

The Dutch Intersection:
The Jews and the Netherlands in
Modern History

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in Modern History

Edited by
Yosef Kaplan



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In Memoriam

Henriëtte Boas
(1911–2001)

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PREFACE

This volume contains almost all the papers presented at the Tenth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands, organized by the Center for Research on Dutch Jewry and held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from 21 to 24 November 2004.

More than eighty years ago, the historian and bibliographer Sigmund Seeligman, in his well known article, “Die Juden in Holland, eine Charakteristik,” coined the term *species hollandia Judaica*, which was accepted by quite a few of those who dealt and deal with the history of the Jews of Holland as an apt epithet for the uniqueness of Dutch Jewry, treating it as a distinct and special instance in the history of modern Jewry. Seeligman sought to point out the differences between the Jews of Holland and those of other countries and emphasized the adaptation of the Dutch Jews to the Dutch national character in the wake of the process of emancipation. By contrast, Dr. Joseph Michman, the founder of the Center for Research on Dutch Jewry in Jerusalem and one of the main architects of the first international symposia on the history of the Jews of Holland, in the lecture he delivered at the fourth symposium in 1986, which explicitly took issue with Seeligman’s approach, sought rather to bring out the “Jewish essence of the Jew as a Dutchman,” or, in other words, “how Dutch Jews differed from their Gentile compatriots.”

While Seeligman’s view expressed a horizontal approach, which mainly brought out the particular Dutch context of the history of the Jews of Holland, Michman’s attitude always emphasized the vertical dimension, that is to say, the connections of Dutch Jewish life with Jewish history and culture over the generations.

The articles in this volume are linked in a certain sense to Michman’s approach. Most of them deal with the connections between the history and culture of the Jews of Holland from the beginning of the seventeenth century until the period after the Holocaust, and with phenomena and processes that distinguish all of Jewish history in the modern period. However, the common denominator of all the articles in this collection is very far from an essentialist conception of Jewish history. Moreover, they are distinguished not only by the examination of the influence of general Jewish history on that of the Jews of Holland

but also by focusing on events and processes in modern Jewish history that show the significant influence of the history of the Jews of Holland.

Most of the articles here share the emphasis placed on the intersection: that is to say, they view the Jews of Holland not as a separate phenomenon in Jewish history but as a Jewish collective whose identity and creativity were formed, throughout its history, in close connection with the Jewish people in the present and past. At the same time, the Jews of Holland were not only influenced by the great Jewish centers and nourished by the culture that the Jewish immigrants brought with them to Holland from their countries of origin, but at various stages they also became harbingers of processes and tendencies in modern Jewish history, and their activity and creativity often served as a source of inspiration for Jews elsewhere in the Diaspora.

The economic activity of the Portuguese Jewish merchants and entrepreneurs in Amsterdam during the seventeenth century embraced the entire world, and their integration in international trade and in the colonial projects of the great maritime powers of Europe also attracted the cooperation of Jews in other countries and influenced the economy of the Jews elsewhere. The printing houses of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam became the main suppliers of Jewish books, both rabbinical and other, not only for the Sephardi Jewish Diaspora. They also provided religious books for the well-established Ashkenazi communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Amsterdam became the center of production for wide-ranging Jewish literature in Spanish and Portuguese, both religious and secular, which was intended for “the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Nation” in the West and East. Similarly, in the printing houses of Ashkenazi Jews were printed, in addition to traditional rabbinical literature, also works in Yiddish that were intended for the entire Ashkenazi world, and we find that between 1650 and 1750 Amsterdam became a central focus not only for the distribution of the Yiddish book but also of literary creation in Yiddish. Toward the mid-seventeenth century, Jewish printing in Amsterdam assumed the status that Hebrew printing in Venice had hitherto held, and the editions of Hebrew books from Amsterdam became famous throughout the Diaspora and served as a model for imitation.

Similarly, both Portuguese and Ashkenazi Jews were among the first to create a “Jewish library awareness,” which preceded that created by the Jewish Maskilim in the Age of Enlightenment by several generations. Also the first Jewish newspapers, in Spanish and Yiddish, were

printed in Amsterdam in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, with the intention of providing information to a readership beyond the borders of Holland.

The institutions established by the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam, the patterns of organization that they formed, and the ordinances that they composed, became models for imitation in the entire Western Sephardi Diaspora, including the centers of Jewish settlement on the American continent. Throughout most of the early modern period, the Sephardi community of Amsterdam was the leader of the Western Sephardi Diaspora, and people turned to it with requests not only for material assistance but also for advice and council, and it produced most of the rabbis, cantors, and teachers for the Sephardi communities in Western Europe and the New World, who were trained in its schools and academies.

The unique tolerance enjoyed by the Jews of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, though it was less principled and comprehensive than is commonly thought, was far greater than that known by the Jews in any other part of the Diaspora, and it gave the Jews of Holland, especially the Portuguese elite within it, a particular symbolic status in the consciousness of the Jews in the pre-Emancipation period.

However, changes in the world economy and in the status of Holland in trans-Atlantic trade weakened the economic position of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam and led to deep impoverishment of the Sephardi community of the city, and toward the mid-eighteenth century it lost its former leading and influential status. Moreover, due to the social and cultural consequences of emancipation and assimilation, the cohesion that had characterized Jewish life in Holland was severely weakened. Nevertheless, during the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, until its destruction in the Holocaust, Dutch Jewry retained its creative vitality. From the social, political, and cultural point of view, it never lost contact with the Jewish centers of the world, both old and new, and some of the articles in this volume express this, as well. In their own way, the Jews of Holland took part in the processes of modernization and secularization of the Jewish Diaspora and participated intensely in international Jewish political and philanthropic activity. The confrontation with the problems of modern Jewish identity found fascinating expression in Holland, in cultural productivity, literature, and art.

The articles in this book touch upon a variety of subjects, sometimes broad, sometimes specific, from the perspective of the wider Jewish

context, a context that is sometimes organizational and institutional, sometimes religious, sometimes political, cultural, or artistic, and sometimes a matter of consciousness. The articles that deal with the Holocaust and the developments characteristic of Dutch Jewry in its wake also relate to broader contexts of Jewish history.

This volume is dedicated to the unforgettable Henriëtte Boas, who was a sensitive witness to much of the history of the Jews of Holland during most of the twentieth century. She was a teacher of classical literature with a deeply rooted Jewish education and broad cultural horizons, an intellectual who was involved in many controversies that stirred the Jews of her homeland, a journalist with indefatigable curiosity, and a sharp-eyed historian who knew the history and culture of the Jews of Holland intimately and deeply—a brave and feisty woman.

At all the symposia on the history of the Jews of Holland that took place both in Israel and in Holland, her special, active, and eccentric presence was prominent. There was hardly any lecture to which she did not respond with questions and objections, with characteristic fervor and emotional engagement, with intellectual interest, but mainly with a keen existential identification with the Jewish world from which she stemmed. The tenth conference was held in Jerusalem in November 2004, three years after her death, and it was hard not to feel her absence. We mourn our loss.

* * *

I would like to thank all the institutions and individuals that provided essential support for the organization of the Tenth International Conference on Dutch Jewry and the publication of this book: The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Israel and especially Mr. Bob Hiensch, the Dutch Ambassador to Israel, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Foundation for Collective Maror Funds in Israel, the Frankenhuis Foundation, the Levi Lassen Foundation, and the Maatschappij tot Nut der Israëlitien in Nederland.

In addition, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to the Foundation for Research on Dutch Jewry in Jerusalem and to its former chairman, Avraham Roet, its former secretary, Professor Alfred Drukker, and Ya'acov Yannay, former member of its Board of Directors. I also extend thanks to the present chairperson, Dr. Joel Fishman, and the director general, Mr. Chaim den Heijer, without whose devoted assistance it would not have been possible to hold the conference and publish this volume. I also wish to thank the Friends of the Center for Research on

Dutch Jewry in Holland for their cooperation and generous assistance. Professor Dan Michman helped greatly with his advice in planning the program of the conference. Professor Galit Hazan-Rokem, former head of the Institute for Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University, always responded enthusiastically to our requests.

Throughout all the stages of organizing the conference and preparing this volume, Lea Menashe and Eva Ben David, the two devoted secretaries of the Center, spared no effort to make sure that everything was done professionally, always managing to inspire all the participants and everyone involved in the project with good spirits. Ms. María Mercedes Tuya, from the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, prepared the index with great care. Last but far from least, deep gratitude is due to Valerie Carr Zakovitch for her careful copyediting, which assured consistency in spelling and style throughout the volume.

