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Anton Zykov

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Bnei Ephraim Community: Judaization, Social Hierarchy and Caste Reservation

Anton Zykov, at Higher School of Economics, Russia

Introduction

Since the Ambedkar movement, conversion to another religion became one of the traditional ways for untouchables in contemporary India to leap out of the confines of the caste discrimination[1]. This, however, complicated the narrative of India's caste politics, as according to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950, the reservation system, created for the betterment of socio-economic status of the untouchables, was originally designed for Hindus, to ameliorate the condition of so-called 'schedule castes' and *adivasis*, referred to as 'scheduled tribes'.

Later amendments included Sikhs (in 1956) and Buddhists (in 1990) also within the ambit of the above mentioned provisions. With Mandal Commission report in 1990 greatly extending the reservation limits, other religious communities also claimed their right for reservation. The 2007 Ranganath Misra Commission Report as well as another National Commission for Minorities Report published a year after that "found that there was a strong case for according Scheduled Caste status to Dalit Muslims and Christians"[2], which was *de facto* implemented in certain states like Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu[*].
Thus, the only religious community that remained untouched by the reservation politics were Indian Jews[**] that numbered approximately 33,000 at the time of India's Independence[3].

However, Jews – Malabari, Paradesi, Bnei Israel or Baghdadi – never claimed rights to reservation. This trend changed with the emergence of so called Judaizing movements[***] in the country, largely inspired by the success of Ethiopian community of Beta Israel's (also known as *Falash Mura*) migration to Israel that started in late 1970s. They used the common way of Judaizing, *Baal teshuva* or embracement of Jewish culture and observance of orthodox religious traditions, though which new 'returnees' seek incorporation into Judaism in general and Israeli society.

The success of the "black Jews'" migration to Israel encouraged other groups in Africa as well as other countries to reinforce their claims of Jewish identity. In India, late 1970s marked the activities of Bnei Menashe, a community currently consisting of about 9,000 that is primarily comprised of three tribes: Kuki, Mizo, or Chin, most of whom reside in the states of Mizoram and Manipur in the Indian north-east and fall under the constitutional category of 'scheduled tribes'[4]. They claimed that their ancestral roots could be traced to Manasseh, son of Joseph, one of Jewish patriarchs[5], whose people, a part of 'the ten lost tribes' was expelled from Israel in 721 B.C.E and then though Assyria, Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet reached China, from where they had to flee in 100 C.E. and eventually settled in Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Burma, from where they ended up at their current destination[6].

Although in 1979 Bnei Menahse's Jewish identity was studied and eventually supported by Israeli organisation *Amishav* (*Shavei Israel*) led by rabbi Eliyahu Avichail[7], who was a driving force behind arranging *giyur* or formal convention ceremonies, and later funding the *aliyah*. However, general opinion remained sceptical about the possibility of their acknowledgement as Jews[8] until April 2005 when chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Amar took a decision to accept the claim of Indian group Bnei Menashe for their Jewish descent[9], which opened their way to make *aliyah* to Israel. The Indian government resisted this move and restricted Bnei Menashe's migration[10] for seven years[11], but eventually acknowledged their claim for Jewishness and allowed their departure to Israel in 2012.

The example of successful claims for Jewishness by Bnei Menashe gave inspiration to Bnei Ephraim, the community of untouchables in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh that claims kinship ties with the Bnei Menashe, as Ephraim, according to Judaic tradition was Manasseh's

brother, also son of Joseph. The Bnei Ephraim, numbering just around 40 families[12], are primarily concentrated in the village of Kothareddypalem near the town of Chebrol. Being members of Madiga dalit caste, they are a subject of reservation policies of the state government. Although Israeli rabbinate shows no sign of recognising Bnei Ephraim as Jews, their 'rediscovery' of Jewish identity possesses a dilemma before Indian authorities: if, following the Bnei Menashe case, Israel agrees with the Judaic descent of Bnei Ephraim, and should India accept their right to migration, this will put in question the existing caste politics that do not recognise Indian Jews as a subject of reservation.

This essay discusses the emergence and self-identification of the Bnei Ephraim, as well as the influence of their (re)discovered Jewishness on their socio-economic and hierarchical status among the local community in connection with the governments' politics of reservation, which is applied to them as a 'scheduled caste'. In other words, the paper will look at the history of Bnei Ephraim, an untouchable community claiming the status and rights that characterize other Jewish communities of India, but at the same time being a subject of reservation caste politics.

