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Back from Shingly: Revisiting the Premodern History of Jews in Kerala*

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ABSTRACT

Jewish history in Kerala is based on sources mainly from the colonial period onward and mostly in European languages, failing to account for the premodern history of Jews in Kerala. These early modern sources are based on oral traditions of Paradesi Jews in Cochin, who view the majority of Kerala Jews as inferior. Consequently, the premodern history of Kerala Jews remains untold, despite the existence of premodern sources that undermine unsupported notions about the premodern history of Kerala Jews: a Jewish 'ur-settlement' called Shingly in Kodungallur and a centuries-old isolation from world Jewry. This paper reconstructs Jewish history in premodern Kerala solely based on premodern travelogues and literature on the one hand and on historical documents in Old Malayalam, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic on the other hand. Sources of the early modern period are then examined for tracing the origins of the Shingly myth arguing that the incorporation of the Shingly legend into the historiography of Kerala Jews was affected by contacts with European Jews in the Age of Discoveries rather than being a reflection of historical events.

Keywords: Malabar, Geniza, Malayalam, Jews, Shingly

I BETWEEN FACTS AND FICTION: COCHIN JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography of Kerala Jews conventionally begins with Kodungallur, where an Old Malayalam inscription was granted in 1000 CE to Joseph Rabban, presumably a Jew, by a Hindu King, Bhaskara Ravi Varman.¹ The inscription was first introduced in November 1686 to Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, a Jewish visitor from Amsterdam, by the leaders of the Paradesi Jewish community in Cochin.² The Paradesis presented the

inscription as evidence for their lost kingdom in Kodungallur and for the origin of their community in a royal family traced back to the aforementioned Joseph Rabban. They presented this inscription time and again to foreign visitors, Jewish and Christian alike, repeating the claim of a long lost glorious past. The problem is that the Paradesi community was established sometime towards the mid-sixteenth century, so it is unclear which community kept the copper plates since the eleventh century and how it ended up in Cochin.³ The other Jewish communities in Parur, Chennamangalam, Mala and the market towns in Cochin and Ernakulam can be traced back to the premodern period, but their members were hardly ever consulted for their origin myths. Moreover, the Paradesi narrations were recorded in foreign languages - Portuguese, Dutch, English and, later on, in Hebrew as well,⁴ with no comparable accounts or references in Malayalam sources or in records left by the other, older communities.

Despite the lack of evidence to support it, the Paradesi legends were incorporated into scholarly historiography presupposing a lost Jewish 'ur-settlement' in Kodungallur. In early-modern Hebrew sources, this lost Jewish kingdom came to be known as Shingly that was in turn 'identified' as Kodungallur as well.⁵ The European encounter with the Paradesi Jews is, consequently, perceived by modern Jewish historians as the discovery of an isolated Jewish community long lost to the global Jewish Diaspora.⁶ Contrarily, historical evidence related to Jews in Kerala undermines both notions of an 'ur-settlement' and of centuries-old isolation. The evidence is scattered between different types of sources ranging from Old Malayalam inscriptions and literature to business letters of India Jewish traders in Judeo-Arabic and travelogues. Additionally, the cultural heritage of Kerala Jews provides further evidence for the origins of a

Jewish Malayalam speech community in the thirteenth century and for a Jewish literary evolution beginning in the fifteenth century.⁷

In what follows, I reconstruct the premodern history of Kerala Jews based on premodern sources alone. These sources are in different languages: Old Malayalam, Classical Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic and Arabic.⁸ Besides their various cultural and historical backgrounds, they belong to different genres; some are historical documents *per se* such as royal grants and business letters, while others are literary compositions like travelogues and ballads. The textual and contextual variations in the relevant sources are separately based on a two-fold division of language and genre so as to allow for critical and comparative utilization of the sources in rewriting Jewish history in Malabar.

II HISTORICAL RECORDS IN MALAYALAM

The Kollam copper-plates inscription (849 CE) in Old Malayalam is the earliest evidence for Jews reaching the region.⁹ The inscription is a royal grant given to the merchant guilds *maṇigrāmam* and *añcuvañṇam* in the southern port-city Kollam with signatures in Kufic, Pahlavi and Hebrew scripts attesting the presence of Arab and Persian Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians and Jews at the scene. The beneficiary of the grant is Maruvān Sapīr Īso, a Nestorian Christian who established a market town and received lands for founding a place called Tarissāppaḷḷi.¹⁰ The benefactor is the ruler of Venad, Ayyaṇ Aṭikal, at the time of the Cera king Sthāṇu Ravi Varma.

The Sanskrit terms *maṇigrāmam* (derived from *vaṇij*, 'merchant' and *grāmam*, 'community') and *añcuvañṇam* (derived from *anjumān*, 'organisation') suggest that the parties involved were composed of traders from India as well as from West Asia.¹¹

We do not know whether the foreign signatories permanently settled in Kollam; some

of them were probably sojourners going back and forth across the Arabian Sea. We do know, however, that the names of these two trade guilds recur in other inscriptions related to Indian Ocean maritime trade networks.¹²

The term *añcuvannam* re-appears in another grant in Old Malayalam, conventionally known as the Jewish copper plates (1000 CE). The grant was issued by king Bhaskara Ravi Varmman to one Joseph Rabban (*īsuppu irappan*) in Muyirikkōṭṭa (Muziris), believed to be somewhere near Kodungallur.¹³ Since the inscription was preserved by Kerala Jews for centuries, Joseph Rabban is assumed to be Jewish. Clearly, like his predecessor, the Nestorian Christian Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso, Joseph Rabban too acted as a leader or a representative of West Asian trade guilds regardless of the religious distinctions between their members. Remarkably, the Muyirikkōṭṭa grant significantly differs from the Kollam copper plates; whereas in the Kollam copper plates the signatories include West Asian merchants, in the Jewish copper plates the witnesses are Hindu military personnel. The Muyirikkōṭṭa inscription, in contrast to the Kollam copper plates, contains no evidence for any land granted to Joseph Rabban. According to M.G.S. Narayanan, the Muyirikkōṭṭa copper plates marked the gratitude of the ruler of Kodungallur for financial or martial support rather than constituting a land grant for a settlement.¹⁴

Both inscriptions constitute the earliest evidence for Jews in the region, one somewhere in or near Kollam in south Kerala and the other in or near Kodungallur in central Kerala. None of the two inscriptions, however, provides evidence for a Jewish 'ur-settlement' in Kodungallur or anywhere else for that matter. Nor is there any evidence in neither of the grants for a distinctively Jewish settlement with its own place of worship and land property. In fact, the hereditary honor to Joseph Rabban in the Jewish copper plates is prescribed for his nephews, rather than his sons, thus

suggesting that he might have joined a matrilineal household like the twelfth-century Jewish merchant by the name Abraham ben Yijū (see below). In any case, besides the historical evidence related to Jews in two different medieval coastal towns, there is ample evidence for Jews in other coastal towns in the region, as we shall see in the following section.