Yosef Kaplan

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJS Review</i>	<i>American Jewish Studies Review</i>
<i>BAA</i>	<i>Bulletin des Archives d'Anvers</i>
BT	Babylonian Talmud
CAHJP	Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem
CJO	Centraal Joods Overleg (Central Jewish Umbrella Organization)
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
EAJS	European Association for Jewish Studies
GAA	Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst Amsterdam
GAA PA 334	Archieven der Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam
<i>HUCA</i>	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICA	Jewish Colonization Association
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
NA	National Archive, The Hague
NIG	Nederlands Israëlitische Gemeente
NIOD	Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie
<i>NIW</i>	<i>Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad</i>
NZB	Nederlandse Zionistenbond
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>SPPNN</i>	H. den Boer, <i>Spanish and Portuguese Printing in the Northern Netherlands 1584–1825</i> , CD-ROM (Leiden 2003)
<i>StRos</i>	<i>Studia Rosenthaliana</i>
<i>TJHSE</i>	<i>Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England</i>
WJC	World Jewish Congress

MOSSEH PEREYRA DE PAIVA:
AN AMSTERDAM PORTUGUESE JEWISH MERCHANT
ABROAD IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Jonathan Schorsch

In this essay I explore a fascinating moment of Dutch Sephardi history and identity-formation, one linked to the increasing awareness of global Jewry in the wake of overseas European expansion as well as the rise of color-consciousness. In 1685, a merchant traveler, an upper-class Portuguese Jew born in Amsterdam, aged thirty-four years, set out for India to seek fortune and perhaps fame as a trader in diamonds. Before reaching Surat, his goal, the traveler visited, seemingly with premeditation, the Jewish community of Cochin—hitherto primarily known as an exotic locale in medieval travel tales and the provenance of lost tribes with possibly messianic powers. Cochin had been absorbed into Europe by the Portuguese some two centuries earlier and, only some twenty years earlier than this Sephardi adventurer's departure from Amsterdam, captured by the Dutch themselves—his thriving (but exiled) family's new hosts. He mailed a report of his visit to Cochin back to Amsterdam and paid to have it published. Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, this young merchant, sailed into distant seas, in conceptual vessels that, though adaptive to external stimuli, were very much constructed at home. This is a study of the sailor and some of the oceans upon which he sailed.¹

In the 1680s, we find certain Jews of Cochin, India, mostly of Sephardi extraction, defining themselves as White in contrast to other Jews of Cochin who are called Black.² This is about the same time that the

¹ This essay presents reworked material from J. Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York 2004), pp. 204–13. I make no pretense of covering all of the many interesting features of Pereyra de Paiva, his journey, or the Cochin community. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. I am grateful to Yosef Kaplan for his critical editorial aid.

² I have chosen to capitalize these terms to indicate their constructed nature, as well as to avoid having to use quotation marks each time.

term White became current in the English colony of Virginia.³ The term's first use in a Virginia statute "to designate European-Americans as a social category occurred in 1691."⁴ Of course, the trajectory and timing of the color-complex differed in each colonial situation, but it usually reflected a similar mix of clashing Europeans and dark natives, whose darkness turned the former from "Christians" to "Whites." Nancy Shoemaker thinks that Barbados, the first slave-dependent English colony, may have been "the first English colony to experience the transition in identity from 'Christian' to 'white.'" Meanwhile,

the Dutch in New Netherland called themselves "Christian" for the duration of their control over the colony, and the English [there] continued with "Christian" until about the 1730s, when the term "white people" began to appear with more frequency. As in Barbados, black slavery seems to have caused the transition from "Christian" to "white."⁵

Similarly, in Cochin, though some local residents and European explorers had described various Jews as Black or White for some time, it was not until the seventeenth century that these became categories of social legislation (even of an informal nature) within the Jewish community itself. The use of these categories in Cochin indeed derived in part from Dutch Sephardi visitors.⁶ Concerning the most important of these visitors from the perspective of this study, Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, little is known for certain, other than that he visited the Jews of Cochin in November 1686 and authored a brief report of his brief experiences, *Notisias dos judeos de Cochim* [News of the Jews of Cochin].⁷ An attempt at a biographical sketch appears as the Appendix.

³ W. D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Baltimore 1969), p. 97; T. W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 1: *Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London 1994), p. 261 n. 76.

⁴ Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, vol. 1, p. 261 n. 76.

⁵ N. Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," *American Historical Review* 102 (1997), p. 631.

⁶ Much of what follows thus agrees with the conclusions of J. B. Segal, "White and Black Jews at Cochin, The Story of a Controversy," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1983), p. 232.

⁷ Reprinted in modern times with an introduction by Moses Bensabat Amzalak, as Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, *Notisias dos judeos de Cochim [1687]* (Lisbon 1923). Given that Pereyra de Paiva's *Relação* (this is the title he gave his journal; *ibid.*, p. 3) takes the form of a daily diary that mentions only five days—from 21 November to 26 November—I take it that he stayed only five days. The diary format is one recommended by Ramusian instruction guides for travelers with literary inclinations or aspirations (see J. Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550–1800* [Chur, Switzerland 1995]). Pereyra de Paiva switched after a few days' entries to a thematic order, going through

The actual or legendary origins of the Malabar coast Jews is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice to say that they were clearly established by the end of the first millenium.⁸ There seems to be no doubt that there were indeed Jewish “chiefs” or “nobles” at Cranganore, though the town was abandoned for Cochin, some few miles away, between 1344, the first exodus, and 1565, when Jews left en masse.⁹

Of the medieval references to Jews in India, only one, that of Benjamin of Tudela, mentioned Black Jews.¹⁰ Further, none of the early non-Jewish mentions of South Indian Jews (the Arab geographer Abû Sa’id al-Hassan, Ibn Wahab of Bassora, al-Idrisi, Ibn Battuta, Marco Polo, Oderic of Pordenone, John of Montecorvino, Muhammad b. Abi Talib al-Dimashqi, Pedro Alvarez) referred to skin color. The visit of the Yemenite poet Zacharia ben Sa’adia ben Jacob al Zahari (or al-Dahri) in the first half of the sixteenth century (J. B. Segal placed it at 1570)¹¹ produced no mention of color, though it was one of the earliest mentions of there being two distinct Jewish communities. The Yemenite poet concisely summed up what was to become (what already was?) a major bone of contention between the two communities. Although these “other congregations” were not called Black, they were here said to be descendants of Kushite and Canaanite slaves:

a number of topics of interest. Perhaps in this, too, he was following the Aristotelian method, as advanced by Peter Ramus and later René Descartes, of beginning with the simple and moving toward the complex.

⁸ In any case, the earliest Jews dwelled in places such as Cranganore (or Shingly), Palur, Madai, Calicut, Muttam (or Muttath), and perhaps other places on the Malabar coast. The concentration of Jews in and near Cochin came only after 1341, when a flood changed the shape of the coastline, silting up the once thriving port of Cranganore and opening Cochin as a major harbour for trade (see J. B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* [London 1993]; D. G. Mandelbaum, “Social Stratification among the Jews of Cochin in India and in Israel,” in *Jews in India*, ed. T. A. Timberg [Sahibabad, India 1986]).

⁹ S. S. Koder, “Saga of the Jews of Cochin,” in *Jews in India*, p. 137 n. 32. As noted above, a flood “created” the port town of Cochin in 1341. Cranganore was sacked by the Portuguese in 1504, by the Muslims in 1524 (who sought to oust the Jews and then the Portuguese), and again by the Portuguese in 1565/6 (N. Katz and E. S. Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin: Jewish Identity in Hindu India* [Columbia, S.C. 1993], pp. 6, 64). For historical reference, the Portuguese arrived in India in 1498, the Dutch ousted them in 1663, and the British expelled the Dutch in 1797.

¹⁰ Benjamin’s description was quite positive. It is unlikely, however, that Benjamin visited the region himself. He probably merely reported information he had heard (Y. Levanon, *Jewish Travellers in the Twelfth Century* [Lanham, Md. 1980], p. 139), unless like other so-called “travel liars,” he invented things when convenient.

¹¹ Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 23.

