ My former colleague, Professor Ben Segal FBA, observes that the conflict between the Black and the White Jews is deeply rooted in Indian tradition and was aggravated by the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century. White Jews considered Black Jews the descendants of slaves and converts, and denied that they were really Jews — notwithstanding that they observed Jewish

law — and refused to intermarry with them.¹⁷ They received high level support for their view when, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the famous Egyptian authority, the Radbaz (Rabbi David ben Solomon ibn Zimra) declared the Black Jews to be gentiles from the point of view of Jewish law (who could nonetheless become full Jews by immersion and conversion).¹⁸ According to the tradition of the Black Jews of Cochin, their ancestors came to India in ancient times from Palestine (some members of the community argue that it was after the destruction of the First Temple, while others suggest that it was after the destruction of the Second Temple).¹⁹ The community of White Jews comprised those who had come to India from Europe and the Middle East, though it is not clear when exactly the community was formed or when it received its name.

The issue of the stratification of Cochin Jewry has been studied by a number of scholars.²⁰ One of the earliest sources reflecting the confrontation between the two groups were letters sent in the sixteenth century from Cochin to the Radbaz in Cairo (this particular letter may be dated around 1540) and later to his disciple the Mahariqash (Rabbi Jacob de Castro, died in 1610) also in Egypt. The authors of these letters explained that their community was divided into *meyuhhasim* (Hebrew noblemen) on the one hand, and on the other, descendants of slaves who had converted into Judaism and were nonetheless very pious. The *meyuhhasim* denied that the second group were, in fact, Jewish, even though they recognized that they followed the Jewish Law. They steadfastly refused to intermarry with them. The Mahariqash suggested that the group in question should undergo *tevilah* and after that should be permitted to join the Jewish community.²¹

The terms 'white' and 'black' were not used in this correspondence. Throughout history, the White Jews were also referred to as *Paradesi*, which is also the name of the synagogue they built in 1568 near the rajah's palace in Cochin.²² The Black Jews were considerably more numerous than the White, and had seven synagogues on the Malabar coast, two each in Cochin and Ernakulam, and one each in Mala, Parur, and Chennamangalam.

It is not clear when the two communities started being called 'white' and 'black.' The latter are referred to by this name in a 1678 Yemenite manuscript, which informs us that, "on the night of 21st Elul, Master Mordechai said that he was about to send to the men of Cochin, who are the Black Jews, six or seven scrolls of the Law, *tephillin*, *mezuzot*, and other books of Law." Segal suggests that the Black Jews felt more at ease with Arabian Jews than with the Jews of Europe, with whom the White Jews had maintained contact.²³

Jewish travelers who visited Malabar in the nineteenth century noted that the local Jewish congregation was quite religiously orthodox and was in touch with Western Jews. I.J. Benjamin, a Jewish traveler from Moldavia who visited Cochin in the middle of the nineteenth century, observed that the White Jews

maintained a correspondence in Hebrew with the Portuguese Jewish congregation of New York as early as the end of the eighteenth century.²⁴ Benjamin and another Jewish traveler, David DeBeth Hillel, who visited Cochin earlier in the nineteenth century, appear to have sympathized with the Black Jews and criticized the attitude of the White Jews toward them. They both characterized the former as very observant Jews. According to DeBeth Hillel, they were well acquainted with Hebrew scriptures. Benjamin noted that they followed Talmudic law and that their ceremonies were the same as those of the oriental Jews, but that they sang *piyyutim* in the Indian manner.²⁵

In the nineteenth century the problem of the stratification of the Jews of Cochin became even more complicated, when the *meshuhrarim*, broke away from the community of their former masters and formed a group of their own. Though the *meshuhrarim* had converted to Judaism according to the Jewish laws regulating conversion, they were still not considered to be 'full' Jews and did not enjoy all the rights of community members. They were allowed to attend services in the synagogue, but they were supposed to sit on the floor by the entrance, and not on the benches in the hall, and they were called to read from the Torah only on the day of Simhat Torah.²⁶

