

BOOK REVIEWS

Slapak, Orpa (ed.), *The Jews of India: A Story of Three Communities*, (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1995), pp. 215, \$33.20 + postage, ISBN 925 278 179 7. (English Version; Hebrew Version exists)

In June 1995 the Israel Museum opened its exhibit on the Jews of India, which curator Orpa Slapak had been preparing since 1982. The exhibit coincided with the unveiling of the restored sanctuary of the Kadavumbagam Synagogue, built in Cochin in 1544, transferred to the Israel Museum in 1991, and now part of the permanent collection. Slapak's thirteen years of research, travel, and collection bore a rich harvest, of which the catalogue is visual and intellectual proof. In the course of her travels to India and around Israel, making contact with the three Jewish communities, she recruited scholars Shirley Berry Isenberg, Barbara C. Johnson and Joan G. Roland to prepare chapters on the history of the Bene Israel, Cochins and Baghdadis respectively, as well as Shalom Sabar for a chapter on illuminated *ketubbot* (marriage contracts) and No'am Ben-Yossef for a glossary. A bibliography completes this book, which is as much a scholarly work as it is an exhibition catalogue.

The volume opens, however, on two sour notes reflecting the stereotypical Ashkenazic views of eastern Jews. Museum Director Martin Weyl writes that the Jews of India came from a "distant, colorful, and exotic land" (p.8); in her Foreword Rivka Gonen, senior curator, Department of Jewish Ethnography, repeats that the exhibit "will give the public a taste of the exotic flavor of distant communities" (p.9). She further flaunts her ignorance by adding that the three communities had little contact among themselves or with Jews outside India. The informed reader blushes at these statements from highly placed museum personnel, for India was at the center of world trade. Jews were actively involved in it from at least the 11th century C.E., as Cairo Geniza documents show, if not a thousand years previously, by providing links between the sub-continent and the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and China, long before Ashkenazic Jews from Poland came out of their "exotic" [sic] shtetls. One hopes that Forewords are to be seen and not read.

The contacts were so significant that if the book had a subtitle, it could have been "Between Jerusalem and Varanasi." This theme of connection and link reappears through-out the catalogue, for while the Jews of India maintained their Judaism and even moved closer to mainstream or normative Judaism (e.g. the Bene Israel), they absorbed practices and material culture from the rich civilization around them. Like 20th century America, India accepted and appreciated Jews, but unlike American liberalism and individualism, India encouraged Jewish group identity by integrating Jews into the caste system.

To understand the differences among these Jews, the links connecting them, how they practiced their Judaism and how they adapted to Indian civilization, the editor very sensibly presented the three historical chapters by Isenberg (Bene Israel), Johnson (Cochinis), and Roland (Baghdadis) at the beginning. Then Slapak refocuses on themes such as the synagogue, ritual objects in the home, scenes from daily life, dress, customs and ceremonies, and the illuminated *ketubbot*, explaining with text and over 100 high quality color and black-and-white photos how each community expressed itself.

Isenberg's discussion of the Bene Israel succinctly covers territory examined in her previous publications. Firmly rooted in India, the Bene Israel sharpened their Jewish identities in the 18th and 19th centuries due to their migration to Bombay, contacts with the sympathetic Christian missionary John Wilson, Cochini Jewish teachers, their own newly conscious leaders, and some Baghdadi or Yemeni cantors. Johnson's good history of the Cochinis presents much of the evidence of their long presence such as the circa 1000 C.E. copper plate given to Joseph Rabban (pictures p. 35), a tombstone dated 1269, and the Parur Torah ark dated 1164. She could have mentioned some of the letters from the Cairo Geniza which show a Jewish trading presence on the Malabar Coast from the 11th century, and that Portuguese travelers met Jews around 1500 in Cranganore.