III MALAYALAM LITERARY SOURCES

The Old Malayalam *Ballad of Payyannur* (ca. fifteenth century) mentions the trade guilds *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* in Payyannur, some 450 kilometers to the north of Kollam.¹⁵ This reference is embedded in a literary composition comparable to Old Jewish Malayalam songs composed at the same period and in the same region of the *Ballad of Payyannur*. The unique stylistic features shared by the *Ballad of Payyannur* and Old Jewish Malayalam compositions are: a. second-syllable rhymes (*etuka*) b. first-phoneme rhymes (*mōṇa*), c. Dravidinised (*talbhavam*) Sanskrit loanwords like *caṅṅātam* (< *saṅghātam*), *maṇikkirāmam* (< *maṇigrāmam*), *nakeram* (< *nagaram*). These features are demonstrated below in the ninety-second verse, where *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* are mentioned (*etuka* and *mōṇa* in bold characters and *talbhavam* Sanskrit loanwords underlined):

povāṇ bilakki nen ettireyum/ pokk' oḷippāṇ arutāññūtāt' ippol/a/

cāvaḷarep-pole nīy akala-povūm/ caṅṅātam beṇam perikey ippol//b//

kovātalac-ceṭṭi añcuvāṇṇam/ kūṭṭum maṇikkirāmattār makkeḷ/c/

nammaḷāl nālu nakerattilum/ nālerak koḷka kuṭikku cornno//d//

For so long I prohibited you from going,

For vain.

As you go far as if seeking death,

You must have companions with you!

For your sake, join the four trade associations

Our alliances: the chief Goa merchant,¹⁶

The *añcuvañṇam*, the *mañigrāmam* and, our people.¹⁷

The reference to *añcuvañṇam* and *mañigrāmam* in the Ballad of Payyannur is far from being evidence for Jews settled in the region at the time. What is more significant are the generic similarities with Old Jewish Malayalam songs (*pāṭṭa*), preserving precisely the same above-mentioned features. These features are quite rare in Malayalam literature; they ran out of use by the fifteenth century. Apart from the *Ballad of Payyannur*, only one other composition contains them, the *Rāmacaritam* (ca. fourteenth century).¹⁸ The Old Jewish Malayalam *pāṭṭa* compositions adapt and retell Biblical and post-Biblical stories in language and style that predate the sixteenth century.¹⁹ For example, the fifth verse of the Biblical *pāṭṭa Joseph Sold to Egypt* shows the same generic features typical of this Old Malayalam genre: *etuka* and *mōṇa* rhymes and, *talbhavam* forms of Sanskrit loanwords (for example, *cāṭtera* < *yātra*, *anuvam* < *anubhavam*, *caraticcu* < *śraddhiccu*).

cāṭtera vaḷi pōkkara vannatuk kaṇṭu/ tambar āṇicca²⁰ nām it' ellām otta/a/

cattu pōyāl namakk' ent' or' anuvam/ caraticcu vaccāl cerippiṇōṭ' erum²¹//b//

cāṭterap poṇeyavaru avara viḷiccu/ yosevine kārek koṇṭe kāṭṭi/c/

ittare ennu vilayum parañṇu/ irumbatu veḷḷikku virrāru kāṇave//d//²²

They saw a caravan of travelers.

"We are instructed by God! All is well!

What shall we gain if Joseph dies?

If we are careful, we might gain sandals."

Calling the travelers, they displayed Joseph on land.

They fixed this much of price and
Sold him for twenty silver. Behold!²³

The oldest and most coherent textual version of the Biblical *pāṭṭā* appears in a notebook dated 1876 and bearing the name of its owner: Abigail Madayi, suggestive of the origin of the tradition in Madayi in North Malabar, approximately fifteen kilometers south of Payyannur, after which the *Ballad of Payyannur* is named. The generic similarities and the extra-textual evidence suggest that Kerala Jewish culture underwent a formation stage in North Malabar during the premodern period, contrarily to the conventional notion of an ‘ur-settlement’ in Kodungallur in central Kerala.

IV HISTORICAL RECORDS IN HEBREW

Hebrew sources dating from the twelfth century onwards attest ongoing contacts between Kerala Jews and West Asian Jewish Diaspora. The famous twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides lost his younger brother David in a shipwreck on his way to the Malabar Coast, to the dismay of the devastated Maimonides who was financially supported by his brother’s trade with India.²⁴ Maimonides attests to contemporary Jews settled in India in a letter addressed to the Jews of Lunel in Southern France. He writes that copies of his *Mišneh Torah* were distributed as far as India and adds that the Jews in India have no copies of the Pentateuch, so that they merely observe the most basic commandments. But rather than excluding Indian Jews from the rest of the Jewish world, Maimonides regards their limited knowledge of Jewish lore as a common denominator of Jews elsewhere:

I hereby inform you that in this difficult time there are no more people left for raising the flag of Moses up high, except you [Jews of Lunel] and the cities

around you. I know that you always inquire into the teachings; that you are wise and intelligent. But *in all those [other] places the [Jews] lost touch with the Torah [...]* However, in the periphery, rich people, God bless them, already willingly sent messengers and bought copies of [my] composition [*Mišneh Torah*] distributing them in each region. *Thus, the eyes [of Jews] were opened and their actions corrected as far as India.* However, the Jews in India do not know the written Torah and observe nothing of the [Mosaic] Law except for Saturday and circumcision at the eighth [day after birth]. Now, in the cities of the incompetent speakers [i.e. Persians] that are in the Islamic regions, [the Jews] merely read the Torah with no commentary. In the Western cities – well, we know already what their lot was, and we have no other help but you, brothers and men of our redemption.²⁵

Maimonides must have had the West Coast of South India in mind when he refers to India, for his brother and members of his congregation in Cairo were regularly frequenting the region as attested in the Geniza letters (see Section VI). He knew enough about the region to name and to define import goods typical of the trade with Malabar.²⁶ His reference to Jews and their religious customs in India is, therefore, most likely related to premodern Kerala.