A congregation of Sephardim from the Jewish stock
 With other congregations
 But they are proselytes
 And converted in earlier times
 From the Kushites¹² and Canaanites
 [They are] knowers of practice and law
 And the laws of the Torah they acknowledge.¹³

Color crept in more frequently with direct European contact and conquest in the fifteenth century, in an effort to situate these “exotic” Jews.¹⁴ A former Portuguese *converso* named Hayim Franco, possibly a member of Vasco da Gama’s second expedition to India, related his experiences of the Jews in Cranganore to Yohanan Alemanno while visiting Mantua in 1503–1504. Franco stated that the Jews “are black and white, like the other Indians.” Arthur Lesley, who discovered Franco’s testimony in a manuscript note of Alemanno’s, suggested that it “may mean as little as that the Jews were indistinguishable from other Indians in their appearance, or as much as that they, like other Indians, were divided among themselves according to color.”¹⁵ The Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa mentioned Jews at Cochin as “natives of the country” in 1516.¹⁶ Already in the late 1550s Portuguese inquisitors in Goa who were investigating the activities of various New Christians with the Jewish community of Cochin, as well as some of

¹² Segal read this as “Cochinis” (ibid.).

¹³ Cited in N. Bar-Giora, “Source Material for the History of the Relations between the White Jews and the Black Jews of Cochin” [in Hebrew], *Sefunot* 1 (1956), p. 247. The conflict between those alleged to be descendants of slaves (*lo* or *einan meyuhasin*) and other Jews in the community (*meyuhasin*) generated enough passion, and possibly violence, that a missive seeking a resolution was sent early in the sixteenth century to R. David ibn Zimra in Cairo and another around a century later to his successor. Again, though the issue of the disputed manumission of these slaves was raised, color was never mentioned (see Segal, “White and Black Jews,” pp. 230–31; idem, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, pp. 24–25).

¹⁴ This is not to say that the Blackness of the one group did not play a role in their contemptuous treatment by the other group. The visiting Yemenite poet also related the story of a Jew who had come from abroad and was betrothed to marry a woman whom he ultimately rejected because of her Blackness and her being a “despised slave woman” (Segal, “White and Black Jews,” p. 233).

¹⁵ A. M. Lesley, “Shingly in Cochin Jewish Memory and in Eyewitness Accounts,” *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 3 (2000), pp. 8, 17, 14.

¹⁶ Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 107 n. 91. Shortly after the Portuguese arrival in India, Yitshak Abravanel mentioned reading a missive brought back from India by Portuguese mariners who saw many Jews there, along with a letter from one of their sages. Nowhere was skin color raised (Yitshak Abravanel, *Perush al ha-Torah* [Commentary on the Torah], 3 vols. [Jerusalem 1963], comm. to Jer. 3:18).

the New Christians themselves, described some of the Cochini Jews as “whites” and others as “blacks” [*pretos*] or “malabars.”¹⁷ Jan Huygen van Linschoten, a Dutch traveler visiting India in 1584, noted that the Jews outside of Cochin “are most white of color, like men of *Europa*, & haue many fair women.”¹⁸ Another Dutch traveler, Baldaeus, wrote that “In and around the city of Cochin live [...] also some Jews who even have a synagogue allowed them outside the fortifications; they are neither white nor brown, but quite black.”¹⁹ The Portuguese friar António de Gouveia, writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, described the Jews of Malabar as “of the color of those of the land, excepting some whites of upper Cochin, who come from other parts, or sons of those who arrived from [elsewhere], & they are very ancient in Malabar.”²⁰ Finally, Portuguese authorities in Goa employed terms of color to describe the differing Jewish communities. In 1636, the Viceroy of Goa wrote to the king of Portugal seeking a course of action regarding “the synagogues of the white and black Jews that the king of Cochin permitted in his territory.”²¹

With the arrival of European residents and colonists, Jews as well as Christians, the categorization of black/white evidently became more useful in understanding and depicting the Cochin Jewish community. Certainly, in part, this development stemmed from the increasing color consciousness of these Europeans themselves. Perhaps the most prominent example of this growing usefulness can be found in Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva’s, *Notisias dos judeos de Cochim*. In this slim travel report, Pereyra de Paiva provided a list of Cochin’s Jewish householders, noting in front of some of them a “B” for “*branco*” [white].

About Pereyra de Paiva’s biography much remains uncertain, though he came from one of the most prominent and wealthy families among the Amsterdam Sephardim.²² According to the approbation by Rabbi

¹⁷ J. A. R. da Silva Tavim, “Os Judeus e a expansão portuguesa na Índia durante o século XVI. O exemplo de Isaac do Cairo: Espião, ‘Língua’ e ‘Judeu de Cochim de Cima,’” *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian* 33 (1994), pp. 189–90, 200.

¹⁸ John Huighen van Linschoten, *His Discourse of Voyages Unto Ye Easte & West Indies* (London: Iohn Wolfe, n.d. [1598]), p. 79.

¹⁹ Cited in Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 29.

²⁰ Cited in Tavim, “Os Judeus e a expansão portuguesa na Índia,” p. 152.

²¹ Governo Geral do Estado da Índia, *Assentos do conselho do estado*, 5 vols., ed. Panduronga S. S. Pissurlencar (Bastora, Goa 1953), vol. 2, p. 159 (doc. 45).

²² See Appendix. We know from the frontispiece of the *Notisias* that Pereyra de Paiva paid for the text’s publication, itself an indication of the financial resources at his disposal.

Isaac Aboab da Fonseca prefacing the *Notisias*, Pereyra de Paiva's report conveys an accurate and publishable ethnography of "our brother inhabitants" in the recently Dutch, Asian subcontinent.²³ Pereyra de Paiva left Amsterdam on 26 November 1685 and arrived in Cochin on 21 November 1686 (*Notisias*, 5). According to some scholars, the Amsterdam *parnassim* sent Pereyra de Paiva, with some other men, to India in order to investigate the Cochin Jewish community.²⁴ Nonetheless, I have found no evidence to support the assertion that Pereyra de Paiva came with a "delegation" bearing an official mandate from the *parnassim*. A Hebrew letter, c. 1787, from a member (members?) of the Paradesi or White Jews of Cochin to the Portuguese Jewish community in New York contained the following depiction:

And in 1686 according to the Christians four people from Amsterdam came here to Cochin: Moses Pereyra, Isaac Orgas [Ergas?],²⁵ Abraham Burta, Isaac Mocat.²⁶ And they were Jews, Sephardim, merchants, and they saw all the places where Jews live, and they were glad, and wrote to Amsterdam all the matters and also the lack of books. And because they heard they sent from the Holy Community of Amsterdam a gift to the Holy Community of Cochin: humashim [Pentateuchs], mahzorim [Holiday prayerbooks], and the Shulhan Arukh, and some other books and the whole congregation rejoiced. And from that time we had friends in Amsterdam and we write to them and they bring books which we need until today.²⁷

The ethnological gaze of the "developed" Jewish community intertwined from the start with philanthropy. The ethnological import of this first mission to this "exotic" Jewish community can be further gleaned from the twelve historical and thirty-five ritual questions put to the

²³ From the approbation of Rabbi Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, 9 Elul 5447 (1687), in Pereyra de Paiva, *Notisias*, p. 2. Hereafter, page references will be given in the text.

²⁴ Amzalak, "Introduction," *Notisias*, p. 17; S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York 1952-), vol. 18, p. 406.

²⁵ In his report, written in the second person plural, Pereyra named none of his companions. If Ergas is the correct name here, this traveler might be the son of the Amsterdam *parnas* David Hergas.

²⁶ Possibly the name Mocatta is meant here, of which there were families in Amsterdam and London. An Isaac Mocatta established a sugar refinery in Amsterdam in the late 1660s or early 1670s, a refinery that remained in the family's hands at least through 1710 (D. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* [London 2000], p. 154).

²⁷ G. A. Kohut, "Correspondence between the Jews of Malabar and New York a Century Ago," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut*, ed. G. A. Kohut (Berlin 1897), p. 428.

community by Pereyra de Paiva, which he appended to the end of his report along with the rather laconic answers.²⁸ The “questionnaire” constituted one of the forms of surveillance developed by and in the early modern era, especially by ecclesiastical authorities.²⁹ Though today Pereyra de Paiva’s report appears obscure, within twenty-five years of its publication no fewer than three Yiddish editions came out, one but a few days after the original Portuguese version.³⁰ Pereyra de Paiva’s report presents a form of Jewish colonial travel literature, its wider dissemination curtailed probably only by the thinness of the text. Yet in the eighteenth century, the *Notisias* was cited by Tuvya ha-Cohen in a scientific treatise, and excerpted in Bernard Picart’s well-known survey of world religions.³¹

Pereyra de Paiva’s text constitutes a fascinating auto-ethnographic Jewish text. Auto-ethnographic texts, writes Mary Louise Pratt, are not “what are usually thought of as ‘authentic’ or autochthonous forms of self-representation,” but rather involve “partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror.” Often, “the idioms appropriated and transformed are those of travel and exploration writing, merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous

²⁸ There is no proof that the Amsterdam *parnassim* or *hakhamim* knew in advance of Pereyra de Paiva’s journey. His statement at the end of the questions implies that he concocted them in light of his exposure to the local customs and not in advance: “All these questions I put to them notwithstanding that they follow our *minhag*, because I am in favor of informing myself with a foundation in order to proceed securely” (*Notisias*, p. 15).