Bnei Ephraim: Emergence and Self-identification

Bnei Ephraim community, by and large, belongs to Madiga caste, one of the two major *dalit* caste clusters of linked endogamous groups of this region. Their main traditional occupations have been skinning of dead animals, leather dressing, making of leather ropes, making leather buckets for hauling water from wells, and other leather articles used in husbandry[13] as well as agricultural labour, such as making *chappal* or open sandals and taking care of the village cattle owned by the upper castes[14.] At the beginning of the twentieth century, Briggs wrote about Madigas as those who "live on the outskirts of the village, [are] described as coarse and filthy, as an eaters of unclean food, and as a user of obscene language, who work in leather, and serve as a menial and as a scavenger"[15]. According to Briggs, "Madigas are practically serfs. Most of them are field labourers"[16]. Most of my correspondents (both elders as well as middle-aged) in Kothareddypalem village confirm this professional description[17]. According to Egorova and Perwez, "Madigas constitute 46.94 per cent of the total scheduled caste population of the state [Andhra Pradesh - A.Z.]"[18] or 6 million in absolute figures[19].
The conversion of Telugu untouchable castes from Hinduism to Christianity started in late 19th century and by "1902, ten per cent of the Madigas were returned as Christians"[20]. The exact percentage of Christians, however started dropping after India's Independence: while in 1951 its share in the state's population was 3.94 per cent (more than 12 million) and reached its peak in 1971 (4.19 per cent or more than 18 million), by 1981 it plunged to 2.68 per cent (around 14 million)[21]. Senftleben suggests that the major reason for this "was that many Christians of Scheduled Caste origin have declared themselves as Scheduled Caste members, which they can be only if they do not belong to the Christian community… [whereas] the government does not continue to give the benefits and reservations, which are provided for the Scheduled Castes, to those Scheduled Caste members who embraced Christianity"[22]. However, in 1970, Andhra Pradesh government adopted the Anantharaman Commission recommendations and introduced – though just 1 per cent – reservations for dalit converts to Christianity under 'Group C' of the scheduled castes category[23].

Interestingly, although the leadership and core of Bnei Ephraim initial followers are Christians (as Egorova and Perwez note: "Back in the 19th century the ancestors of the Bene Ephraim were converted to Christianity by an American Baptist mission"[24]), some of the Bnei Ephraim families who joined the movement later, when interviewed, named Hinduism as their former religion[25].

Besides, conversion to Christianity – both in the view of upper castes such as Reddy and Kamma, and in the view of the Dalits – did not help stop the practice of untouchability against dalits[26]. Although conversion to Christianity for Madigas as untouchables "meant certainly... improvement in social and economic status"[27], in fact, Christianisation has

institutionalised caste divisions. Senftleben notes that "it is a fact that different denominations or different churches of the same denomination (there are, for instance, three different Lutheran Churches in Andhra Pradesh - the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church that counts about 25 per cent Madigas, while the South Andhra Lutheran Church mostly, which consists of Malas. A merger of these two Lutheran churches in Andhra Pradesh is unlikely, because the Malas of the SALC do not want their property to fall into the hands of Madiga Christians) do not join because they fear problems on the basis of caste origin. Especially Malas and Madigas have a deep-rooted hatred against each other"[28].

Untouchability characterised by polluted hierarchical status of its victims; absence of intermarriages; and social aspects of subordination (prohibition on inter-dining, and the use of water sources, as well restricted access to sacred spaces)[29] was fully practiced towards Madigas. In his comprehensive account for South Indian castes, Thurston recalls that "at a factory, where at [he] stayed... there were three wells, viz.: - for Malas, for Madigas, and for the rest of the workers, except Brahmans. And the well-water for the Malas was better than that for the Madigas"[30]. In the first half of the 20th century, Hassan mentions that Madigas were treated as "the lowest in the Hindu social system …while no caste except the Dakalwads, their own subdivision, will eat food cooked by them. They live on the outskirts of villages, in thatched one-storied houses, with only one entrance door. Their habits are very dirty, and their quarters extremely filthy"[31].