Another direct reference in Hebrew to Jews in premodern Kerala is found in a letter sent from Cohin in ca. 1520 to Rabbi David ben Zimra in Alexandria asking for Halakhic advice regarding a bitter dispute in the community:

Question from India from the Island of Cochin (*Qogi*), where there are approximately nine-hundred [Jewish] households; one-hundred of them are Jews of pure lineage and the rest are sons of slaves and sons of maidservants,

who are rich, observant and pious. Those of pedigree do not intermarry with them calling them slaves, so they endlessly quarrel about it. The rich so-called slaves differ from each other. Some of them arrived as merchants from Turkey, from the country of Aden and Yemen and from Persia (*al-‘Ajām*). They bought maidservants and begot by them sons and daughters [...]. All these semi-infidels intermarried with each other; adhering to the Jewish religion, they became a large community. *They are learned in the Torah, rich and close to the royal house and the government. They are also the main negotiators for merchants. Contrarily, the Jews of pedigree are the minority, they are poor, but they call the others slaves out of jealousy and hatred [...].*²⁷

Leaving aside the Halakhic problem related with conversion and intermarriage, the letter is an important testimony for the socioeconomic status of Jews in Cochin during the early sixteenth century, when the Portuguese were establishing Cochin as a major port in their emerging network of global trade.²⁸ The anonymous writer must have been an Arabic speaker for he uses the Arabic name of Persia: *al-‘Ajām*. As such, the letter represents a period of radical transformation from Jews operating within the Arab maritime trade networks to Jews linked with Malabar by way of the European West India companies. By the time Cochin was taken over by the Dutch in 1663, the socioeconomic of the minority of ‘pure Jews’ in Cochin was drastically altered. It is sometime during this period that the ethnohistorical account of an ‘ur-settlement’ in Kodungallur emerged, as shown in the concluding section. Clearly, the author of this letter relates the origins of Kerala Jews to the trade networks connecting major centers in the Islamic world – Turkey, Persia and Aden.²⁹

The premodern Jewish world considered Jews in Malabar as an extension of the trade networks rather than an isolated community of mythical origins as evident also in the twelfth-century Hebrew travelogue attributed to Benjamin of Tudela. The itinerary starts from Spain in ca. 1165 heading eastwards along the Indian Ocean trade routes via Aden to India and as far as China. The itinerary refers in passing to Jews in and around Kollam, which is described in a fantastic fashion typical of Jewish depictions of India, the source of luxury import goods.³⁰ Despite their fanciful imagination of India, travelogues tend to provide some practical information for fellow travelers and traders.³¹ Locating Jews living in remote places is, therefore, a practical matter in providing useful information about nodal points in the Jewish networks.

Benjamin's description thus begins with the market conditions in Kollam:

From [Qatifa],³² it is a seven-day journey to Kollam (Qaulam), where the kingdom of the sun worshippers begins. They are descendants of Kuš,³³ divinising by stars; they are all black and trustworthy in business. When merchants from abroad reach their harbor, they are welcomed by three royal scribes, who write their names and introduce them before the king. The king is responsible for their property, so they can leave it unattended in the open. A clerk sits in one shop, and any lost items that one finds on the road is brought before him. The owner describes his lost item, and the clerk returns it to him. This is the custom in that kingdom.

This pragmatic information is followed by elements of verisimilitude descriptive of the climate and the produce in the region and, culminating in a fanciful ethnography of the population:

From Passover [April] until the High Holidays [September-October] all through the summer, no one leaves home because of the sun. Since that country is extremely hot, three hours after sunrise they all hide in their houses until the evening, and go out only later. They light candles in all the markets and streets and conduct their business and trade during the night. They turn night into day due to the excessive heat of the sun. There is pepper there. They plant pepper trees in the fields, and each citizen knows his own orchard. The pepper trees are small, and the pepper is as white as snow, but when they pluck it, they put it in barrels and pour hot water on it to make it stronger. Then they take it out and dry it in the sun until it turns black. Additionally, cinnamon, ginger and many types of perfumes are found there.

The people there do not bury their dead, but rather mummify them with all kinds of herbs, seat them on benches and cover them with cloth. The ancestors of each family are stored in special storage buildings. The flesh dries on their bones so they look alive. Everyone recognises his own ancestors many years into the past. They worship the sun. They have big altars everywhere around half a mile away from town. Every morning they run towards the sun, because each altar has a sun-disc manufactured by various magic tricks. During sunrise, the [sun] disc turns producing loud noises. Each person has his own vessel with burning incense for the sun. This is the conduct of men and women, silly as they are.

Benjamin of Tudela is obviously unaware of the weather conditions during the monsoon season and ignorant about pepper cultivation for which Malabar was

famous during his times. His depiction of the inhabitants of Kollam relies on a common stock of images and motifs used to refer to exotic peoples.³⁴ What follows is a soothing reference to Jews integrated in the local population but notably co-religionists of Benjamin and his readership:

Among the people in those places, there are hundred Israelites in all these cities.³⁵ All the people of that country are black, and so are the Jews. They are good Jews observing the commandments. They possess the Mosaic Law, the books of the prophets and little of Talmud and Halakha.³⁶

Benjamin takes notice of the number of Jews in all the places he mentions, so as to inform Jewish readers of potential hosts and business partners in distant lands.³⁷ Many Jews mentioned in the travelogue are specifically identified as cloth-dyers, an occupation that demanded the regular provision of Indigo and other varnishing plants imported from India by Jewish traders.³⁸ Benjamin refers to the Jews of Kollam as observant and pious, knowledgeable of the Jewish religion in a manner resembling the responsum cited earlier, written some four centuries later. In this, both writers identify the Jews of Malabar as Rabbinic Jews, differentiated from Karaite Jews, considered foreign and outcaste.³⁹

Benjamin's reference to Malabar Jews further undermines the notion of an isolated community and renders the Jewish origin in an 'ur-settlement' in Kodungallur less likely.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Benjamin fails to observe any Jewish kingdom or sovereignty in the region. Contrarily, he does mention Jewish kingdoms in remote regions located in the Arabian Peninsula.⁴¹ None of them, however, is called Shingly.

The earliest reference to Shingly in Hebrew literature is in the poem *nomar širah*,⁴² composed by Nissim ben Sanji of Constantinople, who visited Cochin in the

seventeenth century, sometime before 1686.⁴³ This poem first appeared in print in 1756, in a Hebrew book of prayers with liturgy for wedding rituals.⁴⁴ The printed book also contains the earliest occurrence of the term as an attribute to the Jewish community in Cochin – 'Shingly Custom' (*minhag šingli*). The poem is addressed in the first person as eye-witness to an Israelite King of Shingly:

Traveling from Spain,
I heard of the city of Shingly.
Longing for an Israelite king,
I saw him with my own eyes.

Clearly, the speaker is a poetic persona and the Israelite king is probably a Paradeši bridegroom likened to a king. This poem was incorporated in the repertoire of all other communities only much later and in association with the feast day of *Ṭu bi-Šəbat*,⁴⁵ a ritual occasion celebrated by Kerala Jews only after their migration to Israel.⁴⁶ For the Paradeši Jews this poem – and especially the last verse – was functionally used for juxtaposing the bridegroom with Joseph Rabban while enacting during their wedding processions royal status symbols listed in the *Muyirikkōṭṭe* copper plates.⁴⁷

VI JUDEO-ARABIC SOURCES

The argument that medieval Jews settled in premodern Kerala in various coastal towns while retaining contacts with Jews elsewhere is strongly supported by evidence found in business-letter exchanges in Judeo-Arabic.⁴⁸ These letters were discovered in the *geniza* chamber of a Synagogue in Cairo, where the afore-mentioned Maimonides used to pray in the twelfth century. The Cairo Geniza contains hundreds of letters exchanged between Jewish traders from the eleventh to the thirteenth century,

providing a rare glimpse into the daily lives and biographies of merchants involved in the Indian Ocean maritime trade.⁴⁹