²⁹ See P. Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge 1987), chap. 4 (“The Bishop’s Questions and the People’s Religion”). Burke here treats the Italian Church’s late seventeenth-century implementation of surveys that parish priests filled out about their parishioners. Church “visitors” to the “heathen” south of Italy compiled similar surveys on local popular religion and heresy. Questionnaires were used even earlier by the Spanish monarchs in their efforts to administer their American colonies.

³⁰ See L. and R. Fuks, “Jewish Historiography in the Netherlands in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. S. Lieberman (Jerusalem 1975); Amzalak, in Pereyra de Paiva, *Notisias*, p. 19. The first Yiddish edition was Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, *Kennis der yehudim fun KUSHIM o der Zeitung aus Indien* (Amsterdam: Uri Phoebus, 1687); a second edition was *Wahrhaftige Kantschaft oder Hidushin aus Ostindia* (1688); the first Yiddish edition was reissued in 1713. Mendes dos Remedios mentions a Spanish translation in the Montezinos/Ets Haim Library in Amsterdam, without dating its production (J. Mendes dos Remedios, *Os Judeus portugueses em Amsterdam* [Coimbra 1911], p. 112).

³¹ Tuvya ha-Cohen, *Ma’ase Tuvya o Sefer ha-Olamot* (Venice: Bragadina 1707), p. 71b; Bernard Picart, *Cérémonies et Costumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples Du Monde* (Amsterdam: J. F. Bernard 1723), in the chapter on the Jews in China and Hindustan.

modes.”³² Of the genesis of Pereyra de Paiva’s feelings, well in tune with his time, of “fraternal love [...] always, with living truth, to see for myself our brothers of Cochim,” we know nothing (p. 3). Nonetheless, using the format of the travel report genre, he cast his gaze at these other Jews who, in his eyes, wavered between the categories of “same” and “different.” The rites and ceremonies stood mostly parallel with “ours,” those of western Sephardim, other than in a handful of cases, which Pereyra duly recorded, “more for reason of curiosity than importance” (p. 8).³³ Pereyra de Paiva captured a glimpse of these Indian Jews through a discourse more “scientific” than that which reported on the Lost Tribes for medieval readers. Though he indeed asked his informants “whether they have any notice of the 9 tribes” (p. 13)—nine because these Cochini Jews constitute the tenth?—these Cochinis presented a more complicated “modern” Jewish community than the mirage-inflected medieval “lost tribespeople.” For one thing, Cochin boasted “eastern” Jews and “western” Jews, colonial Jews and Jews of the metropole.³⁴ Still, Pereyra de Paiva provided several indications of

³² M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London/New York 1992), p. 7.

³³ Curiosity, of course, served as a driving force behind overseas expansion and travel and for the literary and information industries feeding off of them (Stagl, *History of Curiosity*). Travelers who sought adventure, exoticism, and distance frequently came from the ranks of the urban middle classes, such as did our author, often questing after a less humdrum existence and larger horizons. Additionally, most such travelers in this age of the expanding self desired, as did René Descartes, “to search for no knowledge other than what could be found within myself, or else in the great book of the world” (“Discourse on the Method for Conducting One’s Reason Well and for Seeking the Truth in the Sciences,” in *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. D. A. Cress, 4th ed. [Indianapolis 1998], p. 5). At the end of his list of the questions he put to the community (and its answers), Pereyra de Paiva apologized for subjecting his “brothers” to the instruments of the ethnographic speculum, that is, for doubting their kinship (see the passage quoted above, in n. 28).

³⁴ The mechanisms allowing Pereyra’s look at the Cochin Jews formed his knowledge differently from the medieval “Prester John” model, a difference appearing in the *Noticias*. Pereyra’s informants told him (in response to one of his questions) that they first got notice of the Amsterdam Sephardi congregation in the 1620s (p. 13), that is, when Dutch mercantile and colonial agents began to appear in India. His question marked a cognizance of the “simultaneity” then embodied in Dutch and English newspapers, with their burgeoning nationalism and overseas extensions. In Pereyra de Paiva’s report we see a Jewish nation looking at itself anew in a changing global diaspora (see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [London/New York 1991], pp. 187–92). Pereyra’s question about whether or not the informant community had been well-treated by “the ministers of the Company,” i.e. the Dutch East India Company, shows this newly-developing “simultaneity” as a kind of opportunity for minority counter-surveillance (p. 13).

their exoticism. “The women do not go out [of their houses], nor are seen in their homes,” wrote Pereyra de Paiva (p. 7). The hosts presented a concert for the visitors, whose “harmonies were pleasing enough, even if it [the concert] was too long” (p. 4), a curiously restrained description given the florid language throughout the *Notisias*. Pereyra de Paiva evidently did not fully appreciate this “Indian” music.

One of the most significant elements of Pereyra de Paiva’s construction of Cochini identity consisted of his detailing which community members were White. Here, then, is Pereyra de Paiva’s list of the heads of families:

LIST OF THE HEADS OF FAMILIES

- *B. H[aham]. R. Haim Belilia—his great grandfather from safet. (c. 1566)
- B. David Levy Medulhar—his grandfather from Germany. (c. 1596)
- B. Haim Belilia, teacher, scribe—his great grandfather from Alepo. (1566)
- B. David Raby—from Alepo. (1646)
- B. H. Hia Pinto—from Damascus. (d. in Cochin 1689)
- Elia and David Castiel—his great, great, great grandfather from Castella (Spain). (c. 1566)
- Jeuda and David Asquenazim—sons of the distinguished H. Mosseh Asquenaz
- his grandfather from Germany. (d. in Cochin 1646)
- Semtob Castiel has retired to Paru by order of Batavia, owing to some unpleasantness he had with David Levy whose post he occupied before. (some branches of the family said to have come in 1511)
- Mosseh Aleva—his grandfather from Alepo. (1606)
- B. Joseph and Zacharias Zackay—descendants of the first families from Cranganore, their grandfather the distinguished H. Selomo Zackay.
- B. Semuel Barrioti—his father and grandfather from Constantina. (1578)
- David Belilia—his grandfather from Jerusalem. (1596)
- B. Elia a Reuyaly (Reby) his great grandfather from Jerusalem and the first foreigner in Cochin. (c. 1566)
- Ishac and Abraham Aleva—their grandfather from Alepo. (1596)
- B. Sason Michael from the city of Xiras in Persia.

- B. Joseph Susany (Guer [proselyte]) from Susan the capitol [Persia].
Aaron of Cranganore of the first families.
- B. Isaque Toby from Berberia.
Mosseh and Meyr, from the seed of the [Cranganor?] royalty on
the mother's side.
- B. Joseph Asury from Babel
- * N.B. the "B" denotes Whites (p. 6).³⁵

Several conclusions can be tentatively drawn from this text. First, one should note that the community was "quite cosmopolitan."³⁶ The population included Jews from Germany, Spain, Damascus, Aleppo, Safed, Jerusalem, Turkey, Persia, Iraq, Berberia, etc. Interestingly, Pereyra de Paiva listed as White some Jews from Middle Eastern countries and North Africa, and left out some Jews from Germany and even Iberian lands! Jews derived from the families at Cranganore—and therefore earlier arrivals than those who seem to have fled the Iberian persecutions—were also called White. Second, it appears that non-White Jews also belonged to this Paradesi community (the name *Paradesi* means "foreigner," and refers to those who came from abroad to India, especially from the west). It is unclear whose "voice" the listing of Whites represents. Perhaps the listing was Pereyra de Paiva's concoction, or perhaps he was told by members of the Paradesi synagogue who was White and who not.

But questions regarding this list abound. Pereyra de Paiva's taxonomy does not correspond exactly to similar taxonomies said by the Frenchman François Pyrard de Laval—who was in South India around 1608—to have been used in the area by the reigning Portuguese. Pyrard de Laval described the social structure as follows:

To the Portuguese the most esteemed are those who have come from Portugal and are called "Portuguese of Portugal," next are those born in India of Portuguese father and mother and called *castici*...; the least esteemed are the offspring of a Portuguese and an Indian parent and called *Metices*, that is *Metifs*, or mixed. Those born of a Portuguese father and a caffre or African *negro* mother are called *Mulestres* are held in like consideration with the *Metifs*.