Most of my Bnei Ephraim correspondents retain a memory of caste discrimination that can be summarized in four major patterns: separate sitting (often on the floor in the remote corner of a classroom) in government school where other students and even teachers avoided any communication with untouchable pupils; refusal to share food and water in plates or vessels with untouchable workers who did seasonal labour for upper castes (the food was instead thrown at them from a distance and water poured in their hands or on their heads); prohibition to enter places of worship (churches and temples equally) as well as village wells belonging to upper caste; generally restricted access to the upper caste village areas, being confined to the secluded areas on the outskirts of settlements (some untouchables had to wear palm leafs attached to their waist to whip their steps after them)[32]. Thus, Bnei Ephraim, as members of the Madiga caste retain a strong memory of untouchability that has been practiced towards them in various forms and is sometimes still experienced by them. The discrimination, in a less vivid forms, continued till recently. Yacob Yacobi, 38, the second son of Shmuel circumcised by rabbi Avichail in 1992, who did his schooling in Vijaywada during the 1980s also states that the upper castes "never recognised me... and in school they never talked to me... even teachers, they wanted to keep me away"[33].

The Judaizing idea among Bnei Ephraim emerged in the early 1980s. According to Shmuel Yacobi, the history of Jewish descent was disclosed to him by his father, who served in in the British Army and was sent to Palestine during the Raj[34]. Egorova and Perwez also reproduce this narrative, stating however, that "a more likely source of 'external' influence may have come from another Indian community that embraced the Lost Tribe tradition"[35], i.e. Bnei Menashe. In Shmuel's book, the definition of 'Bnei Ephraim' encompasses nearly all Telugu untouchables: "There are about 10 million members in Bnei Ephraim... Some of these 10 million call themselves as Christians, and few others... Buddhists or Hindus... and about 90 per cent call themselves as scheduled caste Malas and Madigas"[36].

Judaization and Untouchability

The new Jewish status of Bnei Ephraim helped them elevate their social status in the eyes of their neighbours. An Important role in this process is played by the rise of community leadership's authority in the village through re-establishment of its place in the village hierarchy. One of the ways to do so is to break the traditional patterns of behaviour and even change their living area. The house loan taken by Sadok Yacobi helped him in 1991 build his new home which now serves as a synagogue in Kothareddypalem. The synagogue is located

in the central part of the village, which contradicts the traditional lower caste apartheid towards Madigas. Egorova and Perwez note that "the Yacobi brothers managed to build the synagogue in the central part of the village, on a site surrounded by land belonging to caste Hindus... [Escaping] the untouchable quarters, which are traditionally situated on the outskirts of the main village". Thus, according to the scholars "the synagogue... may be seen as a symbol not just of the new religious identity of the Bnei Ephraim, but also of their claim to a new status"[37].

During my fieldwork, an observation was made that after the *shabbath* prayers at the synagogue, Sadok Yacobi, who led the service, was addressed for ritual blessings by some of the Bnei Ephraim. For instance, a woman asked him to bless her baby child; and a young man, who had suffered an injury in a recent bike accident, asked for a healing prayer. More interestingly, Sadok's authority as pastor and transmitter of favour, has spread not only among Bnei Ephraim and other Madigas, but even amongst upper caste villagers. In our conversations, he mentioned that several people in need, such as pregnant women or the sick, come to his synagogue for blessings: "when they [upper caste village people – A.Z.] come [to the synagogue – A.Z.], I ask them to sit... I give them [the prayer] *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad*, and then I ask them to tie [the *tefillin*]... People used to come [back – A.Z.] and say: "We are now happy, we are all right"[38].

Apparently, Sadok's blessings are also believed to bring fertility to families, disregarding their caste background: "they [childless villagers – A.Z.] come to me and say: 'We have been to many religions, many temples and [have] no children... and we came to you because you can also say something so we can follow and can pray'... I say: 'I will introduce you to God, whom you did not know until now... He is the man who gave birth to you all, that's why we don't bother about your religious beliefs, the God of Hebrews..., [so] you pray and see, and we also pray, the whole congregation will pray for you'"[39]. The upper castes in village seem to be less problematic with coming to Sadok's synagogue, asking for spiritual services, rather than entering Madiga Christian churches or other holy places, although for some Bnei Ephraims, religious beliefs are still believed to be some sort of Christian cult of sect[40].