Though numerous port towns in the West Coast of India and, especially, in Malabar, are mentioned in the Geniza letters, the letters remain silent about Jewish communities in the Malayalam-speaking region. The letters do, however, refer occasionally to marital issues like abandoned wives, conversions and cohabitation with non-Jewish women.⁵⁰ A famous example for intermarriage is that of Abraham ben Yijū, a Tunisian Jew who cohabitated with a Tulu Nair woman called Aśu, the sister of ben Yijū's business partner.⁵¹ Occasional references in the letters to Jewish work migrants suggest transregional migration patterns, as of Yemenite Jews sent to work in Abraham ben Yijū's bronze factory in Mangalore.⁵² Evidence of a Rabbinic court operating in Broach suggest the emergence of Jewish communities at the time.⁵³ Based on the evidence in the Geniza letters, Kollam emerges as an important destination for Jewish traders, who mention a ship regularly sailing to Kollam and bearing the name *al-kūlāmi*, 'the Kollamite One'.⁵⁴ Clearly, Kollam cannot be considered as an 'ur-settlement' of Jews either; several port towns along the northernmost districts of the Malayalam-speaking region such as Dharmapaṭṭaṇam/Dahbatan, Vaḷarpaṭṭaṇam/Baryabatan and Pantalayāni-Kollam/Fandarayana are mentioned time and again. These places are also known from premodern Arabic sources, to which we turn next.

VII ARABIC SOURCES

The West Coast of South India derives its name 'Malabar' from Arabic travel literature, by combining the place name *malī* with the Persian/Arabic word *bar*, 'land'.⁵⁵ Notably, it is in Arabic sources that the place name Shingly originates as *sinjlī*

(سنجلي), *šinklī* (شنكلي) and *sanjā* (سنجا).⁵⁶ Abu al-Fidā' (1273-1331) mentions two places inhabited by Jews, Šāliyāt and Šinklī, the former is identified as Chaliyam in northern Kerala.⁵⁷ Al-Dimašqī (1256-1327) writes that Šinklī and Fandarīna (Pantalayāni-Kollam) in North Kerala are inhabited by Jews.⁵⁸ Though the location of Shingly cannot be identified as any currently existing coastal town, it is associated with Kodungallur based on the origin myths told by Paradeśi Jews in Cochin.⁵⁹ None of the references to Shingly, wherever it may be, marks it as a prominent Jewish settlement, let alone a kingdom. Moreover, mapping a region by relying on medieval descriptions of a landscape often based on second-hand accounts can be frustrating, especially in cases of port towns that may have been abandoned long ago.

The only reference loosely supportive of Jewish self-rule in the region is in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's fourteenth-century travelogue (*riḥla*),⁶⁰ in a place called Kunja-Kari, half-way between Calicut and Kollam. P. M. Jussay identifies Kunja-Kari with Chennamangalam, based on Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's description of a hill which is not found in Kodungallur.⁶¹ Though Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travelogue is based on a first-hand account of the author, his reference to Jewish sovereignty in Malabar should be read carefully in the context of the rise of Calicut as a trade center in the north contrasted with Kollam in the south. The journey of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa is through a foreign and alienated landscape; he chases a big Chinese vessel (*kakkam*) sailing southwards with all his possessions, servants and concubines. Left with nothing but his prayer mat he hires a Malayali Muslim servant, annoyed by his behavior and drinking habits:

As I was told that the *kakkam* would have to put in at Kawlam (Kollam), I decided to travel thither, it being a ten days' journey either by land or by river, if anyone prefers that route. I set out therefore by the river, and hired one of the Muslims to carry the carpet for me. Their custom is to disembark in the

evening and pass the night in the village on its banks, returning to the boat in the morning. We did this too. There was no Muslim on the boat except the man I hired, and he used to drink wine with the infidels and annoy me with his brawling, which made things all the worse for me.⁶²

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa is emphatically estranged in an alien, perhaps even scary, landscape, when he refers to Jews:

On the fifth day of our journey, we came to Kunja-Kari, which is on the top of a hill there; it is inhabited by Jews, who have one of their own number as their governor, and pay a poll tax to the sultan of Kawlam.⁶³

The Jews are the first sign for approaching Kollam, the famous and affluent port town. Moreover, the sociopolitical conditions in Kollam are clearly known too, as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa refers to the Sultan of the Infidels by the title Tirawari, an Arabicised form of Tiruvaṭi, already mentioned in the Kollam copper plates as the title of the Hindu ruler Ayyaṅ Aṭikaḷ (see Section II above). The position of a governor subordinate to the ruler of Kollam might at best be read as that of a community leader.⁶⁴ In Kollam, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa finally meets fellow Muslims up to his standards:

On the tenth day, we reached the city of Kawlam, one of the finest towns of the Mulaybar lands. It has fine bazaars, and its merchants are called Sūlís. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house. There is a colony of Muslim merchants; the cathedral mosque is a magnificent building, constructed by the merchant Khawája Muhazzab. [...] Muslims are honored and respected in [Kawlam]. The

sultan of Kawlam is an infidel called Tirawari. He respects the Muslims and has severe laws against thieves and profligates.⁶⁵

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's reference to Jews suggests that they were subordinated to Kollam rather than Kodungallur, which at the time seems to be of little economic significance compared with Calicut and Kollam. If by the fourteenth century Jews were paying poll tax to the ruler of Kollam, some five centuries after the Kollam copper plates, it is possible to conclude that Kerala Jewish communities were more closely affiliated with Kollam than with Kodungallur even as late as the fourteenth century.

VIII EUROPEAN SOURCES

Towards the late medieval, European travelers began to write about the region. The earliest reference to Jews is in the late-thirteenth century travelogue by Marco Polo (1254-1324). Again, the place where Jews are located, this time along with Christians, is in Kollam:

Upon leaving Maabar and proceeding five-hundred miles towards the south-west, you arrive at the kingdom of Koulam. It is the residence of many Christians and Jews, who retain their proper language. The king is not tributary to any other.⁶⁶

Marco Polo specifically relates to Kollam and to its Jewish and Christian inhabitants possibly attempting to mark the place as friendly to traders back home. The reference to their retention of “proper language” is followed by a section on Indian export goods culminating in referring to the market conditions, echoing to a certain extent the merchant-friendly description of Kollam by Benjamin of Tudela in the mid-twelfth century.