³⁵ The parenthetical dates for the arrival of the ancestors in Cochin come from S. S. Koder, "Saga of the Jews of Cochin"; the asterisked note is Pereyra de Paiva's.

³⁶ Katz and Goldberg, *Last Jews of Cochin*, p. 92.

Not surprisingly, Pyrard de Laval related that the Portuguese

will not that any Portuguese or other [European] should do any vile or dishonourable work, nor should beg his livelihood; they will rather maintain him to the best of their power. Insomuch that the greatest of them treat the lowliest with honour, and they infinitely prize the title “Portuguese of Portugal,” calling such a one *Homo blanco* or white man, all the poor Indians they despise, as though they would trample them under their feet.³⁷

Pereyra de Paiva’s Whites should thus have corresponded with those born outside of India, to the “purely foreign-born” in the Portuguese scheme.³⁸ But if the dates of the families’ arrival in India given by Koder are accurate, then some of those listed as Whites must have been born in India. “White” could indicate “of foreign extraction,” as some of those listed were Sephardim and we know that the sixteenth-century Yemenite poet al-Zahari called the *meyuhasin* Jews “Sephardim,” while in the seventeenth century the *meyuhasin* were known as “Majorcan” Jews.³⁹ Yet the list of Whites does not correspond to the “First Spanish Jews” (p. 8) who arrived in Cochin in the year 5373 (1513/14).⁴⁰

J. B. Segal stated that the “White” heads of households designated those families that “had not acquired an Indian strain.”⁴¹ But this does not come across clearly in Pereyra de Paiva’s account of the heads of the Paradesi households:

All of these people are very well disposed, and by nature gentle, Great Jews, and *ba’alei* Torah, and Lesser Merchants could not puncture them, and by color they have become mulattos, which certainly proceeds from the climate, seeing that they are totally separated from the Malabars, [...] that there is Great disgrace in marrying them [Here Pereyra de Paiva inserts a note in the margin: “They cite as a Reason that they are slaves of slaves, and that they are mixed with Canaanites, Converts and Muslims.”], they do not eat from their butcher nor count them as one of the ten men needed for prayer, even though they observe in everything, all of them, the same rites and ceremonies as do the others (pp. 6–7).

³⁷ Cited in Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 22.

³⁸ As suggested by Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 43.

³⁹ Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, p. 42; Bar-Giora, “Source Material,” p. 246.

⁴⁰ My reading of the list in the *Noticias* found corroboration in that of Tavim, “Os Judeus e a expansão portuguesa na Índia,” pp. 194–97, which I received only after the preparation of my manuscript.

⁴¹ Segal, “White and Black Jews,” p. 237.

Phenotypically, even the Paradesi Jews were not White, as Pereyra de Paiva himself noted, though he was careful to ascribe their color to the accident of the “environment” and not to miscegenation with people who were dark “by nature.” Visiting community leader David Raby (i.e. David Rahabi), Pereyra de Paiva was able “with great difficulty” to see his two daughters.⁴² They were, he wrote, both “gentle, young, white and beautiful [*Alvas, e lindas*]” (p. 7). As explained above, the children would darken as they grow under the Indian sun. These were yet White, since the girls were young and the women in general never left their houses. Yet Whiteness often served as a trope that ironically had little to do with skin color; Pereyra de Paiva’s list proves no exception. Pereyra de Paiva described *all* of the heads of households as having avoided intermarriage with the “Indian,” Black Jews. Hence, again, we are left with the difficulty that some of these leaders were not listed as White.

Pereyra de Paiva’s taxonomy fails to fully correspond to the Indian caste system or, at least, to such a system as it is usually understood.⁴³ For one thing, the complicated, historical unfolding of the caste structure leaves it uncertain whether caste meant very much in early colonial, southern India. During the seventeenth century, socio-political organization based itself increasingly—but loosely and hardly in a uniform fashion—on ties of blood and privileged, client-sponsor relations with elite lineages. The fractured multiplicity of urban merchants, priests, warrior groups, courtiers, etc., relied more and more on the asserted superiority of their groups over the rural peasantry and lower classes, but again, the notion of castes among Indian collectives, especially in the south, was probably still less systematic than that constructed by Portuguese colonists.⁴⁴ Even so, while many castes and sub-castes differed from one another in custom and habit, Pereyra de Paiva and others attested to the identical Judaisms of the two Jewish communities; only in economic focus and power did the two communities differ.

⁴² On the prominent merchant David Rahabi, who was not Sephardi, see B. Weinstein, “Jewish Pepper Traders of the Malabar Coast: The Rahabis,” *Indo-Judaic Studies Journal* 5 (2002), pp. 40–54.

⁴³ The literature on Indian castes—the term derives from the Portuguese *casta*—is vast. See, among recent titles, S. Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, *The New Cambridge History of India*, pt. 4, vol. 3 (New York 1999); C. Smaje, *Natural Hierarchies: The Historical Sociology of Race and Caste* (Malden, Mass. 2000); R. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford 1990).

⁴⁴ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics*, chap. 1, esp. pp. 32, 35.

Ultimately, one has a circularly-defined sub-caste of “elite” Jews, despite the fact that even Pereyra de Paiva described the Jews from “the other side” of the river as equally wealthy. All evidence suggests that what distinguished the *meyuhasin* from the non-*meyuhasin* was that the former claimed “unquestioned Jewish status” and “attested lineage.”⁴⁵ This is more than likely the (self-)articulation of their difference from the “other” Jews—who, they allege, “are slaves of Slaves, and are mixed with Canaanites, Gerim [converts] and Ishmaelites” (p. 7, sidebar note)—though even with this explanation one sees that yet another, different and not fully consistent distinction has been made between Whites and non-Whites. Pereyra de Paiva himself presented the already well-attested history of the Black Jews in a paragraph entitled “Their Origin.” They

proceeded from the fact that The Jews of Cranganore possessed Great prosperity and numbers of Slaves, and among them a Ba’al Torah, a Prime citizen and powerful, who taught Judaism to 25 of his [slaves], giving them liberty and a synagogue. Some time passed, the Masters of Cranganore, dying and becoming fewer, the slaves were annexed to them, increasing in the manner presently seen (p. 8).

It must be noted that nowhere does Pereyra de Paiva mention any halakhic impropriety. Improper or unclear manumission of these slaves could have provided a valid halakhic reason to object to their or their descendants’ inclusion in community ritual life. Such charges indeed constituted a large part of the two queries sent from Cochin to Rabbi David ibn Zimra and his student, Rabbi Jacob Castro, in the sixteenth century.⁴⁶ Immediately following Pereyra de Paiva’s brief history of the Malabar Jews, in the same section devoted to “Their Origin,” comes a paragraph that completes the implied merism encompassing the community: “In the era of 1512. Arrived The First Spanish Jews at Cochin, in whose Place they Took Root, with their Synagogue, which today they keep very pretty, and of the size of that of London” (p. 8). Unlike the Malabaris, these Sephardi Jews warrant pleasing adjectives, possess civility, and their achievements can be compared with those of European Jews. In the sense that the Paradesi community represented a self-willed political assemblage of a subject-citizenry with particular

⁴⁵ See Katz and Goldberg, *Last Jews of Cochin*, p. 133.

⁴⁶ The former was published from manuscript in A. Marx, “Contribution à l’histoire des Juifs de Cochin,” *REJ* 89 (1930), pp. 297–301; the latter appears in Jacob Castro, *Ohalei Ya’akov* (Livorno 1783), responsum no. 99.

interests, which based its claims on genealogy (i.e. not having mixed with former slaves or converts), place of family origin (abroad, Cranganore), and skin color (White), we arrive at a general parallel to Indian castes.⁴⁷ In Pereyra de Paiva's list, one sees this self-representation reflected through the eyes of the Portuguese *sistema de castas*, though no apparent systemization of Pereyra de Paiva's list of Whites fully resolves the list's gaps and contradictions. Finally, it seems that the situation generated by freeing slaves and intermingling with them in Cochin struck Pereyra de Paiva as an intriguing parable; Amsterdam during the mid and late seventeenth century experienced its own troubles with Black servants and ex-slaves, who had been excluded by a series of communal ordinances from conversion or absorption into the congregation and from participation in certain aspects of its ritual life.⁴⁸

Commercial ties and aspirations, often one of the defining factors in the differentiation of Indian urban groups, might have made a subjectively-defined affinity for Europe the most salient factor in attaining Whiteness. Pereyra de Paiva's designation of *branco* in his 1686 list of householders was hardly the first such usage regarding the Cochin community, since many descriptions by Europeans since the sixteenth century, especially those by Portuguese witnesses, employed the color schema of the *sistema de castas*. To some degree, however, Bar-Giora holds Pereyra de Paiva's usage to be the one that established the trend considering the Paradesi (foreign) Jews to be Whites.⁴⁹ More important than its possible primary status, though, is what it reveals concerning the turn to color or race in the distinctions being made between the two communities. Segal cites a 1676 letter to Amsterdam from the Paradesi Jew David Rahabi, whom Pereyra de Paiva visited in Cochin, reporting that the majority of Jews in Cochin were "black like Ethiopians except

⁴⁷ See Inden, *Imagining India*, pp. 217–28, 239–44; Smaje, *Natural Hierarchies*, p. 181. One author who read the behavior of the Paradesi Jews as "accept[ing] the Indian mode of social stratification" is D. G. Mandelbaum, "Caste and Community among the Jews of Cochin in India and Israel," in *Caste Among Non-Hindus in India*, ed. H. Singh (New Delhi 1977), pp. 107–40.