The acceptance of Judaism for Bnei Ephraim not only helped them elevate their social status in Kothareddypalem, but also attracted the interest of upper castes, particularly Reddy and Kama, that dominate the socio-economic and political scene in Andhra Pradesh*. Shiv Ram Reddy, 49, a lawyer at the High Court of Hyderabad heard about the movement through a newspaper article in 1999 and went to stay with Sadok and Shmuel, celebrating Shabbat and other holidays with Madiga community members: "... last *Rosh haShana* [Jewish New Year – A.Z.] I was there, some people from Reddy community also visited [the Bnei Ephraim with me – A.Z.]. There we had food and water also"[41]. Now he considers himself as a part of Bnei Ephraim and recently had a DNA test conducted to prove his Middle Eastern ancestry. Answering a direct question about caste that may be an issue as far as his incorporation in the Bnei Ephraim community is concerned, Shiv Ram Reddy states that it is Judaism that makes the caste question irrelevant for him: "... for us the *haShem* [one of God's names in Judaism – A.Z.] is the only thing that measures the power, we don't consider the question of caste. The caste consciousness is totally vanished... Judaism is a catalyst in developing society."[42]Christianity, unlike Judaism, according to Reddy, practices caste and untouchability. Reddy goes even further accepting the potential possibility of intermarriages between Bnei Ephraim Madigas and upper castes within the Jewish community (he himself as well as his son are circumcised and consider themselves as Jewish - he overtly claims his Semite rather than Dravidian origin), a possibility categorically denied by the majority of Bnei Ephraim themselves.

Another member of an upper caste, a Kamma, named Bala Raju, 37, who runs a business of selling pharma products and food supplements in Guntur, recently took on the name 'Israel.' He also got circumcised and personally attends the Bnei Ephraim synagogue in Kothareddypalem. Israel also come to know about Bnei Ephraim through the media sources

and then addressed Sadok Yacobi, through whom he got engaged with the community[43]. The religious link between him and Bnei Ephraim has also evolved in economic relations, as currently he is helping Sadok acquire a new loan for his village house that serves as the Bnei Ephraim synagogue in Kothareddypalem. According to Sadok, he goes to Israel's house every Sunday to teach Hebrew to his three children[44]. In addition to involving upper castes in the movement, Bnei Ephraim community also attracted members of untouchable Mala caste, that otherwise has traditionally been rival to the Madigas[45]. Joshua Tomothy, a Mala Bnei Ephraim from Guntur, claims that the establishment of the community has even opened the way for intermarriages between the two competing untouchable castes. According to him, the Bnei Ephraim following among Malas in Krishna, Guntur and Vijaywada equals to about 50 families[46].

Bnei Ephraim managed to draw international attention to their religious and, consequently, socio-economic issues. American Rabbi Marvin Tokayer visited Kothareddypalem in 2007 and made a financial contribution. Few years ago, an Israeli TV channel made a documentary on the community; and in 2012 a performer Irene Orleansky visited the community with the 'purpose of recording a CD of music of the Hebrew tribes'[47]. Bnei Ephraim attracted significant scholarly attention with Dr Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez of SOAS/Durham conducting several months of fieldwork with the community. On December 30, 2012 Shmuel Yacobi and his sons managed to organise an international conference on Bnei Ephraim in Vijaywada. One of his sons, Dan Yacobi, 36, through Rabbi Tokayer's sponsorship was admitted to study in *yeshiva* in New York for a year, and thereafter in 1999 he, travelled to Israel to continue his *yeshiva* studies for another two years[48]. Yeshua Yacobi, Shmuel's eldest son even managed to do *aliah* and now resides in Ramat Gan, where he married a woman of Ukranian origin[49]. Another community member Kyla Coniah (her previous Hindu name - Samyuktha Kooniah) moved to Canada, where she, according to our correspondence, completed a PhD comparing the rituals of her native Kamakur Village with Jewish customs and concluding that "most of us [untouchables – A.Z.] in Andhra Pradesh are of true Jewish blood – to prove that we have our surnames, which have been handed down to us from generations after generations for more than 2500 years"[50]. In 2010, she was in correspondence with Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger[51].