The heat during some months is so violent as to be scarcely supportable; yet the merchants resort thither from various parts of the world, such, for instance, as the kingdom of Manji (South China) and Arabia attracted by the great profits they obtain both upon the merchandise they import, and upon their returning cargos.⁶⁷

In the early fourteenth century, another Italian traveler, Odorico da Pordenone, visited the Malabar Coast. He too, like Abu al-Fidā' and Dimašqī before him, mentions Jews settled in North Malabar. The Jews in his account are rivals to Christians in Flandrina (Pantalayāni Kollam) and in neighboring Shingly. But first, Odorico visits Kollam,:

And now that ye may know how pepper is got, let me tell you that it growth in a certain empire whereunto I came to land, the name whereof is Minibar, and it growth nowhere else in the world but there. And the forest in which the pepper growth extendeth for a good eighty days' journey, and in that forest there are two cities, the one thereof is called Flandrina and the other Cyngilin. In the city of Flandrina some are Jews and some are Christians; and between those two cities there is always internal war, but the result is always that the Christians beat and overcome the Jews.⁶⁸

The references to Jews in the south and in the north of premodern Kerala are compatible with the evidence in the sources viewed so far, strengthening the notion of Jewish settlements scattered along the west coast of South India and weakening the identification of Kodungallur with a Jewish 'ur-settlement'.

Besides the textual evidence discussed so far, linguistic and ethnographic data challenge the centrality of Kodungallur in Kerala Jewish history as well as the notion of an isolated and deteriorated Jewish community. Alternative views on the origin and history of the community are documented in some studies on Kerala Jews. Barbara Johnson cites several sources including interviews that refer to Calicut as a place of origin.⁶⁹ Similarly, Shemtob Gaguine refers to a record of a synagogue in Calicut.⁷⁰ Madayi in North Kerala is mentioned in several accounts as a place inhabited by Jews.⁷¹ This is supported by the retention of a Jewish family name Madayi and by an old quarry in Madayi bearing the name *jūtakkulam*, 'Jewish Pond'.⁷² Considering the evidence in the premodern sources discussed in this paper, it is reasonable to assume that medieval Jews were also settled in or around Calicut, though it is difficult to tell when exactly they all clustered in and around Cochin in Central Kerala.⁷³

The historical link with North Kerala is most emphatically attested in the linguistic heritage of Kerala Jews, which was identified as a distinctive Jewish language only recently, when Jewish Malayalam has already reached its moribund stage.⁷⁴ Several phonemic features of Jewish Malayalam attest its affinity with northern Malayalam dialects; the most striking example is the alternation between /l/ and /t/ in words like *tōtan* (< *tōlan*), 'groomsman' and *kaḷa* (< *katha*), 'story', (a hypercorrection). Similarly, the use of an *-a* accusative ending instead of *-e* as in Modern Malayalam is comparable with northern dialects affiliated with Southern dialects of Kannada. Additionally, some morphophonemic features are comparable with the Muslim dialects of North Malabar like the adjectival and participial ending in *-e* instead of the more standard *-a*. Jewish Malayalam is comparable with Muslim dialects also on the lexical level; kinship terms like *umma*, 'mother', *vāva*, 'father', and *kāḷka*, 'elder brother' are shared by both Jewish and Muslim Malayalam speakers to this day. Also

telling is the kinship term for 'husband', *māppiḷa*, which derives from the combination of *māman*, 'maternal uncle' and *piḷla*, 'son', suggestive of the centuries-old interactions with matrilineal castes.⁷⁵ The term *māppiḷa* used to denote in the past the general category of Muslims, Christians and Jews in Kerala. Nowadays, it refers only to Muslims. Similarly, Jewish Malayalam speakers in Israel still use the term *nērc̣ca* for festive occasions and vows as typical of Kerala Muslim festive occasions. The term *mōlyāṛə*, 'rabbi', too is comparable with the Muslim term *mō'lyāṛə*, 'religious authority', both terms are derived from the more standard term *mutaliyār*, 'headman'. Another term *onnāṅkāṛṅṅōṛə*, 'communal elder', is suggestive of affinities with the *nāyar* communities of North Kerala, attested in Judeo-Arabic documents of the twelfth century, where the brother-in-law of the aforementioned Abraham ben Yijū is named Nāyar. Also the term *taṛavāṭə*, 'hereditary estate', still used by Jewish-Malayalam speakers is suggestive of a matrilineal social organisation similar to Nāyars.

Besides the family name Madayi mentioned above, another family name, Muttath, suggests an origin place in Kerala in Muttam, approximately thirty kilometers south of Cochin, and closer to Kollam in the far south, where Jews were first attested to be present in the Malayalam-speaking region. Like Madayi, Muttam too is mentioned in Jewish chronicles since the seventeenth century. Affinities with Christian communities in South Kerala are further attested by the terms *kaṭavumbhāgam* and *tekkumbhāgam* that distinguish between two synagogue communities in Ernakulam and in Cochin each. These terms are comparable with the Christian terms, *vaṭakkumbhāgar*, 'Northists', and *tekkumbhāgar*, 'Southists' distinguishing between St. Thomas and Knānaya Christians respectively.⁷⁶ Some Jewish Malayalam speakers in Israel interpret the term *kaṭavumbhāgam* as 'the northern side' ($k < v$), rather than 'the

side of the river bank', which is the conventional interpretation of the term.⁷⁷ This is significant because the terms denote affinities with the Christians from South Kerala, once again suggestive of historical connection with the coastal area in the south. Lastly, some surviving anecdotes, idioms, stories, folk etymologies and proverbs testify to a formerly-rich oral tradition in Jewish Malayalam, most of it forgotten by the time it began to be documented. Nevertheless, even the few ethnohistorical narrations that were recorded challenge the primacy of Kodungallur in Kerala Jewish ethnohistory and the dubious identification of Kodungallur as the mythical Shingly. Remarkably, none of the Jewish Malayalam speakers ever used the word Shingly while speaking in Malayalam.

One story recurring among Jewish Malayalam speakers in Israel does relate to Kodungallur. Yosi Oran, who was born in Chennamangalam in 1945, recalled a story about Tipu Sultan (d. 1799) invading Kodungallur and expelling the Jews from the city. According to Oran, the expelled Jews took an oath by breaking a stick (*kōl aṭaccu*) never to spend even a single night in the town. Other former inhabitants of Chennamangalam recalled that the expelled Jews took a handful of earth with them to be buried with it when their time comes. There were so many of them, that the act left a huge pit in the ground, which is still seen today retaining the name *jūtakkulam* (Jewish pond) by the local people.⁷⁸ These narrations may not be completely ahistorical; in an Arabic text written by a Malayali Muslim in the late sixteenth century, an incident in Kodungallur dated 1524 involved a violent conflict between Jews and Muslims in Kodungallur.⁷⁹ However, it seems that the prominence of Kodungallur and its association with traumatic destruction among Chennamangalam Jews reflect and react to the Paradeśi legends that stigmatised all other Kerala Jews as their former slaves.⁸⁰

Finally, faint memories of alternative origin myths are still retained in Jewish Malayalam, such as a story told about Parur by Hemda Tiferet:

The Jews in Parur had much wealth. They entrusted it with the Levites and Kohanim to build the third temple over there. They laid the foundation stones, but there erupted a plague and many died. Then they started again. Again the plague erupted and killed many. They abandoned this plan, and the place became a jungle. Our mothers told us it was dangerous to play there and forbade us from going there.⁸¹

The subtext of this story is that Parur was for its Jewish population as holy as Jerusalem, where the first and second temples were built and destroyed prior to exile. It warns against forgetting the yearning to return to Zion and thus strikingly contrasts with the legends of Kodungallur that replicate the motifs of destruction and exile, ascribing Kodungallur the status of a second Jerusalem.⁸² Similar locality-oriented ethnohistories survived in bits and pieces in fading memories that barely made it to the studies on Kerala Jews. However, the bits and pieces that did get through clearly point at legends and myths of origin that challenge the primacy given to the Shingly myth.