⁴⁸ Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World*, chaps. 7–8. In a similar manner, local concerns in Amsterdam led Pereyra de Paiva to ascertain whether the Cochins have knowledge of Shabbetai Zevi (pp. 9, 13).

⁴⁹ Bar-Giora, "Source Material," p. 247. Elsewhere Bar-Giora writes that it was another Dutch immigrant, Moshe Sargon (Surgun?), who came to Cochin shortly after Pereyra, who first used the term "Blacks" as a derogatory epithet for the local Jews who were not *meyuhasin* (Bar-Giora, "Source Material," p. 249). Unfortunately and disappointingly, Bar-Giora fails to produce any documentation.

for some twenty-five families who are of white or whitish complexion, *some of them eager to claim European descent.*"⁵⁰ Linschoten's full comments on the Jews outside of Cochin reiterated the connection between Whiteness and Europe: "they are most white of color, like men of *Europa*, & haue many fair women. There are manie of them that came out of the country of *Palestina & Ierusalem* thether, and speake ouer all the Exchange verie perfect and good *Spanish*."⁵¹ Rahabi's above-mentioned letter may very well have provided the impetus for the Indian voyage of Pereyra de Paiva and his colleagues. Yet another letter (or a Portuguese translation of it) from the same year, 1676, authored by the Cochini Jews Venbeniste Hain Belilho and Mosseh Asquenazi, can be found in the incoming correspondence of the Amsterdam *parnasim*.⁵² This second letter made no mention of the two Cochin communities or any conflict, but did allude lamentingly to the absence of direct contact with the Dutch Sephardim, something Pereyra de Paiva also raised in the *Notisias* (p. 4).

Earlier commercial partnerships between Cochini Jewish merchants and Portuguese *conversos* in Cochin had not withstood the growing inquisitorial persecution within Portuguese society in India, nor did Jewish commerce in general succeed in staving off Portuguese competition.⁵³ The timing of Pereyra de Paiva's journey may thus have had something to do with the changing face of commerce in colonial India. After the Dutch conquest of 1663, Jewish merchants were again able to take advantage of commercial opportunities. Indeed, it was the Rahabi family, who arrived in Cochin only in the late 1640s, that

⁵⁰ My emphasis; Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*, pp. 53–54.

⁵¹ Linschoten, *Discourse of Voyages*, p. 79.

⁵² GAA PA 334, no. 66, unbound items; CAHJP microfilm HM2 1565a, no pagination.

⁵³ Some of these are described in J. A. R. da Silva Tavim, "From Setúbal to the Sublime Porte: The Wanderings of Jácome de Olivares, New Christian and Merchant of Cochin (1540–1571)," in *Sinners and Saints: The Successors of Vasco da Gama*, ed. S. Subrahmanyam (New Delhi 1995), pp. 94–134. In the early seventeenth century, Samuel Castiel, an influential merchant and relative of the Castiels' listed by Pereyra de Paiva, served the ruler of Cochin as interpreter to the Portuguese, while according to various testimonies to the Goa Inquisition, "the Jews of India" had sent letters to Yosef Nassi (alias João Miguez or Micas) in Constantinople (Tavim, "From Setúbal," pp. 118, 120). In a culmination of anti-Jewish sentiment based on commercial competition, Castiel was murdered by Portuguese residents in 1643; see S. Subrahmanyam, "Cochin in Decline, 1600–1650: Myth and Manipulation in the *Estado da Índia*," in *Portuguese Asia: Aspects in History and Economic History (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)*, ed. R. Ptak (Stuttgart 1987), p. 82.

soon dominated the local mercantile landscape.⁵⁴ In the early 1680s the Dutch East India Company attempted to bolster trade of pepper and other commodities at Cochin, which at the time stood as the sole recognized point of export for pepper, providing passes to Malabar—as of 1683—only to Cochini merchants. The same years saw the Dutch grudgingly accepting the end of the monopoly system, as far as pepper was concerned.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the English East India Company was making efforts to manage its own monopoly of the diamond trade from India. In the 1680s, Jewish Sephardi agents first received permission from the company to operate at Madras, and then, under Dutch protection, in Surat.⁵⁶ Among these agents was a possible relative of Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva's, Jaques (or Isaque or James) de Paiva (or de Paiba), who in 1684 was permitted to go to Madras to trade in diamonds. Perhaps, ultimately, Pereyra de Paiva's "codification" of White Jews in Cochin reflected the need in Sephardi Amsterdam and London for trustworthy kin with whom to trade in India. His entire venture to Cochin and his conveyance of White Jewish potential trading partners may even have been part of an attempt to strengthen his own position in the India trade. Perhaps for this reason Pereyra de Paiva began his text with an "Account of the Affectionate Reception we experienced among our Brothers The Inhabitants of upper Cochin" (p. 3; this is his actual title for the whole text), repeatedly emphasized in the *Notisias* the Mallorcan origins of the community and the date of the arrival of "the first Sephardim," the year 1512 (p. 8), and stated allusively that the Cochinis' welcome of these Dutch visitors was such "that I assure Your Graces [his report was addressed to the Sephardi community's *parnasim* in Amsterdam] Sirs Brothers that were the King Messiah to enter through the door it could not have been done Better" (p. 4). Already in 1676 Pereyra de Paiva's uncle, Mosseh, had become a partner along with another uncle, Aron Pereyra, in a consortium of Amsterdam jewel buyers. If the historian Edgar Roy Samuel is correct in his assertion that our Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva operated as a jewel trader in Surat

⁵⁴ Subrahmanyam, "Cochin in Decline," pp. 84–85.

⁵⁵ H. K. s'Jacob, *The Rajas of Cochin, 1663–1720: Kings, Chiefs and the Dutch East India Company* (New Delhi 2000), pp. 61–64, 88.

⁵⁶ G. Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (Leicester/New York 1978), p. 37; E. R. Samuel, "Diamonds and Pieces of Eight: How Stuart England Won the Rough-Diamond Trade," *Jewish Historical Studies* 38 (2003), p. 32; W. J. Fischel, "The Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat" [in Hebrew], *Sefunot* 9 (1965), pp. 249–62.

under the name Pedro Pereyra, then he did so just after his Cochin adventure, during the late 1680s and early 1690s. Citing among other evidence James or Jacques de Paiva's published will, which mentioned "my Couzin Moses who goes with us to the Indies," Samuel believes this Moses to be our Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva.⁵⁷

The color-coded list of householders produced by Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva appeared amid a series of statements articulating anew the difference between the two Cochin communities, between two kinds of Jews ("color" vs. "status"), through the lens of an imported local situation (race and color as understood in various European metropolises). The distance between Rahabi's 1676 letter (the vague "white or whitish complexion," *their* unauthorized claim to Whiteness) and the list of Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva (with the categorical fixity of its bureaucratic marker "B" and its legitimizing repetition of *Paradesi* claims of European status) points to the transformation of this communal conflict under the gravitational pull of European empire and Sephardi international commerce. For some Sephardi Jews in India, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, European Whiteness seemed imperative.

Appendix: Toward a Biographical Sketch of Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva

Our author, Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, is almost certainly the alias of jewel merchant Pedro Pereyra. Edgar Roy Samuel first suggests this connection, which, if true, means that our author operated as an agent at the Dutch East India Company factory at Surat, India, trading jewels with/for the Amsterdam firm of Athias and Levy in the late 1680s and 1690s.⁵⁸ Already in 1676, Pereyra de Paiva's uncles, Mosseh and Aron Pereyra, both active Amsterdam merchant jewelers, became partners in

⁵⁷ See Appendix; personal communication (Nov. 2004). I am grateful to Mr. Samuel for kindly alerting me to this reference. Throughout, I have seen Pereyra de Paiva and/or Pedro Pereyra through the lens of recent analyses of seventeenth-century merchant capitalism such as M. Nerlich, *Ideology of Adventure: Studies in Modern Consciousness, 1100–1750*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis 1987); J. Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca 2005).