Finally, Judaization helped at least some members of Bnei Ephraim acquire an identity that helped them overcome the stigma that has been attached with their caste for centuries. Charsley, who particularly looks at the case of Madigas, speaks of them as victims "of an iniquitous social order, exclusively victims with absolutely nothing of which they could be proud of." He opines that Judaization came as an important intervention in their lives as, "the castes so reduced were able to distinguish their identities with pride... presenting [untouchables] with an embraceable identity.[52]" Most of my correspondents among Bnei Ephraim also accepted the possibility of matrimonial relations[53] with the members of the other Judaizing Indian movement of Bnei Menashe, the possibility and could be hardly possible without embracing a common religious identity.

Francisco writes that "the 'Judaization' of the Bene Ephraim has been described as Jewish liberation theology, as its objective appears to be to challenge the position of this community in the Indian caste system."[54]By accepting the Jewish identity, regarded as a powerful one, the Bnei Ephraim were able to shed off the weak identity offered by the 'scheduled caste' designation. As Egorova and Perwez note, "Shmuel's research into the Israelite part of his community was partly motivated by his desire to free Bnei Ephraim from caste inequality"[55]. Besides, similarly to other Judaizing movements elsewhere, "the historical experience of suffering of the Jewish people seemed to provide [Bnei Ephraim - A.Z.] a new model for explaining—and thereby making more tolerable—their own conditions of discrimination"[56]. Thus, accepting Judaism has helped the community to acquire 'embraceable identity', the job that the 'scheduled caste' definition was designed to do through positive discrimination. And if this is the goal of state caste politics towards untouchables in India, the Bnei Ephraim way of achieving this goal should be logically recognised at a legal level.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Bnei Ephraim's (re)discovered Jewish status has helped them gain a new sense of communal self-identification, which has increased their social and hierarchical status amongst the local population. Unlike their former Christian and Hindu religious identity, the Jewish one helped them to acquire recognition among upper castes and break certain restrictions linked with their untouchable origin, such as inter-dining, sharing of water, common access to prayer places et cetera.

As we have mentioned in the beginning, the Indian authorities' *de facto* recognition of Bnei Menashe as Jews created a paradox in country's caste politics, since the Mizo, Kuki and Chin tribal group, as members of the 'scheduled tribes' *de jure* considered as *adivasis*, continue to be entitled for the reservation, but at the same time acquire a right of immigration to Israel acknowledged by the Indian government with regard to 'traditional' Jewish groups in the country. It must be kept in mind that these 'conventional' Indian Jewish groups never enjoyed any form of reservation. The possible acknowledgement of Bnei Ephraim, who are covered by reservations as members of the Madiga dalit caste, as Jews will lead to even larger controversy in the nation's caste politics, since unlike 'scheduled tribes' the 'scheduled caste' category's definition is legally linked to Hinduism, making untouchability a 'Hindu phenomenon'[57].

On the one hand, as the essay demonstrates, the changed religious narrative of Bnei Ephraim contributed to uplifting their social and hierarchical status amongst the local population, which correlates with the very purpose of the reservation policies aimed at "raising the status of hitherto underprivileged peoples so that they can compete as equals and indeed be able to fight effectively for right guaranteed in the Constitution"[58]. Thus, the Jewish status of Bnei Ephraim should be recognised and supported within the framework of the Indian government's politics of caste. At the same time this recognition should give them the right of *aliyah* to Israel that the Indian government has traditionally given to its historic Jewish communities and recently granted to Bnei Menashe. On the other hand, the recognition of a group belonging to 'scheduled castes' as Jews will contradict the constitutional law itself that does not include Jews in the definition of 'scheduled castes'. Thus, the religious rights claimed by Bnei Ephraim create dilemma in the country's caste politics creating the clash between the spirit of India's constitution and its word.

