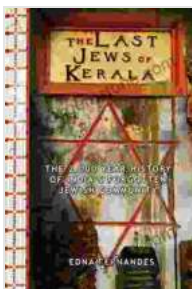


The Two Thousand Year History of India's Forgotten Jewish Community

The origins of the Bene Israel are shrouded in mystery and legend. According to their oral tradition, they are descendants of seven shipwrecked sailors from the lost tribes of Israel who arrived on the Konkan coast of India around 175 BCE. This legend is supported by linguistic evidence, as the Bene Israel speak a dialect of Marathi that contains numerous Hebrew and Aramaic words.

Over the centuries, the Bene Israel established themselves as a thriving community in various parts of India. They primarily worked as merchants, artisans, and traders, and they played a significant role in the local economy. They also developed a rich cultural and religious life, blending Indian and Jewish traditions.

One of the most prominent Bene Israel communities was in Cochin, Kerala. Known as the Cochin Jews, they enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and flourished under the patronage of the local rulers. The Cochin Jews were renowned for their trade and commerce, and they built several synagogues, schools, and hospitals in the area.



The Last Jews of Kerala: The Two Thousand Year History of India's Forgotten Jewish Community

by Edna Fernandes

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 4074 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 258 pages
Lending : Enabled



In the 18th century, a separate Jewish community emerged in India: the Baghdadi Jews. They were immigrants from Baghdad and other Middle Eastern countries who settled in Bombay, Calcutta, and Rangoon. The Baghdadi Jews were primarily engaged in banking, commerce, and industry, and they played a significant role in India's economic development.

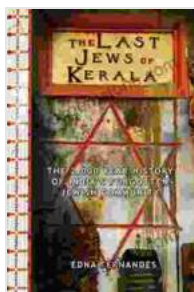
Another group of Indian Jews known as the Bene Ephraim originated in Andhra Pradesh. They claimed descent from the lost tribe of Ephraim and practiced a unique blend of Jewish and Hindu traditions. The Bene Ephraim were primarily farmers and lived in self-contained villages.

The Bene Israel, Cochin Jews, Baghdadi Jews, and Bene Ephraim all maintained their Jewish identity while embracing elements of Indian culture. They celebrated Jewish holidays, observed kosher dietary laws, and studied the Torah and Talmud. They also developed unique customs and traditions, such as the use of Indian spices in their cuisine and the incorporation of Indian folk songs into their religious ceremonies.

In the 20th century, the Indian Jewish community faced several challenges. Economic hardship, emigration, and assimilation led to a decline in their population. By the 1970s, only a few thousand Jews remained in India. Today, most of the Bene Israel, Cochin Jews, and Baghdadi Jews have

emigrated to Israel, the United States, and other countries, while the Bene Ephraim continue to live in Andhra Pradesh.

The history of the Jewish community in India is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Jewish people. For over two thousand years, the Bene Israel, Cochin Jews, Baghdadi Jews, and Bene Ephraim have preserved their unique identity and traditions while contributing to Indian society. Their legacy continues to inspire and fascinate people around the world.



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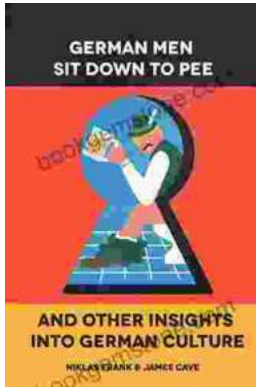
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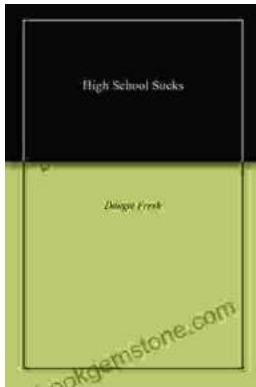
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