⁵⁸ E. R. Samuel, "Manuel Levy Duarte (1631–1714): An Amsterdam Merchant Jeweller and His Trade with London," *IJHSE* 27 (1978/1980), p. 28, n. 101. I have not had a chance yet to systematically retread the relevant archival sources, as I stumbled onto Pereyra de Paiva backwards, as it were, in the course of a project on Black-Jewish relations. I am therefore all the more grateful to Mr. Samuel for generously sharing with me his knowledge of the archival materials on which I rely.

a consortium of Amsterdam jewel buyers.⁵⁹ His father, Jacob Pereyra, an army contractor, was “a regular trader in jewelry.”⁶⁰ Mosseh/Pedro’s brother Isaac was an army contractor like their prominent and wealthy father, Jacob.⁶¹ Jacques de Paiva, a London trader in diamonds, went to India to buy rough jewels for the Antonio Rodrigues Marques syndicate; he mentioned in his 1685 last will and testament, “my Couzin Moses who goes with us to the Indies.”⁶² Samuel believes this to be a reference to Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva. The same will shows that Mosseh left for the Indies while still a bachelor, since De Paiva stated that, in the event that no family survives him, he bequeaths his remaining goods to one Mariana Gonsales, if her father would permit her to marry “my Couzin Moses.” In the *Notisias*, it should be noted, Pereyra de Paiva made no

⁵⁹ The two Pereyras shouldered one third of the partnership’s joint account, another third going to Jacob and Selomoh de Lima, and the final third to the firm of Athias and Levy (Buyers’ Cartel Agreement, 2 Aug. 1676, cited in Samuel, “Manuel Levy Duarte,” p. 29 [Appendix 2]); Fischel, “The Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat,” p. 251.

⁶⁰ Samuel, “Manuel Levy Duarte,” p. 28, n. 120; GAA PA 334/858/79, 589.

⁶¹ According to D. S. Katz, *Jews in the History of England, 1485–1850* (Oxford 1994), p. 158, Jacob Pereyra “dispatched his relative Isaac Pereyra” to England “to look after the firm’s interests there.” A letter from the English ambassador to the Moghul king, Sir William Norris, whom Pedro Pereyra greeted with ceremony and honor when the former arrived in Surat in 1700, mentioned that “A brother of [Pereyra’s] in London is a particular friend and an acquaintance of mine who I suppose had written to him to offer his service and show me all meane of respect” (quoted, in English, in Fischel, “Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat,” p. 259). This would seem to refer to Pereyra’s brother Isaac. According to Swetschinski, an Isaac and an Abraham Pereyra handled English and Irish operations for Machado & Pereyra (*Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, p. 139).

⁶² See also Samuel, “Diamonds and Pieces of Eight,” p. 32. De Paiva’s will was published in C. Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters, 1158–1917* (London 1938), pp. 78–80. According to Richard Barnett, De Paiva came from Portugal in 1675 with his brother Abraham de Paiba (R. D. Barnett [ed.], *The Circumcision Register of Isaac and Abraham de Paiba [1715–1775] from the Manuscript Record Preserved in the Archives of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation of London Named Sahar Asamaim, Together with a Supplement Including A Record of Circumcisions 1679–99, Marriages 1679–89 and Some Female Births 1679–99 Compiled by Miriam Rodrigues-Pereyra*, vol. 4 of *Bevis Marks Records* [London 1991], p. 7). Also in 1675, according to Barnett, Isaque emigrated from London with his second wife, Jeronima, and his servants to Fort St. George (Madras) where he traded in diamonds in partnership with Abraham do Porto. Isaque died in 1687 on a visit to the diamond mines of Golconda, central India (*ibid.*, pp. 7, 10). His will was written in 1685, the year before Pereyra de Paiva reached Cochin, and indicates that Jacques is about to leave for the Indies; hence either Barnett is wrong about an earlier stay at Madras or Jacques had already returned to England. According to Barnett and Samuel, James de Paiva’s Jewish name was Moses Zagache. His father was Diego Nieto de Paiva. Samuel confessed to me that he does not know exactly how De Paiva/Zagache was related to Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva’s mother, Ribca de Paiva (personal communication, November 2004).

mention of Surat. He did compare one of Cochin's synagogues to that of London, which I take to mean that he had been there.

In Surat, according to the Samuel hypothesis, Pedro/Mosseh traded in rough and prepared jewels with two other Portuguese Jewish partners, Antonio do Porto and Fernão Mendes Henriques. The latter's Hebrew name, according to Edgar Samuel, was none other than Isaac Ergas, a conclusive link between Pereyra de Paiva's party in Cochin and his colleagues in Surat.⁶³ In one of Antonio Gomes Serra's unpublished letters of 1685 to Manuel Levy Duarte (in Amsterdam), an officer of the firm Athias and Levy with whom Pedro Pereyra and his partners were trading jewels, Serra expressed his horror that Pedro should have left for India without asking for his father's blessing.⁶⁴ Letters to Pedro/Mosseh in India from Manuel Levy Duarte show that some dispute broke up the partnership between Pereyra, Do Porto, and Mendes.⁶⁵ In the letters, Levy Duarte made clear that business would continue with Pereyra, the other two partners having been relieved of their duties.⁶⁶

Walter Fischel is the first scholar to provide a biography of Pedro Pereyra, as far as I know, in a piece in *Sefunot* in 1965.⁶⁷ Fischel writes unaware of the shared identity of Pedro, the jewel merchant, and Mosseh, the visitor to Cochin and author of the *Notisias*. Instead, Fischel, who often does not explicitly identify his sources, understands Pedro and Mosseh to be brothers. Nonetheless, his (earlier) piece corroborates much of what Samuel maintains: Pereyra was born in Amsterdam

⁶³ Personal communication, December 2005.

⁶⁴ E. R. Samuel, personal communication, December 2005; letter of 22 December 1685 or 1 January 1686 (GAA 677/598). In the letter, Serra used Pedro's Jewish name, Mosseh, making it literally the only piece of evidence definitively marking Mosseh and Pedro as the same man (again, the *Notisias* never mentions Surat or jewel trading, while the Pedro Pereyra correspondence in the archives never mentions Mosseh or Cochin).

⁶⁵ Fischel, "Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat," relates the details of their careers as far as is known from the spotty archival record. In one place Samuel writes that there was "a dispute between do Porto and Pereyra" (Samuel, "Manuel Levy Duarte," p. 23), elsewhere that the three partners in Surat "quarrelled with each other" ("Diamonds and Pieces of Eight," p. 35). Antonio do Porto was the brother of the Domingo do Porto (alias Abraham do Porto) who had worked in Madras with James/Jacques/Isaque de Paiva (Samuel, "Diamonds and Pieces of Eight," p. 32).

⁶⁶ Letters of 3 January 1692, Manuel Levy Duarte, *Kopieboek van uitgaande stukken*, 1691–1707, GAA PA 334, no. 683, fol. 13; CAHJP microfilm HM2 2078–2079, no pagination. According to Samuel, "Manuel Levy Duarte," Athias and Levy ceased operations in 1690.