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http://www.simoncharsley.co.uk/ - Simon Charsley (University of Glasgow)
http://www.aponline.gov.in/apportal/departments/departments.asp?dep=03&org=111 – Andhra Pradesh Commission for Backward Classes

Notes

[1] Eleanor Zelliot (ed.) *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*. (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 126
[2] Satish Deshpande and Geetika Bapna. *Dalits in the Muslim and Christian Communities: a Status Report on Current Social Scientific Knowledge*. (National Commission for Minorities, Government of India): xii
[*] According to the 2006 Sanchar Committee Report, Christians account for 9 per cent of the 'scheduled caste.' *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India* (Prime Minister's High Level Committee Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, November, 2006):7
[**] Notwithstanding that the Report of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (known as the Ranganath Misra Commission Report) recommends reservation for Parsis and Jains, this essay does not consider Parsis due to their very small (just around 70,000 according to the latest published Census data) and yet dwindling numbers. More generally, the explanation II, Article 25 of the Indian Constitution states that "the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion." (http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/631708/, accessed April 10, 2015)
[3] Elazar, Daniel. The Jewish Community of India. // Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs - http://jcpa.org/dje/articles2/india.htm; Slapak, Orpa (ed.) The Jews of India: a Story of Three Communities. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1995, pp.22, 34, 43,
[***] These movements have to be distinguished in nature from simple conversion to Judaism that happened in India before with the servants of White Cochin Jews, who came to be known as *meshuhararim* or "the manumitted" (Mandelbaum, David. Society in India. New Delhi: Popular Prakashan, 2011, p.562)
[4] The Constitution of India (Scheduled) Order. // http://lawmin.nic.in/ld/subord/rule9a.htm The movement emerged in the early 1950s but became most active after two decades.
[5] This idea, according to the conventional legend, came in dream sometime in the early 1950s to a Shinlung farmer named Chala (Tchalah). http://www.elijah-project.com/RabbiAvichail.html
[6] Stephen Epstein, "A Long-Lost Tribe is Ready to Come Home," *Bnei Menashe.* http://www.bneimenashe.com/history.html
[7] Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail is also known for his investigation of Israeli descent of the Pathans in Afghanistan and Pakistan, several African tribes in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and other counties and Latin America (Peru and Mexico). http://www.elijah-project.com/RabbiAvichail.html
[8] Apart from general criticism by Israeli officials, Indian biologists undertook a genetic study that showed absence of the "Cohen Modal Haplotype, the genetic signature of Cohanim origin"

See Maity Bh., Sitalaxmi T, et al. "Tracking the genetic imprints of lost Jewish tribes among the gene pool of Kuki-Chin-Mizo population of India," *Genome Biology* 6 (2004): 1, abstract.
[9] "Rabbi backs India's 'lost Jews'." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4400957.stm
[10] "Israel halts Indian conversions." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4422510.stm
[11]The Israeli government also played a role in postponing Bnei Menashe's migration by complicating the migration rules. ("Immigration of 'lost tribe' to resume after 5 years." http://www.timesofisrael.com/bnei-menashe-immigration-to-resume-after-five-years/)
[12] Egorova Yulia and Perwez Shahid, "Old Memories, New Histories: (Re) discovering of the Past of Jewish Dalits," *History and Anthropology* 23, no. 1 (2012): 2.
Shmuel Yacobi, one of the movement founders, in his book referred to 125 families in Krishna, Guntur and Prakashan districts (Shmuel Yacobi, *The Cultural Hermeneutics: an Introduction to the Cultural Transactions of the Hebrew Bible Among the Ancient Nations of the Talmudic Telugu Empire of India*. (Vijayawada: Hebrew Open University, 2002), 133.