She explains that each of the eight synagogues was led by very learned persons who were in continual contact with Jews elsewhere in India, Yemen and Amsterdam. This minuscule community composed its own songs and prayers. Roland, author of a book about Jews during British rule, summarizes here the Baghdadi Jewish experience, emphasizing their 18th century arrival at Surat, then Bombay and Calcutta, from Baghdad, Basra, Aleppo and Persia. The Baghdadi Jews assimilated least into the Indian environment, preferring to learn English and some spoken Hindi rather than Marathi and Bengali of their neighbors. Not unexpectedly, they departed from India sooner than the others, although they left important Jewish and secular landmarks thanks to their wealth and generosity: the David Sassoon library in Bombay (pictured p. 38); Magen David Synagogue in Calcutta; Eliahu Synagogue in Bombay; and the Sassoon Hospital in Pune, plus trust funds for the poor. A wonderful photograph of the interior of the grand Calcutta home of Moses Elias in Calcutta in 1986 (p. 39) shows the casual luxury in which some Baghdadis lived.

Slapak shifts the focus to themes in the next chapters. First she discusses synagogues and ceremonial objects, explaining that there was a unified Malabar synagogue architecture which the photos prove, while the Bene Israel houses of worship were all different from each other, and the Baghdadis' tended to be more like western synagogues or, in a couple of examples, like British churches. There are 20 Bene Israel synagogues or prayer halls, seven standing Cochin synagogues of which only one is used, and there are six Baghdadi synagogues today. Clear photographs and text explain the organization

of the sanctuary, the ark curtains, handmade furniture, and the Torah scroll cases showing the influence of other communities, particularly those of the Baghdadis. The spectacular carved Torah ark of the Kadavumbagam synagogue, which is now in Moshav Nehalim, is pictured (p. 56) along with the handmade ark curtains. Cochin interior design is similar to that used in local mosques; the Hindu lotus is also a frequent motif. Oil lamps suspended from the ceiling grace all types of synagogues as they do Hindu temples. Many scrolls came from Iraq, but the local artisans who made the cases took inspiration from local aesthetics (pp. 61, 69, 71, 75). Cochinis had special customs on Hanukah such as reading a scroll unique to them, the "Scroll of Antiochus." During that holiday they also visited the tomb of Nehemiah Mota, a Jew venerated as a saint by Muslims, Hindus and Jews.

Scenes from the daily secular life of these communities show their own traditions, Jewish custom and adaptations to the surrounding cultures. Only the Baghdadis, however, show the strong influence of the British. Among the Bene Israel stalks of rice are "hung on the doorpost to ensure blessing and prosperity" on Shavuot, a custom shared by non-Jewish neighbors (p.99). Like other rural Indians their houses were made of mud with a layer of cow dung. Styles of water containers, methods of food preparation, cooking and serving, and clothing were close to those of non-Jews. Bene Israel in rural areas extracted oil from peanuts, "ramtil" and coconut just like their neighbors, except they did no work on Saturdays, a commandment they kept over the centuries of separation from other Jews (for picture, p. 109).

One of the most interesting chapters follows: "Dress: Tradition and Innovation." Bene Israel women wore saris just like their Hindu neighbors, and the many old photos printed here show the fabrics, as well as how to tie a lugra, which is similar to a sari. Bene Israel brides wore white, not the red of the Hindu neighbors. Men's apparel was eclectic. Cochinis wore simple but distinctive Jewish clothing. The color picture of a bride and groom in wedding apparel (p. 152) is simply gorgeous, and the author explains that in Cochin Muslim, Hindu and Jewish brides wore the same outfit. Baghdadis, as the photos of the distinguished Sassoons show (p. 141), at first kept their Ottoman styles, but later they shifted to British clothing.

Slapak then expands her previous remarks about marriage with the help of photos of the henna ceremonies (pp. 142, 148, 150). Some of the photos were taken in Israel where Indian Jews, particularly the Bene Israel and Cochinis, perpetuate many Indian Jewish customs. In Cochin the bride went to the synagogue on a road covered with coconut branches, not possible in Israel. Singers accompanied her. In the synagogue there was no *huppah* (marriage canopy), nor was there a rabbi. The groom and the congregation recited the blessings. Names for their future babies were chosen from astrologers' suggestions, following the example of the Hindu majority. Baghdadis decorated babies' cradles with amulets to keep away the evil eye, similar to Muslims (pp.

160-161). The very short section on leisure and entertainment provides other examples of the closeness of the Bene Israel and the Cochins to their non-Jewish neighbors: board games called *gaychula* (p. 163), the eating of *paan* after some ceremonies or events and types of female singing and storytelling.