In 1848, the *meshuhrarim* made an attempt to found a synagogue of their own in Jew Town (the district of Cochin around the Paradesi synagogue) but they came up against the opposition of the White Jews. The White Jews appealed to the Dewan of Cochin and he sided with them. After that, the *meshuhrarim*, left Jew Town, which was situated in territory belonging to the Rajah of Cochin, for the British part of the city and set up a synagogue there. However, the existence of the *meshuhrarim* as a separate congregation did not last long. After a few years, the community was stricken with cholera and many of them died. The survivors, who could not maintain a full community life any more, had to return to Jew Town.²⁷

It is interesting to consider the response of Jews from the outside world to the existence of the *meshuhrarim* and their position among Cochin Jewry. They were visited in 1860 by Jacob Saphir, a Jewish emissary from Jerusalem, who reckoned that the members of their community strictly observed all the customs and traditions of Judaism and even that there were scholars of Jewish law among them.²⁸ Solomon Reinemann, a Jewish traveler from Galicia, who lived with the White Jews of Cochin for a while, had an opportunity to observe the confrontation between his hosts and the *meshuhrarim*. In *Massa'ot Shelomo*, he described the plight of the *meshuhrarim* after the outbreak of the epidemic and argued that while the cause of the *meshuhrarim* was just, the Pardesi apparently benefited from divine favor.²⁹

At the end of the nineteenth century, the position of the *meshuhrarim* of Cochin was brought to the attention of the Sephardi Chief Rabbi Meir Panigel in Jerusa-

lem. He was asked to examine the situation from the point of view of *halakhah*. The Rabbi stated that any meshuhrarim who had undergone a ritual immersion should be considered a full member of the Jewish community and should be permitted to marry a Jew. This ruling was transmitted by Rabbi Asher Abraham Halevi, who came to India in the 1880s as an emissary from Jerusalem.³⁰

In the first half of the twentieth century, the relations between the three groups of the Jews of Cochin remained tense. The White Jews continued to discriminate against the Black Jews and the meshuhrarim. On their side, the meshuhrarim considered themselves superior to the Black Jews of Cochin. Moris Laserson, the ORT-OZE³¹ delegate, noted that the meshuhrarim refused to intermarry with the Black Jews.³² The meshuhrarim were certain of their Jewish identity and status as they had been converted in conformity with the laws of Judaism regulating conversion and were thus full Jews, according to *halakhah*. As far as the Black Jews were concerned, they were alleged by the tradition of the White Jews, which was presumably also the tradition of the meshuhrarim, to be the descendants of slaves who had observed the Jewish law. However, unlike the meshuhrarim, it was not clear whether they had undergone proper ceremonies of conversion or not.

The position of the meshuhrarim improved by the middle of the twentieth century. In 1942, one of their most educated members, Abraham Barak Salem, a university graduate and a lawyer, led a campaign for equal rights for the meshuhrarim. As a result, the meshuhrarim were allowed to sit on benches in the Paradesi synagogue, read from the Torah during Sabbath services, and bury their dead in the cemetery of the White Jews. However, according to Louis Rabinowitz, the chief Rabbi of Johannesburg, Transvaal, and the Orange State, who visited Cochin in 1951, the meshuhrarim were still at a disadvantage in Jew Town. They were the last to be called to read from the Torah on Sabbath and were allowed to use only a special site against the wall of the cemetery.³³

Though there were so many disputes among the members of the three groups relating to their origin and status as Jews, it appears that their religious observances were uniform. David Mandelbaum, who carried out field work among the Jews of Cochin in 1937, noted that in the major aspects of Jewish practices and belief all three groups were equally observant. All members of the community followed the dietary rules, observed the Sabbath and the holy days, and paid great attention to the religious education of their children.³⁴

At the moment, the division into White and Black is still characteristic of the small remnant of the community in Cochin, though all Jews pray in the Paradesi, the only synagogue of the Malabar coast which still functions.³⁵ The majority of the community now resides in Israel, where the old divisions between White, Black and meshuhrarim are still maintained.³⁶ To this day we have no clear idea of the historical origins of the three communities.³⁷