XI CONCLUSION: REORIENTING SHINGLY

Jews must have inhabited Kodungallur sometime in the past, but there is no evidence to support the assumption that it was the most important or the oldest centre for Jews in Kerala anytime in the past.⁸³ It is the early modern period in Malabar Jewish history that produced the legendary Shingly and its identification with Kodungallur rather than an early and obscure phase in premodern history, which provides evidence for diffusion of Jews in various port towns in Malabar. Similarly, the notion of an

'isolated' premodern Malabar Jewry can be traced in the early modern 'Age of Discoveries', for premodern Jewish sources provide ample evidence for constant contacts between Jews in Malabar and Jews in the Arab Muslim world. It is, in fact, difficult to imagine the involvement of Jews in maritime trade networks without such contacts being sustained over time. Indeed, the notion of a lost Jewish kingdom inhabited by isolated Jews is traceable in the fanciful imagination of early modern Jewish accounts of India as reflected in late seventeenth-century Jewish sources such as the Hebrew poem by Nissim ben Sanji and the Portuguese travel account by Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva. Arguably, the legend of Shingly and the isolation myth both served for incorporating Jewish trade networks in the European political and economic ventures to the Malabar Coast. Pereyra de Paiva's biography portrays him as a member of such network.⁸⁴

The origin of the Shingly myth lies in early-sixteenth century Europe, where the name Shingly is first attested in Hebrew in the Messianic writings of Yohanan Alemano of Florence (1503) and David Reubeni (1525). During that period, Jews in the European Diaspora sought alliance with Christians in their quest after both wealth and messianic aspirations in the 'Far East', where 'lost tribes' and 'isolated kingdoms' waited to reunite with their Christian and Jewish brethren from Europe.⁸⁵ Rather than providing historical evidence for Shingly, these accounts attest the emergence of a new type of Jewish long-distance trade networks based on alliance with the colonial powers that were gradually expanding in the Indian Ocean Rim and taking over the Arab Muslim trade networks.

The early-modern account by Alemano is probably the earliest reference to a lost Jewish kingdom on the Malabar Coast. His narration betrays the tensions between

European Christians and Arab Muslims competing for domination of the Indian Ocean trade routes:

When they travelled the Indian Ocean, they found places full of Ismaelites (Muslims). One is a big city called Calicut and its ruler is very great. Another nearby kingdom is called Cochin. Near Cochin there's a country 15-days walk long. It is all populated by Jews. The king is called Joseph and his capital is called Shingly. [...] All the pepper comes from that country. The Jews gather and sell it mostly in Cochin and especially to four big Ismaelite merchants, who are settled there and who pay taxes to the king so that no man in Cochin could buy from the Jews except for them. And they sell it to the Portuguese.⁸⁶

Alemano attributes this account to Haim Franco, who feared disembarking a Portuguese ship in Cochin:

All these were told by one Portuguese Haim Franco. He himself spoke with two of their rabbis who came to the ship to speak on his behalf. Among them was a venerable Jewish man of the servants of king Joseph sent to speak with the four Ismaelite merchants, who bought pepper, in order to bail out that afore-mentioned Haim by payment of 10,000 ducats to the master of the ship so as to allow him to meet their king Joseph. But Haim refused out of fear, for something had happened to him that he didn't disclose to them for he was afraid of the master of the ship.⁸⁷

The reasons for Franco's apprehension remain unspecified. He might have been a spy working for the Portuguese, therefore fearing directly contacting Jews associated with Muslims in Cochin.⁸⁸ Alemano's narration proceeds in the form of a Jewish ethos

with Biblical references and it is presented as a narration by the Shingly Jews in the first-person plural:

Before the destruction of the first temple during the time of king Yerob'am ben Nəbat, nine tribes had settled in Kuš (Ethiopia). We who are settled in the land of Shingly are of the tribe of Judea and Benjamin. After the destruction of the second temple, Šəmu'el Ha-Levi, Israelites and *kohens* (priests) came like primordial water to the land of Malibar and the name of their city is Shingly. At that time all the land of Malibar and the land of Calicut and the land of Cochin are all at the hands of one king Prestor John. The king gave to each king his own city. To the king Samari (Zamorin) he gave the city of Calicut. To Rabbi Šəmu'el he gave Shingly. To king Beveli (?) he gave Cochin. And we are favored by the king of Cochin and he is favored by us, but not so the king of Calicut.⁸⁹

Though the narration is clearly fanciful and a-historical, it reflects the historical conditions at that time; indeed in the early sixteenth century Calicut and Cochin were rival kingdoms, with the Portuguese gradually forming their alliance with Cochin. That Jews too sought alliance with the Portuguese at that time is attested in the account of the messianic Jewish traveler David Reubeni, who first heard of Shingly at the court of the king of Portugal in 1525:

The captive captain was brought before the king that day. I was standing before the king, and the captain was standing before the king. The king asked him: “The land of India and Calicut – are there Jews there?” The captain replied: “There are so many Jews that they cannot be numbered. They are in Šingoli – ten-days walk from Calicut.” The king asked him: “Did you hear

about the Jews being ruled by kings?” and he told the king that they have their own kings. The servants before me, the Jews and also one Arabic speaker heard all these things and they told me that.⁹⁰

These references show that the term Shingly and the notion of isolated and self-governing Jews originated in the context of early modern colonial expansion rather than in premodern Malabar. These Hebrew sources witness the emergence of new types of Jewish trade networks basing alliances in Jewish-Christian messianic ideology while distancing from the Arab Muslim networks. The premodern sources in Arabic, Judeo-Arabic and Old Malayalam and the linguistic fossils and fading memories in Jewish Malayalam tell a history that is incompatible with the paradigms of the Jewish narrative of destruction, exile and reunion of the 'tribes'. Nevertheless, this history better fits the known history of Jews along the long-distance trade routes in premodern times; it is a history of networking with West Asian Muslims and Christians, of integration into the framework of sociocultural exchange and interreligious collaboration. It is, therefore, a history worthy to be told beyond the narrow field of Jewish studies and without the prejudices against indigenous Jews in premodern Kerala as offspring of converted 'slaves' disconnected from the centuries-old networks of Asian – especially Arab – Jews prior to the European 'Age of Discoveries'.

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¹See Sekhar, 'Evolution of Malayalam', pp. 185-188; Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis*, pp. 23-28; cf. Fischel, 'Exploration of Jewish Antiquities', p. 231 and f.n. 6; Wink, 'The Jewish Diaspora', p. 363 and f.n. 58.