[13] Siraj Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions.* Vol. I. (Bombay: Times Press, 1920), 420
[14] Egorova Yulia and Perwez Shahid. "Telugu Jews: are the Dalits of coastal Andhra going caste-awry?" *The South Asianist* 1, no. 1 (2012): 9
[15] George Briggs, *The Religious Life of India: the Chamars*. (London: OUP, 1920), 31-2
[16] Ibid. 32
[17] Interviews with Ruben Kushi, Nayomi Kaftori, Itshak Korahi, November 30, 2012
[18] Egorova Yulia, "Telugu Jews," 9
[19] "Andhra Pradesh. Data highlights: the Scheduled Castes," *Census of India 2001*. Accessed 10th April, 2015, http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_sc_andhra.pdf
[20] Briggs. *The Religious Life*, 32
[21] M.E. Prabhakar, "Andhra Christians – Some Demographic and Ecclesial Issues," *Religion and Society* XXXVII, no. 1 (1990): 5 cit. in Senftleben, *Influences of Hinduism on Christianity*, 86
[22] Ibid. 87f. Prabhakar demonstrated this with the example of Guntur district, where the number of Christians decreased by nearly 13%, while the total Scheduled Caste population increased from 4.8 per cent to 9.22 per cent (Prabhakar, *Andhra Christians*, 6).
[23] "Andhra Pradesh: A Case Study on the Impact of Reservation Implemented in Andhra Pradesh on the Educational Progress of Backward Classes (Interim Report)" Oversight Committee on the Implementation of the New Reservation Policy in Higher Educational Institutions, Planning Commission of India, Annexure X, 330. Accessed 20th April 2015, http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/resedu/rpresedu_a10.pdf
[24] Egorova Yulia and Perwez Shahid, "The Children of Ephraim: Being Jewish in Andhra Pradesh," *Anthropology Today* 26, no. 6 (2010): 14
[25] Interview with Ruben Kushi and Nayomi Kaftoti, November 30, 2012
[26] Interviews with Sadok Yacobi and Shiv Ram Reddy, November 29 and December 1, 2012
[27] Senftleben, Martin. Influences of Hinduism on Christianity in Andhra Pradesh. Book based on a PhD thesis at Sri Venkateswara University in Tirupati (manuscript), p.101 - http://www.drmartinus.de/bio/de/thesis1.pdf
[28] Ibid.
[29] Mendelsohn, Oliver and Vicziany, Marika. The Untouchables. Cambridge: CUP, 1998, pp.1-43
[30] Thurston, Edgar and Rangachari, Y.K. Castes and Tribes of Southern India. Volume IV. Madras: Government Press, 1909, p.294
[31] Hassan. The Castes and Tribes, p.420
[32] Interviews with Daniel Korahi, Moshe Kedari, Rivka Sabotiya, Ruben Kushi, Yacob Yacobi. November 29-30, 2012
[33] Interview with Yacob Yacobi. November 30, 2012
[34] Interview with Shmuel Yacobi. November 30, 2012

[35] Perwez Egorova, *Old Memories, New Histories*, 5
[36] Yacobi. *The Cultural Hermeneutics*, 133
[37] Perwez Egorova. *Old Memories, New Histories*, 8
[38] Interview with Sadok Yacobi. November 30, 2012.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[*] Reddys and Kammas are referred in this paper as 'upper caste' mainly because this is the way these castes are defined by the Madigas. To be more correct, as Srinivasulu puts it, historically belonging to shudra castes,
"The Reddys, Kammas... have emerged into a dominant position in the production process and have successfully translated this into political and cultural domains". (K. Srinivasulu, *Caste, Class and Social Articulation in Andhra Pradesh: Mapping Differential Regional Trajectories*. (Overseas Development Institute, September 2002), 31)
[41] Interview with Shiv Ram Reddy. December 1, 2012.

[42] Ibid.
[43] Interview with Bala Raju Kamma (Israel). November 30, 2012.
[44] Interviews with Sadok Yacobi. November 30, 2012.
[45] Prabhakar, Andhra Christians, 16-7
[46] Interview with Joshua Timothy. November 30, 2012
[47] Irene Orleansky, "Bnei Ephraim: the Telugu Jews of South India," *Asian Jewish Life* 11 (2013)
[48] Interview with Dan Yacobi. November 30, 2012
[49] Telephone conversation with Yeshua Yacobi. November 30, 2012
[50] Kyla Coniah. *Baht Judah* – manuscript
[51] Letter from Yona Metzger to Kyla Coniah. May 16, 2010.
[52] Charsley, "Interpreting Untouchability," 269
[53] Interviews with Daniel Korahi, Moshe Kedari, Rivka Sabotiya, Ruben Kushi, Yacob Yacobi. November 29-30, 2012
[54] Cited in Egorova, "Children of Ephraim," 15
[55] Egorova Yulia, Perwez Shahid. Telugu Jews: are the Dalits of coastal Andhra going caste-awry? // The South Asianist, January 2012, vol.1, No 1, p.11
[56] Egorova Yulia, Perwez Shahid. Old Memories, New Histories: (Re)discovering of the Past of Jewish Dalits // History and Anthropology, March 2012, vol.23, No 1, p.3
[57] Lelah Dushkin, "Scheduled Caste Politics," in *The Untouchables in Contemporary India*, ed. Mahar, Michael (New Delhi: Rawat, 2009), 167
[58] Gupta Dipankar, *Interrogating Caste. Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*. (New Delhi: Penguin, 2000), 110