Shalom Sabar's concluding chapter on *ketubbot* could stand by itself as scholarship and discovery. He finds striking similarity among these marriage contracts from the three communities which "drew on an older tradition so strong and well established that it was perpetuated by all three communities, however different they were in other respects" (p. 168). The dozen very beautiful color plates support his analysis and descriptions: these documents, which the Cochins may have influenced the most, show flowers and animals of India; they are preserved in cases of silver or bamboo; the formulas are the same, even for the Baghdadis, with certain phrases occurring in all and indicating influences from the Mediterranean (as proven by Cairo Geniza materials) and Yemen. Documents from Yemen specify that during the 18th century Yemenite women were sent to Cochin to marry the Yemenite merchants already resident there (p. 172, footnote 14). The Baghdadis of India influenced *ketubbot* design more than their relatives in Baghdad, and their ideas were exported east to their communities in China (p. 194). This chapter closes with a poignant portrait of the wedding party of Seemah and Saul Ezra in Calcutta in 1951, all of whom are doubtless living elsewhere today.

Seeing this happy group of family and friends portrayed 46 years ago, just before the beginning of the end of the community, and then turning the last page of this catalogue-book, I felt both sad and content. Sad because we all know that the communities in India are no more, except for 5,000 Jews in Mumbai and a handful of stalwarts in Cochin, but content realizing that they thrived in India, making their own contribution to India, while maintaining their Judaism in peace. Orpa Slapak's *The Jews of India* is a beautiful tribute to those Jews and the land that welcomed and sheltered them.

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Maurice Friedman, *Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image*, Ed. By S.C. Malik and Pat Boni (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi Center for the Arts, 1995), 299 pages, ISBN 81-246-0044-9. Rs. 600.

Invited by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) to initiate and facilitate a series of deeper-dialogues, this volume includes four public lectures plus a discussion paper prepared by Professor Friedman, and

a lecture by his wife, Aleene, each followed by a discussion. True to its title, *Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image* is charged with a freshness of the spoken word, and by recurring occasions of speech-with-meaning. Along with the oral genesis of the book ("I did not use a text or even notes in giving any of my lectures," Friedman states), equally important is the fact that these lectures were a conscious attempt to give shape to his "mature thought at seventy" by bringing it into dialogue with professors from many fields and many parts of India.

The work takes the shape of a five-part, musical quartet with motifs from each section echoing through the other movements: Analogous to reviewing a musical composition by listening carefully to selected sections, here I will quote one central passage from each movement. Together, they point to Friedman's 40-year concern with the life of dialogue and with becoming uniquely human.

The first movement is comprised of Friedman's reflection on the philosophical anthropology of Martin Buber. As he grows older, Friedman writes, more than Buber's impact on religious traditions, "the aspect that speaks more and more to me is Buber's philosophical anthropology." To address the motifs of human wholeness and uniqueness, Friedman rehearses familiar themes in a concise way: Buber's "two-fold world" of *I and Thou*; the ontology of the between; the narrow bridge; inclusion, mutuality, and making present. For Buber, he writes, dialogue really means a fully responsible response to the unique address of a lived word.

The second movement, "Dialogical Psychotherapy," accumulates many formative voices—from Hans Trub to Carl Jung, from Carl Rogers to R.D. Laing—each of whom are taken up into dialogue with Buber. Stressing the importance of healing through meeting, of existential guilt, and of inclusion, Friedman highlights one of Buber's most provocative insights concerning the therapist's struggle to confirm a patient.

The third movement, "The Dialogue of Touchstones," springs from Friedman's earlier book, *Touchstones of Reality*, in which he spoke of "touchstones" as insight-producing events whose lasting residue grows milestones along the way which affect the attitudes one brings to each new situation. In and of themselves, they tell us nothing about what "reality" is apart from the "relation" out of which it emerges.

In the fourth movement, "Restoring Relational Trust: The Confirmation of Otherness in Family, Community, and Society," he speaks about "existential trust" as the heart of the confirmation of otherness. In a moving passage, one most pertinent to our time, Friedman speaks of how important the confirming presence of Buber's wife, Paula, was for his work.