² Pereyra de Paiva, *Notisias*, pp. 38-39; see also Schorsch, 'Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva'.

³ Fischel, 'Exploration', p. 232; see also Daniel and Johnson, *Ruby of Cochin*, pp. 132-134.

⁴ For a detailed list of chronicles since the seventeenth century, see Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 165-206.

⁵ See for example: "There are, however, various legends which give more colorful reasons for this migration [from Shingly/Kodungallur] and which set the date at 1341" (Mandelbaum, 'The Jewish Way of Life', p. 428); "Cochin Jews still retain a certain attachment to their ancient home at Kodungallur, which they call 'Shingly', even though most of them migrated to other places in Kerala by the sixteenth century" (Johnson, 'Cochin Jews and Kaifeng Jews', p. 34 [my translation]); "The legends of Jewish kings at Cranganore or Shingly, as it was also called (Tiruvanchikkulam), is persistent in local history" (Segal, 'White and Black Jews at Cochin', p. 229). See also Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*; Walerstein, *Public Rituals*, pp. 39-40; Mandelbaum, 'Social Stratification', pp. 166-169; Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin*, pp. 6-13; Lesley, 'Shingly in Cochin Jewish Memory'; Katz and Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin*, pp. 35-61.

⁶ Walter J. Fischel claims that the arrival of the Portuguese in India marks the rediscovery of Kerala Jews (Fischel, *The Jews in India*, p. 91). According to Mandelbaum ('The Jewish Way of Life', p. 423), "A Colony of Jews has been settled there for many centuries. They have been comparatively isolated from the main body of Jewry [...]." Similarly, Meir Bar-Ilan claims that Kerala Jews were so isolated from other Jews, that they retained some form of pre-Rabbinic Judaism (Bar-Ilan, 'Books from Cochin', p. 84 and p. 86). Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg rephrase the 'isolation' as 'stagnation' 'refreshed' by contacts with Dutch Jewry (Katz and Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin*, p. 23). See also Segal, 'White and Black Jews at Cochin', pp. 228-230; Fischel, 'The Exploration of the Jewish Antiquities', pp. 230-233; Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 10-24; Bar-Giora, 'Source-Material for the History', pp. 243-245; Walerstein, *Public Rituals*, pp. 27-45; Katz and Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin*, pp. 40-45; Katz, *Who are the Jews of India?*, pp. 30-33; Wink, 'The Jewish Diaspora', pp. 362-366.

⁷ For the linguistic heritage of Kerala Jews, see Gamliel, ‘Voices yet to be Heard’; for a timeline of Jewish Malayalam literary history, see *idem*, ‘Jewish Malayalam’, pp. 508-511; for the linguistic evidence in Jewish Malayalam, *idem*, ‘Fading Memories’, pp. 88-95.

⁸ Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations are mine.

⁹ Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis*; Narayanan, *Perumals*; Malekandathil, *Maritime India*; Varier and Veluthat, *Tarissāppaḷli*.

¹⁰ Kerala historians believe that Tarissāppaḷli was established as a church based on identifying its founder as a Christian and on the fact that the inscription was preserved by Christian communities. I am inclined to disagree on a definite identification of the place as a church for reasons that are elaborated elsewhere (Gamliel, ‘Who was the Fadiyār?’).

¹¹ Champakalakshmi *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization*, pp. 220-222; Subbarayalu, ‘Añjuvaṇṇam: A Maritime Trade Guild’, p. 161.

¹² Champakalakshmi, ‘Medieval Guilds’, p. 328.

¹³ Malekandathil, ‘Muziris’.

¹⁴ Narayanan, ‘The King of Jews in Kodungallur’.

¹⁵ Gundert, ‘The Legend of Payyannur’; Narayanan, ‘Payyannūrṑṑṑṑ’; Nayar, ‘Payyannūrṑṑṑṑ: Orṑṑṑṑṑṑṑṑṑṑ’.

¹⁶ *kovātalac-ceṭṭi* according to M.G.S. Narayanan (‘Payyannūrṑṑṑṑ’) is the chief (*tala*) merchant (*ceṭṭi*) of Goa (*kovā*).

¹⁷ Malayalam text in Zacharia and Antony, *Payyannūrṑṑṑṑ*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁸ Lilavathy, ‘Bhāṣāpariṇāmapaṭhanattil’, pp. 48-50; Freeman, ‘Genre and Society’, p. 452.

¹⁹ Gamliel, *Jewish Malayalam Women's Songs*, pp. 238–345; *idem*, ‘Jewish Malayalam’ (b), pp. 508-510.

²⁰ < *tamburāṇ kāṇicca*

²¹ < *cērum*

²² Transcribed from the manuscript S13, p. 2 (a copy is available upon request in the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem). The song is numbered III52 in the index (prepared by Barbara Johnson) available upon request in the Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem.

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- ²³ For an analysis of the Biblical *pāṭṭā* in the context of performance, see Gamliel, ‘And the Women Sing’.
- ²⁴ Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, pp. 207–208; Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World*, pp. 8–9.
- ²⁵ Lichtenberg, *Anthology of the Maimonides Responsa*, III, p. 44 [slightly abridged; emphasis is mine]. Cf. Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World*, pp. 21–22.
- ²⁶ See Maimonides’ explanations on the names and usages of cinnamon, myrrh and red perfume sticks as goods imported from India (Maimonides, *Mišneh Torah*, ‘*Abodah, Hilḳot Kley ha-Miqdaš*, 1: 3).
- ²⁷ Qastro, *Responsa*, responsum 99 (my emphasis).
- ²⁸ Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire*, pp. 64–78.
- ²⁹ For Aden as an important center of trade with Malabar, see Margariti, *Aden*. See also Wink, *Al-Hind III*, pp. 178–179.
- ³⁰ Melamed, ‘The Image of India’; Jacobs, *Reorienting the East*, pp. 51–56.
- ³¹ Jacobs, *Reorienting the East*, pp. 50ff; O’Daugherty *The Indies*, pp. 54–64.
- ³² Qatifa is identified as a port city in the Persian Gulf, see Adler, *The Itinerary*, p. 63, f. n. 1.
- ³³ Benjamin conflates India with Ethiopia, or Kuš, as it is called in Classical Hebrew. See Melamed, ‘The Image of India’, p. 311.
- ³⁴ Jacobs, *Reorienting the East*, p. 191; Melamed, ‘The Image of India’.
- ³⁵ The numbers of Jews in Kollam vary considerably in the manuscripts; some mention 100, others 3,000 and some mention 100,000.
- ³⁶ For the Hebrew text, see Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, pp. 58–59 [my translation is based on different readings]. For Adler’s English translation, see *ibid.*, pp. 64–65.
- ³⁷ Cf. Margariti, ‘*Aṣḥābunā*’.
- ³⁸ Goitein and Friedman, *India traders Of Medieval Aged*, pp. 15–16.
- ³⁹ Jacobs, *Reorienting the East*, pp. 180–190.
- ⁴⁰ Some scholars identify al-Gingaleh, mentioned by Benjamin, as Shingly that is in turn identified with Kodungallur (Segal, ‘White and Black Jews at Cochin’, p. 229; idem, *A History*, p. 11; Fischel, ‘The Exploration of the Antiquities’, p. 231, f. n. 4; Johnson, *Shingly or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 35–36). Yet the itinerary locates al-Gingaleh nineteen days *en route* to Zbeida in Yemen on the opposite side of

the Arabian Sea and sixty-eight days away from Kollam. Compared with Arabic place names, al-Gingaleh might better be identified as Zanzibar, or al-Zanj, in Arabic travel literature.