How does genetics help us cast light on this murky picture? Very briefly (and here I am quoting Professor Karl Skorecki), "a pattern is emerging, in which there appears to be evidence for a substantial contribution of middle eastern ancestry to the male lineage [of the Black Jews] together with admixture coming from the local non-Jewish Cochini population. This Middle Eastern influx seems to be quite old (likely more than 1000 years — but this remains to be sorted out more carefully), and is not evident in the Y-chromosome based population structure of the non-Jewish Cochini. In contrast, preliminary analysis of mitochondrial DNA samples to learn about the female population structure, does not provide corresponding evidence for a middle east contribution. Analysis of diversity for both Y-chromosome and mitochondrial DNA markers, reveals much lower diversity for the Jewish community. This is consistent with a so-called 'founder effect,' and also suggests that there was relatively little admixture with the surrounding non-Jewish population after the community was established. It should be emphasized that these remarks are very tentative, until the analysis has been completed."

Nonetheless, in both cases we now have evidence (or likely evidence in the case of the Black Jews) of an early migration of what were probably Jews from the Near East to India in ancient times. This, when linked with other papers we have produced — notably on the Lemba of southern Africa — begins to hint at a much wider dispersion of the Jewish people in ancient times than had hitherto been imagined.

NOTES

1. See e.g. *The Jews of China, i*, ed. J. Goldstein, (Armonk, NY, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999). For a recent bibliography on the Jews of China, see F.D. Shulman, "The Chinese Jews and the Jewish Diasporas in China from the Tang Period (A.D. 618-906) through the Mid-1990s: A Selected Bibliography," in *The Jews of China, ii (A Sourcebook and Research Guide)*, ed. J. Goldstein, (Armonk, NY, London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), pp.157-183. See also M. Pollack, *Mandarins, Jews and Missionaries: The Jewish Experience in the Chinese Empire*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980). On Chinese attitudes toward Jews, see Zhou Xun, *Chinese Perceptions of the 'Jews' and Judaism: A History of the Youtai*, (Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 2000). On the Ethiopian Jews, see: *Ethiopian Jewry: An Annotated Bibliography*, ed. S. Kaplan and S. Ben-Dor, (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1988); *Ethiopian Jewry: An Annotated Bibliography 1988-1997*, ed. H. Salamon and S. Kaplan, (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1998). J. Quirin, *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews: A History of the Beta Israel (Falasha) to 1920*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992);

S. Kaplan, "The Beta Israel (Falasha) Encounter with Protestant Missionaries: 1860-1905" in *Jewish Social Studies*, xlix, no.1 (winter 1987); S. Kaplan, "The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia," (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992); D. Kessler, *The Falashas*, (London: Frank Cass, 1996); Tudor Parfitt and E. Trevisan-Semi, *Judaizing Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002). Tudor Parfitt and E. Trevisan-Semi (eds.) *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel: Studies on the Ethiopian Jews*, (London: SOAS Near and Middle East Publications, 2000).

2. For a comprehensive discussion of the existing theories of the Bene Israels' origin, see Shirley Berry Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel, An Inquiry and Source Book*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1988), pp. 3-19.

3. Haeem S. Kehimkar, *The History of the Bene Israel of India*, (Tel Aviv: Dayag Press, 1937). For a recent detailed discussion of Kehimkar's version of the Bene Israel legend of origin, see M. Numark, "Constructing a Jewish Nation in Colonial India: History, Narratives of Descent, and the Vocabulary of Modernity" *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (winter 2001), pp. 89-114.

4. Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1920), vol.1, p. 242.

5. *India's Bene Israel*, p. 3.

6. *Bene Israel: Halakha Verdicts about their Status and Origin* (Heb.), (Jerusalem: Israel Chief Rabbinate, 1967), pp. 20-22.

7. Hai Gaon (939-1038) last Gaon of Pumbedita and son of Sherira Gaon.

8. Misphpetei Uzziel, "Even ha-Ezer: 32" quoted in M. Corinaldi, *Jewish Identity: The Case of Ethiopian Jewry*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1998), p. 24. The problem with the passage from Maimonides, like other medieval passages, is that it is unclear which Indian Jewish community is being referred to.

9. *Bene Israel: Halakha Verdicts*, p. 25.