This section is followed Aleene Friedman's lecture, "The Healing Partnership: Biofeedback Pain Therapy," in which she illustrates the concepts basic to biofeedback pain therapy with two case studies. Referring to a

different type of dialogue, one between body and mind, she remarks that the "communication process is non-verbal, and is expressed through the rhythm that pulsates through every cell, organ, and body system" (132).

The last movement, "Dialogue and the Human Image," is a short position paper used to lead a two-day seminar. It encompasses both the method and the goal of the book — namely, a dialogical approach to the meaning of human existence grounded in the ontology of the between. Because we live in relation to other selves, finding a meaningful existence involves responding to images of the human that point toward our unique potential.

One of Friedman's pivotal contributions to philosophical anthropology is that the image of the human is not a fully formed concept, but constantly changes and evolves. Embodying potentiality and the direction we give it, Friedman then suggests a fruitful outline for discussion.

One of the most intriguing chapters of the book is simply called "Dialogue," which should be read in connection with the conclusion, "Intercultural Dialogue: Meeting or Mismatching?" In the dialogue between Friedman and the professional participants, fruitful exchanges took place about problems involving multilogue, monologue, and dialogue itself. Two senses of "relationship" were discussed—identification with the whole world experientially, and a relational dialogue that retains the otherness of the other—in the context of different cultures and among different traditions. The exchange contains valuable, spontaneous insights, and openings into many of Friedman's other works. Readers of Friedman (and Buber) will relish the opportunity to mine these fields which elicit theoretical, methodological, and applied interrelations between a variety of thinkers.

My one criticism is that the book ends too quickly. Not wanting to be restricted by misunderstandings, Friedman distinguishes "cognitive dialogue" and "technical dialogue" from "genuine dialogue." He writes, "As the reader will have noted, there was often mismatching and meeting — enough so that halfway through I declared that the seminar was not what I would call genuine dialogue" (283). Given that the dialogues were as much mismatching as meeting, Friedman writes, "Even our disagreement about what we meant by dialogue was itself a meaningful part of our dialogue, coming as we did from many intellectual fields and geographical and cultural backgrounds" (284). Genuine dialogue, Friedman concludes, is integral to the tension between understanding and misunderstanding.

But in what way? This is a very provocative statement. I am left wanting to hear more. More details. More reactions. More responses. How much, one wonders, did cultural differences stand in the way of genuine dialogue? Can one say that genuine dialogue is transcultural? And how is dialogue integral to (might we say, generated by?) the tension between understanding and misunderstanding? We can only hope for an expanded edition of this book in which Professor Friedman will be able to address these issues, and

to speak further of the relationship between the human image and touchstones of reality as mutually constitutive components of becoming uniquely human in a multi-cultural context.

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Mavis Hyman, *Jews of the Raj*, Hyman Publishers, 10 Holyoake Walk, London N2 OJX, pp. 258 (15 pounds sterling + 2 pounds sterling p.&p., or \$20US).

They had a glorious life, complete with servants, summer houses, clubs and race horses, the historical illusion only to be shattered by Indian independence in 1947. For the Jews of Calcutta, now resident in England, Australia, North America and Israel, the sweet memories remain of an unreal, too-good-to-be-true world, which their children and grandchildren in the West find difficult to fathom.

Jews of the Raj is written by Mavis Hyman, an Iraqi Jewess resident in London since 1957, and author of a previous book entitled *Indian-Jewish Cooking* (Hyman, 1993). According to most accounts, the first Jewish settler in Calcutta was Shalom Cohen (1762-1836) (Ezra, 1986), but Hyman's maternal ancestor was one of the first Jewish merchants to escape deteriorating conditions in Iraq and settle in Calcutta about 200 years ago. He was followed by many of his countrymen who escaped the persecutions of Daud Pasha (1871-1831) in Baghdad. They established thriving businesses in the East and magnificent Jewish community structures.