⁴¹ Jacobs, *Reorienting the East*, p. 188.

⁴² The poem is often cited as evidence for premodern Shingli based on the mistaken attribution to the fourteenth-century Spanish poet Nissim ben Reuben of Girona. See Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 115–130; Segal, ‘White and Black Jews’, p. 229; *idem*, *A History*, p. 15; Katz and Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin*, p. 32; Jussay, *The Jews of Kerala*, pp. 77–92.

⁴³ Seroussi, ‘The Singing of the Sephardi Piyyut’, pp. 239–240; cf. Pereyra de Paiva, *Notisias*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Qastiel, *A Book of Prayers*, p. 66; see also Rahabi, *A Book of Prayers*, p. 88.

⁴⁵ Barmut, *Śarim ’aḥar Nogrim*, p. 40; *’Arešet Səfatenu*, p. 258.

⁴⁶ The feast day called *Tu bi-Šəḇaṭ* (15th of the month *Šəḇaṭ*) was not considered an important holiday among Kerala Jews. It became prominent among certain Jewish communities only during the late seventeenth century and gained popularity with early Zionism. On the history of the feast day, see Ya’ari, ‘History of the New Year for Trees’; on the poems conventionally prescribed for the feast day, see Ya’ari, ‘Poems for the Feast’.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*, p. 155; Walerstein, *Public Rituals*, p. 93; Johnson, ‘Cranganore, Joseph Rabban and Cheraman Perumal’; Gamliel, ‘Jewish Malayalam’, p. 510.

⁴⁸ Judeo-Arabic refers to Arabic as spoken by Jews during medieval times and documented in the Hebrew script since approximately the ninth century CE. See Khan, ‘Judeo-Arabic’; Hary, *Translating Religion*.

⁴⁹ Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*; Goitein and Friedman, *India traders of the Medieval Ages*; see also Margariti, *Aden*, pp. 13–20; Chakravarti, ‘Indian Trade’.

⁵⁰ Friedman, ‘Women and the India Trade’.

⁵¹ Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders of the Medieval Ages*, pp. 69–73; *idem*, *India Book III*, pp. 17–26.

⁵² Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders of the Medieval Ages*, pp. 58–59; *idem*, *India Book III*, pp. 8–9.

⁵³ Broach is in Gujarat, where no evidence for a premodern Jewish community is left. For references to the Rabbinic courts, see Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders of the Medieval Ages*, pp. 56, 713; *idem*, *India Book III*, pp. 281–282; *idem*, *India Book I*, p. 90 fn 14.

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- ⁵⁴ *Idem*, *India Traders of the Medieval Ages*, p. 24 fn 55.
- ⁵⁵ Malī is a name of a place associated with Kollam (Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, pp. 58–59).
- ⁵⁶ Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, pp. 40, 49, 73, 76–77.
- ⁵⁷ Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, p. 73 and f. n. 145; cf. Johnson, *Shingly or the Jewish Cranganore*, p. 22.
- ⁵⁸ Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, p. 76.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75–76 and f. n. 156.
- ⁶⁰ Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūta*, 2005 [1929]; Panikkassery, *Kēraḷam Aṟunūru Kollam Mumbā*, 2007 [1962].
- ⁶¹ Jussay, *The Jews of Kerala*, 20; see also Vijayalekshmy, *Trade and Trading Centres*, 109 fn. 31.
- ⁶² Translation by Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūta*, 2005 [1929], p. 238 [slightly abridged].
- ⁶³ Translation by Gibb, *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ The rank of a Jewish governor paying taxes to the ruler of Kollam may have been similar to or identical with that of a *pati* (see Veluthat, *The Early Medieval*, p. 203; cf. Gamliel, ‘Who Was the *Fadiyār?*’).
- ⁶⁵ Translation by Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭūta*, p. 238.
- ⁶⁶ Translated by Masfield, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, pp. 376–377.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 377–378.
- ⁶⁸ Translated by Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, pp. 133–134; cf. O’Doherty (*The Indies*, p. 214), who transcribes ‘Singulun’.
- ⁶⁹ Johnson, *Shingly or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 60–61.
- ⁷⁰ Gaguine, ‘The Jews of Cochin’, p. 18.
- ⁷¹ Pereyra de Paiva lists several communities in Central, North and South Kerala. He mentions Madayi as an old Jewish settlement (*Notisias*, p. 38). Later Hebrew chronicles repeat the same place names.
- ⁷² Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, p. 39.
- ⁷³ In the beginning of the sixteenth century Madayi was still populated by Jews, as reported by Duarte de Barbosa (Barbosa, *Description*, p. 149).
- ⁷⁴ A project of language documentation was launched in 2008 for preserving the fast-fading linguistic heritage of Kerala Jews currently residing in Israel. See Gamliel, ‘Documenting Jewish Malayalam’; *idem*, ‘Voices Yet to be Heard’. For detailed examples and references to recordings, see *idem*, ‘Oral Literary Forms’; *idem*, ‘Jewish Malayalam’; *idem*, ‘Translation Genres in Jewish Malayalam’; *idem*, ‘Linguistic Fossils’.

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- ⁷⁵ T. B. Venugopala Panicker, personal communication.
- ⁷⁶ Swidersky, 'Northists and Southists'.
- ⁷⁷ Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 146–147.
- ⁷⁸ Jussay, *The Jews of Kerala*, p. 21.
- ⁷⁹ Nainar, *Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn*, pp. 62–63.
- ⁸⁰ In the 1970s it seems that this tradition was known only to Paradesi Jews. See Johnson, *Shingli or the Jewish Cranganore*, pp. 140–142.
- ⁸¹ For the transcripts of the Malayalam recording, see Gamliel, 'Fading Memories', pp. 99-101.
- ⁸² See for example Johnson, 'Cranganore, Joseph Rabban and Cherman Perumal', p. 77.
- ⁸³ Segal, *A History*, pp. 6–13; Katz, *Who Are the Jews of India*, pp. 30–3.
- ⁸⁴ Schorsch, 'Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva', pp. 79–85.
- ⁸⁵ cf. O'Doherty, *The Indies*, pp. 54–61.
- ⁸⁶ Hebrew text in Lelli, 'The Role of Early Renaissance', pp. 202–203.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- ⁸⁸ cf. Tavim, 'A Troubling Subject'.
- ⁸⁹ Lelli, 'The Role of Early Renaissance', p. 206.
- ⁹⁰ Re' ubeni, *Story of David*, pp. 73–74.