10. S. N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 314.

11. Joan G. Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India*, pp. 249-51. For an excellent study of the life of the Bene Israel in Israel, see Shalva Weil, "Bene Israel Indian Jews in Lod, Israel: A Study in the Persistence of Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity," Doctoral dissertation, (England: University of Sussex, 1977).

12. "Indian Jews Face Identity Crisis in Israel," in *Hindu*, 20 November 1997.

13. Apparently some of the Banu Israil migrated north-east where they were called "Barabunki 'Kidawae."

14. Called "Banu Israiliyya."

15. N. Bradman, M. Thomas, "Genetics: The Pursuit of Jewish History by Other Means" in *Judaism Today*, (autumn 1998), pp. 4-6; N. Bradman, M. Thomas, "Why Y? Chromosome in the Study of Human Evolution, Migration and Prehistory" in *Science Spectra*, no.14, 1998, M. Hammer, K. Skorecki, Tudor

Parfitt et al., "Y Chromosomes of Jewish Priests" in *Nature*, vol. 385, 2 January 1997.

16. David G. Mandelbaum, "Caste and Community among the Jews of Cochin in India and Israel," in *Caste Among Non-Hindus in India*, ed. H. Singh, (Delhi: National, 1977), pp.107-11; Naphtali Bar-Giora, "Meqorot leToldot haYehasim Bein haYehudim haLevanim vahaShehorim beQochin" ("Sources for the History of Relations Between the White and the Black Jews of Cochin"), *Sefunot*, vol. 1, (Heb.) 1956, pp. 243-78.

17. J.B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), pp. 22-25.

18. M. Corinaldi, *Jewish Identity: The Case of Ethiopian Jewry*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998) p. 23.

19. Interviews with Cochin Jews in August 2001.

20. "Caste and Community," pp.107-11; "Meqorot leToldot," pp. 243-78.

21. "Meqorot leToldot," pp. 245-246.

22. *A History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 21. Paradesi can be translated as "foreign." The synagogue of the White Jews must have received its name from the large accession of Jews from Europe and Western Asia.

23. *A History of the Jews of Cochin*, pp. 44-45.

24. I.J. Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa, From 1846 to 1855*, Second edition, (Hanover: self-published, 1863), pp. 185-92.

25. David DeBeth Hillel, "The Travels of Rabbi David DeBeth Hillel: From Jerusalem, Through Arabia, Koordistan, Part of Persia, and India, to Madras," (Madras: self-published, 1832), p. 122; *Eight Years in Asia and Africa*, p. 185.

26. "Meqorot leToldot," p. 252.

27. *A History of the Jews of Cochin*, pp. 77-80.

28. *A History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 78.

29. S. Reinemann, W. Schur, (eds.), *Masa 'ot Shelomo BiEretz Hodu, Burman veSinim* (Heb.) (Travels of Solomon in India, Burma and China), (Vienna: The Georg Breg Press, 1884), p.162.

30. "Meqorot leToldot," pp. 260-61.

31. ORT (initials of Rus. Obshchestvo Rasprostraneniya Truda sredi Yevreyev, meaning Society for Spreading Labor among the Jews), organization for the promotion and development of vocational training among the Jews, initiated in Russia in 1880; OZE (initials of Rus. Obshchestvo Zdravookhraneniya Yevreyev, meaning Society for the Protection of the Health of the Jews), launched in Russia in 1912, (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 12, pp. 1481, 1537).

32. *The Jewish Tribune*, November 1937, p.7.

33. L. Rabinowitz, *Far East Mission*, Johannesburg, 1952, p. 117.

34. *Caste Among Non-Hindus in India*, p. 91.

35. Interviews in Cochin in August 2001.

36. This observation was made by Shalva Weil at the conference "A View from the Margin: The State of the Art of Indo-Judaic Studies," Oxford, 1-4 July 2002.

37. As far as the meshuhrarim are concerned, a hypothesis about their origin challenging the standard view has recently been offered in the book by Ruby Daniel and Barbara C. Johnson, *Ruby of Cochin: An Indian Jewish Woman Remembers*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995).