The Jews of the Raj belongs to a genre of books, notable among which can be mentioned Elias and Cooper (1974), Ezra (1986), and Musleah (1975), which attempt, in their own individual manner, to record the heritage and flavour of the fading Jewish life in Calcutta. Forerunners provide sketches of the community in its heyday in a more historical perspective (Isaac, 1917; Abraham, n.d.). All the books are written by educated ex-members of the Calcutta community, who see it as their duty to record whilst still possible the history and day-to-day life of this remarkable community. Hyman's book actually represents a group endeavour with 80 informants who provided intimate details of their families' lives in Calcutta. Hyman admits that she played a dual role: on the one hand, she acted as coordinator and commentator, and as such stood outside the community; on the other hand, sections of the book are autobiographical. The book does not purport to rely on a research sample and therefore does not portray the lives of the poor, of whom there

were many. As Timberg points out, "The Jewish poor remained outside the circle of Anglicization and confined to its traditional area" (Timberg, 1986: 34).

Although the book has academic pretensions, it does not really provide an analytical account of the Jews of Calcutta. There is neither an attempt to analyse the remarkable adaptive powers of this minority group, nor an attempt to understand how the unique features of Indian society with its hierarchical structure incorporated the Iraqi Jews. Nor is there a comparison with other ethnic groups such as the Armenian or Greek communities in Calcutta (cf. Timberg, 1986). The book raises more academic questions than it answers and it does not provide an analytic conclusion of any sort. Nevertheless, it is an important document which preserves historical memory.

The chapter titles of the book provide a quick indication of the content of the book and an easy entree into the almost make-believe world of the Jews of Calcutta: "The Servants" is the title of one such chapter; "Food" is another; "An Afternoon at the Races" is the title of a third. For the Jews of the Raj, life was a decadent affair, revolving around the festivals, badminton or the preparation of *humeen* (the staple Sabbath dish). There appeared to be no worries: they set up home-away-from-home in the summer in Darjeeling, the mountain resort famous for its aromatic tea, and in the winter in Madhapur, a railway junction town frequented by Anglo-Indians. Synagogue services complete with a *Sefer Torah* (Torah Scroll) from Calcutta continued at the holiday resorts, scout camps for Jewish youth worked liked clockwork, and Jewish young men mingled but never matched with local Anglo-Indian girls at the club house in the *dak* (Post House) bungalow. Back in Calcutta, the servants washed, cleaned and laboured and became part and parcel of Jewish households. The cooks prepared lunch, or *tiffin*, and brought kosher meals to school for the children of their households to eat. The 'boy,' as he was called (he may have been quite grown up), who served family members at table, would take the food to school with a *tiffin*-carrier in one hand, and the crockery and cutlery wrapped in a dishcloth in the other. Hyman recalls, "We were usually allocated our own seats at long dining tables in school, and by the time we took our places, the servants would have laid the table, fetched water, unstacked the *tiffin*-carriers. ...When we finished eating we went off to play, leaving it entirely to the servants to rinse our dishes, restack the *tiffin*-carriers and make their way home on foot, by bus or by bicycle. I can't remember that anyone of us ever felt a sense of gratitude for this service. We simply took it for granted as part and parcel of our everyday life."

The demise of Calcutta Jewry began in the 1940's. The Second World War left its mark on Jewish community life. Hindus and Muslims began rioting and Zionism took root in India. Hebrew teachers were followed by emissaries from Palestine, who established Zionist movements in Calcutta and encouraged the youth to emigrate. Some pioneers did leave Calcutta and went to Israel,

particularly in the early years of the State; most preferred to emigrate to other countries, such as England, where they felt more comfortable and closer to British culture. The establishment of the State of Israel (1948) almost coincided with the attainment of Indian independence (1947). The "Baghdadis," as they were colloquially known (Hyman never mentions this term!), who had identified with the British Raj, were doubtful as to their future in an independent India. In a final chapter, poignantly entitled "Exodus", Hyman's groups describe their oft-painful decisions to emigrate.

In 1995, Hyman returned to Calcutta from London on a kind of 'roots' trip. She visited the *Magen David* synagogue, and re-traced former steps. "Tears welled up for a past which so many of us were privileged to experience, and for days which would not be renewed in this place. Then I thought about the present. The present that people from this place were enjoying in other parts of the world, reaping different rewards in other places." According to Hyman, in 1995 about 75 people remained in the Calcutta Jewish community (although when I visited the same year, I was quoted the number of 250, but then all depends on the definition of a "Jew" in these dwindling Jewish communities). Nevertheless, strange things are occurring there. A new sociological phenomenon, which requires serious scientific enquiry, is taking place, as young Israeli backpackers, often straight out of the Israeli army, visit India in quasi-ritual fashion. A mandatory stop is Nahoum's the famous Jewish confectioner's and baker's shop in New Market, Calcutta, which still operates under the original family management, where they taste the *makhbuz* and *halwie*, delicious reminders of a once flourishing Jewish community which did not stand the test of time.