⁶⁷ Fischel, "The Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat," p. 251. Samuel writes unaware of Fischel's piece.

around 1652 (a 1690 certificate gives his age as thirty-eight years); his father was Jacob Pereyra, respected diamond merchant in Amsterdam; Pedro had three brothers, Abraham and Mosseh in Amsterdam, and Aron (also known as Francis Pereyra) in London. In addition, half of Pedro's fortune belonged to his *brother* Aron.⁶⁸

Fischel states that Pereyra left Amsterdam for the Indies in February of 1686 (according to another source, he left in September of that year) and reached Surat at the end of 1686 (according to another source, on 7 January 1687). These dates obviously differ from those offered in the *Notisias*. News of his arrival in India spread rapidly among European jewel traders because of his stature (or because he posed a competitive threat?). In Surat, his Portuguese Jewish partners and he, and later he alone, acted as independent agents, trading with a variety of clients. Fischel writes that Pedro Pereyra was last heard from in 1721 and died in Surat the next year.⁶⁹

Fischel finds some wonderful material in the letters that were exchanged between Europe and India, which paint Pereyra as a proud Jew and Dutchman who was conscious of his class and who presented himself as a pure-blooded Iberian. About one Dutch officer, who insulted him with an anti-Semitic epithet, Pereyra wrote: "He enjoys calling me 'the Jew' or 'the Sheeny Pereyra,' as if he knew neither me nor my family. I paid him back in kind, to show him that I was born to parents whose blood is unable to suffer such things. I have the honor to trade and do business with several of our rulers and kings and they always call me Pereyra."⁷⁰

It was Pedro Pereyra who explained to Sir William Norris, the new English Ambassador to the Moghul king, what to expect and how to behave at the court: "the rules of etiquette" and "the ceremony for greeting guests," that "one does not remove one's hat when approaching the King," and that no one, not even the king's son, sits when the king stands.⁷¹ From other incidents that Norris recounted in his diary, it is clear that Pereyra was a skilled translator, knowing at least enough to

⁶⁸ It is implied in Fischel's text that this information derives from a will or from a 1721 letter in the Dutch archives on Surat in which Pedro Pereyra asked a fellow Portuguese merchant to deliver nearly 40,000 rupees to Abraham Pereyra, whom Fischel holds to be Pedro's brother, along with Mosseh of Amsterdam and Francis of London ("Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat," p. 261).

⁶⁹ Fischel, "Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra," pp. 253, 261.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁷¹ Fischel, "Jewish Merchant Pedro Pereyra in Surat," p. 259.

avoid insulting the king.⁷² All this might reflect an ethnographic interest on Pereyra's part, but it could as easily have been knowledge gathered in the interest of personal and commercial survival.

Portuguese scholar Moses Bensabat Amzalak, who reprinted Pereyra de Paiva's *Notisias* in 1923, with a bio-bibliographic introduction that he penned, seems not to have been aware at all of the existence of Pedro Pereyra.⁷³

According to David Franco Mendes, Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva published the *Azharot* of the Yemenite Elias Adeni, which were sent from India by Moses Levy Belilio and printed in Amsterdam in 1688 by Uri Phoebus.⁷⁴ This Belilio was probably the same *hakham* Belilia met by Pereyra on the first page of his *Notisias*, the publication of the *azharot* likely an outcome of Pereyra de Paiva's visit itself. The Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva who wrote the *Notisias* clearly knew some Hebrew (it appears here and there, mostly in the guise of technical ritual terms) and evinced therein a fairly intimate knowledge of Judaism as a lived religion. Given the Sabbatian inclinations of his grandfather, Abraham Pereyra (and of his father, Jacob?), it is interesting to find Pereyra de Paiva, when he related that the Cochinitis knew nothing about Shabbetai Zevi, waxing enthusiastic over the possibility that Shabbetai Zevi remained alive (p. 9).⁷⁵ In addition, Pereyra de Paiva noted that the Cochinitis lacked the mystical work *Reshit Hochma* (p. 13) of Elijah de Vidas—an odd appearance alongside the Babylonian Talmud, “which they have only in fragments,” and the midrashic anthologies *Yalkut*

⁷² Ibid. The king would probably have spoken Farsi, not Gujarati, though Portuguese frequently served as the language of negotiation in Asian courts when Europeans were involved.

⁷³ Amzalak, “As ‘Notisias dos judeos de Cochim mandadas por Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva,’” *Notisias*, pp. 9–19.

⁷⁴ David Franco Mendes, “Memórias do estabelecimento e progresso dos judeos portugueses e espanhóis nesta famosa cidade de Amsterdam (Amsterdam 1769),” published with introduction and notes by L. Fuks and R. G. Fuks-Mansfield, *StRos* 9 (1975), pp. 93–94.

⁷⁵ He called Zevi a “fidalgo,” or gentleman, and hoped that “all the past,” i.e. news of Zevi's forced conversion to Islam, “be the birth-pangs of the messiah [*Heble Massiah*].” On Abraham Pereyra and Shabbetai Zevi, see G. Scholem, *Shabbetai Zevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton 1973), pp. 219, 358, 529–30, 755, 760–61, 888 n. 163, 893; Y. Kaplan, *From New Christians to New Jews* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem 2003), pp. 237, 245; idem, “Abraham Israel Pereyra's Embarrassment of Riches” [in Hebrew], in *Religion and Economy: Connections and Interactions*, ed. M. Ben-Sasson (Jerusalem 1995), pp. 233–51.

Shim'oni and *Yalkut Re'uveni!*, but one that testifies to Pereyra de Paiva's spiritual inclinations or heritage.

Mosseh/Pedro was the son of the prominent army contractor Jacob Pereyra of The Hague, and hence grandson of the Spanish-born Abraham Pereyra (also written as Pereyra, or Abraham Israel Pereyra or Thomás Rodríguez; he died in 1699), an extraordinarily wealthy leader of the Amsterdam community, writer of a number of ethical works in Spanish, founder of *yeshivot* in Amsterdam (1656) and Hebron (1659), and devotee of Shabbetai Zevi.⁷⁶ Pereyra, of Portuguese parents, fled Madrid and, apparently, the Inquisition, for Amsterdam. He arrived in 1646 and established a sugar refinery in 1655 or 1656 with his brother Isaac, also an Amsterdam resident, which they sold to a Dutchman in 1664 for over 45,000 guilders. According to Jonathan Israel, Abraham Pereyra came to Amsterdam bringing "important trading connections with [...] the Caribbean."⁷⁷ In Spain he had been a wool exporter and *asentista*, that is, he held contracts with the monarchy, usually monopolistic, to collect taxes, import/export slaves, market wool, or the like.⁷⁸

Jacob Pereyra (Mosseh's father) was born in 1629 in Madrid, and in 1651 married Ribca de Paiva (b. 1631, Seville).⁷⁹ He furnished supplies to various armies and provided banking services through his firm, Machado & Pereyra.⁸⁰ Jacob Pereyra's partner, Antonio Alvares Machado, owned a plantation in Surinam and financed the business

⁷⁶ On Pereyra, see H. Méchoulán, "Abraham Pereyra: esbozo bio-bibliográfico," in *Hispanidad y judaísmo en tiempos de Espinoza: estudio y edición anotada de La Certeza del Camino de Abraham Pereyra* (Salamanca 1987), pp. 49–54; Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, pp. 136, 211, 215 n. 170, 276, 279–80. In his moral works, Abraham Pereyra made extensive use of the Zohar-based book of De Vidas, *Reshit Hochma*, which had appeared in Spanish in Amsterdam in 1633 (Méchoulán, "Abraham Pereyra," pp. 72–73); hence perhaps its mention by Pereyra de Paiva.

⁷⁷ J. I. Israel, "Menasseh Ben Israel and the Dutch Sephardic Colonization Movement of the Mid-Seventeenth Century (1645–1657)," in *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World*, ed. Y. Kaplan, H. Méchoulán, and R. H. Popkin (Leiden 1989), p. 145.

⁷⁸ Idem, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden 2002), p. 230; see also p. 234.

⁷⁹ D. Verdooner and H. Snel, *Trouwen in mokum = Jewish Marriage in Amsterdam, 1598–1811* (s-Greenvhage [1991]), vol. 1, p. 37; Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, pp. 15–17, 193, 207.

⁸⁰ D. M. Swetschinski, "The Portuguese Jewish Merchants of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: A Social Profile," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1979), pp. 281–85; idem, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, pp. 138–40.

ventures of Curaçao settler Manuel Alvares Correa, which included slave trading.⁸¹

The definitive identification of Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva and Pedro Pereyra as one man constitutes an exciting advance in our knowledge of the Amsterdam Sephardim of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Adding the documentation of the *Noticias dos judeos de Cochim* and its author to the paper trail of jewel merchant Pedro Pereyra yields a fairly rich life-portrait of a fascinating cultural ambassador. An ambitious, adventure-seeking, and perhaps headstrong young man from one of Sephardi Amsterdam's most successful bourgeois clans managed to become an amateur ethnographer and travel writer, as well as a scrappy, dignified, seemingly independent jewel merchant in far-off India. Mosseh/Pedro never returned from "the Indies," symbolizing, perhaps, the numerous questions remaining about this life known to us only in fragments. The report he wrote regarding the Jews of Cochin and the various documents concerning him in the archives enable us, in turn, to continue to discover new things about the lives and world that produced Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva/Pedro Pereyra and his colonial looking glass.

⁸¹ D. M. Swetschinski, "Conflict and Opportunity in 'Europe's Other Sea': The Adventure of Caribbean Jewish Settlement," *American Jewish History* 72:2 (1982), p. 239.