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J.B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), 134 pp., 15.00 pounds sterling.

In the preface to his thin volume, J.B. Segal, an emeritus professor of Semitic languages at the University of London, writes, "This is the story—told as far as possible in the words of contemporary observers—of a miniscule community on the Spice Coast of south-west India that maintained a vigorous Jewish existence throughout the vicissitudes of at least two millenia." Indeed the lengthy quotations and translations from Hebrew, Portuguese, Dutch, and Indian sources make this a valuable and interesting book.

In Chapter One, "The Early Centuries", Segal nicely summarizes the theories and philological and other evidence concerning the arrival of the

Jewish merchants from Palestine and other regions of Western Asia and the Mediterranean who settled in Kerala. He discusses their early relationships with local princes who encouraged them and with other inhabitants there, including Syrian Christians and the Cnanaya, the so-called Jewish Christians of Kerala, of whom there are currently about 70,000. Segal agrees with other scholars that members of the indigenous population whom these Jewish merchants converted to Judaism became the ancestors of the Malabari, or so-called Black Jews. The most important center of Jewish settlement in these early years was an autonomous Jewish principality at Shingli, or Cranganur. In 1341, a major flood silted up the harbor of Cranganur and created the port of Cochin, to which a great number of the Jews now moved.

In Chapter Two, "The Portuguese Period", Segal points out that the arrival of the Portuguese at the close of the fifteenth century marks the beginning of the scientific documentation of the region. He shows how the Portuguese introduced a new and troublesome factor into the politics of Cranganur. The final exodus from that site in the mid-16th century is still remembered in legends and song; Shingli melodies and pronunciation are still used in Cochin synagogues. The Jewish refugees from Shingli were received with great hospitality by the Rajah of Cochin. The White Jewish community was enlarged through the arrival of other refugees—those fleeing religious persecution in Spain and Portugal. Segal focuses on the origins of the antagonism between the so-called White Jews and the Black Jews that was to plague Cochin Jewry throughout its history. Explaining that the Whites believed the Blacks were originally slaves, he argues that the conflict, deeply rooted in Indian tradition and the caste system, was exacerbated by the presence of the Portuguese in South India, among whom distinctions of color were very important. This encouraged the attitude of superiority that White Jews felt toward darker Jews (similar to what occurred later in Bombay when Baghdadi Jewish attitudes toward Bene-Israel reflected British racism). This chapter is particularly useful for its discussion of Portuguese attitudes towards the Jews and the introduction of the Inquisition to South India in 1560, for the "sake" of New Christians who were returning to Judaism. But the Inquisition did not extend to the Old Town of Cochin where the Portuguese had no jurisdiction. There, their Indian hosts protected the Jews.

The Dutch period, beginning in 1662-63, often referred to as the "Golden Age of Cochin Jewry", is described in Chapter Three. Here Segal has used the reports of Dutch Commandeurs and also draws heavily on those of Pereya de Paiva, a Dutch Jew who visited Cochin in 1686. The White Jews were now in contact with the Jewish community of Amsterdam, who visited them and sent copies of the Hebrew Bible, the Babylonian Talmud and other ritual books and objects to the White Jews' Paradesi (Foreigners) Synagogue—a full description of which is given. The Malabari, or Black Jews, received their ritual and synagogue objects from Yemen. According to Segal, the friendly Dutch

attitude precipitated a conflict of loyalties for the Jews for the next three centuries, between the Dutch or the British on one hand and the Indian rajas on the other. The White Jews tried to walk the tightrope, submitting to the jurisdiction of the Dutch East India Company; the rajahs, under whose control they also were, did not seem to protest. The author points out that the favor shown by the Dutch to the Jewish merchants, who were mainly White, increased the tension between the latter and the Black Jews. The lack of intermarriage and interdining between the two communities and the separation of their synagogues was noted by the Dutch governor. The story of the Rahabi (Raby) family, including that of David, the father of the well known Ezekiel, the Principal Merchant for the Company, is discussed in some detail. There is also a brief mention of how the Cochini Jews helped the Bene-Israel in their revival of Judaism, (a story which is continued in the next chapter) but Segal does not think that David Rahabi, Ezekiel's son, ever visited them, as some scholars have suggested.

The last chapter, "British Rule to Independence," is by far the longest. The British conquest of the Dutch fort in 1795 ended Dutch rule in Cochin. Now that the British controlled the economy and opened the area to outside interests, the Jews no longer had a near monopoly on local commerce. The economic and social position of the Jewish community of Cochin slowly declined. Segal gives a good account of the battle over the jurisdiction of the White Jews between the British (who wanted Jews as well as Christians to be subject to British courts) and the Rajah of Cochin. This time the Rajah protested, claiming he had certain prerogatives over all his subjects, and that the British were going beyond Dutch precedents. The Indians claimed that the Jews preferred the Rajah's jurisdiction because they had been treated well; in fact, the Jews once again were caught in the middle. The British extended their protection to the whole Jewish community, including the Black Jews, just as all Christians in South India, regardless of color, had been treated the same by both Dutch and British. Official documents now spoke of "Jews," not "White Jews" (perhaps foreseeing the refusal of the British to make similar distinctions concerning Bene Israel and Baghdadis in the 1930's in cases concerning synagogue access, hospital beds and electoral classification). Segal cites the descriptions of Rabbi David d'Beth Hillel who, having visited in the 1820's, talked about both White and Black communities and the attitudes of the former toward the *meshuhrarim* (manumitted persons) and *avadim* (slaves).

Indeed, much of this final chapter is concerned with the disabilities faced by the Black Jews, the *meshuhrarim* of both communities, and the *avadim*, who had no rights or organized life, but who could be manumitted, and then become *meshuhrarim*. Citing several mid-nineteenth century travelers' accounts, Segal shows himself sympathetic to the claims and problems of the *meshuhrarim*; his treatment of the social and religious discrimination they experienced is excellent. Correspondence between the White Jews of Cochin and Jews in

Bombay and Calcutta, as well as pronouncements of the Chief Rabbi at Jerusalem on the issues, are analyzed. There is a particularly good discussion of one of the 20th century leaders of the *meshuhrarim*, A.B. Salem, who used Gandhian tactics in his campaign for equal rights for his community.

Other areas covered, if a bit choppy at times, include dress of both White and Black Jews, illnesses, education, literary activity, and the role of the synagogue as the center of religious and social life. A table of statistics, taken from various sources in different periods including the British censuses, shows that the number of Jews in Cochin remained more or less about 2000, with Whites rarely constituting more than 15% of the community.

By the second half of the 20th century, with the emigration of many Black (and later White) Jews to Israel, the situation had changed. Relationships among all segments of the now shrunken community were much friendlier. Segal essentially ends his story with the 400th anniversary of the Paradesi Synagogue in 1968, and does not consider the period of 25 years which elapsed between that event and the publication of his book. The community is now practically non-existent: barely 20 Jews remain in Cochin.

This study serves as an accessible introduction to the history of the Jews of Cochin. At the same time, its insights will interest the specialist. The seventeen pages of pictures and maps (some of which could be clearer) and thirty-two pages of notes, index and bibliography make up over one-third of the book. The critical engagement of a wealth of published and unpublished Hebrew sources, as well as of British public records, Indian scholarship, and Dutch, Portuguese and other European materials make this work particularly worthwhile. The relationships between different communities of Indian Jews, whether those between the Bene-Israel and Baghdadis or between the sub-groups in Cochin, have drawn a good deal of popular and scholarly notice. Segal's historical analysis of the Cochin situation is a useful contribution here. Those interested in the interaction between the Cochin Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors will want to supplement Segal's outline with Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin* (University of South Carolina Press, 1993), which analyzes the Jewish legends and the religious observances in their Indian context. A woman's personal account of growing up Jewish in Cochin and of the struggles of the *meshuhrarim* community discussed by Segal can be found in Ruby Daniel and Barbara Johnson, *Ruby of Cochin* (Jewish Publication Society, 1995), which is the autobiography of a member of that community. Segal's concise, thoughtful book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on the Jews of India.

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