

THE ANCIENT CHRONOLOGY
OF THAR

The Bhatika, Laukika and Sindh Eras

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
HONG KONG GUILDFORD MADRAS
1996

The Ancient Chronology of Thar: The Bhatika, Laukika, and Sindh Eras, , Anthony Gordon O'Brien, Oxford University Press, 1996, 0195634748, 9780195634747, 211 pages. This book describes the ancient calendrical systems peculiar to the Thar Desert, their origin and the political and military background against which they developed. The Thar is a harsh, inhospitable tract straddling the border between India and Pakistan. Temperatures regularly exceed 45 degrees centigrade. Rain may fall once only in five years but then, within a day, level plains and recesses between rocky hills and sand dunes become flooded and crops rapidly grow. Life is sustainable. Over the past thousand years the Bhati Rajputs and other princely families of Thar have raised epigraphic monuments to commemorate their dead and to record the foundation of reservoirs and temples. These monuments, precisely dated, lie in vast numbers disarrayed across the desert. Hitherto, they have been virtually unknown to archaeologists and historians and have long since become unintelligible to the people of Thar. To obtain material for this book the author explored, in ever-widening circles from his base in the fortress at Jaisalmer, the pathless wastes of the desert in quest of monumental remains, alone on foot for the first two years but eventually by jeep. Based almost entirely upon original research, this book should be required reading for historians of Rajasthan and Sindh. It should also be of great value to students of South Asian epigraphy, as the author has invented a method of verifying precisely, in accordance with the parameters of the standard mediaeval astronomical authorities, historical dates issued from any part of South Asia. This method, once computerized, would enable epigraphic dates to be verified almost instantly, without the frequent errors that tabular calculation is prone to. Visitors and armchair travellers will be fascinated to discover that a region of such apparent desolation harbours so rich a depository of historical and calendrical data..

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Indian Calendric System , S. K. Chatterjee, Jan 1, 1998, Calendar, 85 pages. .

Decimal tables for the reduction of Hindu dates from the data of the Sindh era, Walter Emile van Wijk, 1938, Science, 33 pages. .

The chronological systems of Gujarat from early times upto 1304 A.D., Bharati Kirtikumar Shelat, 1987, History, 403 pages. .

Report , Calendar Reform Committee (India, 1955, Calendar, 280 pages. .

Rajasthan [district Gazetteers]: Jalor , Rajasthan (India), 1973, . . .

Rajasthan [district Gazetteers]: Baran , Rajasthan (India), , History, . .

Origin and development of Indian calendrical science , Apurba Kumar Chakravarty, 1975, Calendar, Hindu, 62 pages. .

Epigraphic resources in Gujarat , Rasesh Jamindar, 1981, History, 80 pages. .

Coins, Art, and Chronology Essays on Pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands, Michael Alram, Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, 1999, , 498 pages. Twenty-four papers from a symposium held in Vienna in 1996. The aim was to integrate data from numismatics with archaeological, artistic, and epigraphic evidence to illustrate

Rajasthan [district Gazetteers].: Jhunjhunun , Rajasthan (India), 1984, History, . .

The Indian Calendar - With Tables for the Conversion of Hindu and Muhammadan Into A.D. Dates, and Vice Versa , Robert Sewell, 2010, , 318 pages. Many of the earliest books, particularly those dating back to the 1900s and before, are now extremely scarce and increasingly expensive. We are republishing these classic works

Rajasthan [district Gazetteers].: Sirohi , Rajasthan (India), 1967, History, . .

Rajasthan [district Gazetteers].: Udaipur , Rajasthan (India), 1979, History, . .

Journal of the Rajasthan Institute of Historical Research, Volume 4, Issue 4 , Rajasthan Institute of Historical Research, 1968, History, . .

History of the calendar in different countries through the ages , M. N. Saha, N. C. Lahiri, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (India), 1955, Science, 123 pages. .

Rajasthan [district Gazetteers].: Churu , Rajasthan (India), 1970, . . .

There were large communities in Aleppo (the Halabi Jews) and Damascus (the Shami Jews) for centuries, and a smaller community in Qamishli on the Turkish border near Nusaybin. In the first half of the 20th century a large percentage of Syrian Jews emigrated to the U.S., Latin America and Israel. Most of the remaining Jews left in the 28 years following 1973, due in part to the efforts of Judith Feld Carr, who claims to have helped some 3,228 Jews emigrate; emigration was officially allowed in 1992.[3] The largest Syrian Jewish community is located in Brooklyn, New York and is estimated at 75,000 strong.[4] There are smaller communities elsewhere in the United States and in Latin America.

There have been Jews in Syria since ancient times: according to the community's tradition, since the time of King David, and certainly since early Roman times. In 70 BC there were about 10,000 Jews in Damascus.[citation needed] Jews from this ancient community were known as Musta'arabim (Arab Jews) to themselves, or Moriscos to the Sephardim.[7] Many Sephardim arrived following the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and quickly took a leading position in the community.

Today, there is no clear distinction between these groups, as they have intermarried extensively, and all regard themselves as "Sephardim" in a broader sense. It is said that one can tell Aleppo families of Spanish descent by the fact that they light an extra Hanukkah candle. This custom was apparently established in gratitude for their acceptance by the more native Syrian based community.

In the nineteenth century, following the completion of the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1869, trade shifted to that route from the overland route through Syria, and the commercial importance of Aleppo and Damascus underwent a marked decline. Many families left Syria for Egypt (and a few for Lebanon) in the following decades, and with increasing frequency until the First World War, Jews left the near East for western countries, mainly Great Britain, the United States, Mexico and Argentina. Further emigration, particularly following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, was largely caused by repetitive Muslim aggression towards the Jewish communities in Syria.

Beginning on the Passover Holiday of 1992, the 4,000 remaining members of the Damascus Jewish community (Arabic Yehud ash-Sham) as well as the Aleppo community and the Jews of Qamishli, were permitted under the regime of Hafez al-Assad to leave Syria provided they did not emigrate to

Israel. Within a few months, thousands of Syrian Jews made their way to Brooklyn, with a few families choosing to go to France and Turkey. The majority settled in Brooklyn with the help of their kin in the Syrian Jewish community.

There has been a Jewish Syrian presence in Jerusalem since before 1850, with many rabbinical families having members both there and in Damascus and Aleppo. These had some contact with their Ashkenazi opposite numbers of the Old Yishuv, leading to a tradition of strict orthodoxy: for example in the 1860s there was a successful campaign to prevent the establishment of a Reform synagogue in Aleppo. Some Syrian traditions, such as the singing of Baqashot, were accepted by the mainstream Jerusalem Sephardi community.[9]

A further group immigrated to Palestine around 1900, and formed the Ades Synagogue in Nachlaot. This still exists, and is the main Aleppo rite synagogue in Israel, though its membership now includes Asiatic Jews of all groups, especially Kurdish. There is also a large Syrian community in Holon and Bat Yam.

Many Jews fled from Syria to Palestine during the anti-Jewish riots of 1947.[citation needed] After that, the Syrian government clamped down and allowed no emigration, though some Jews left illicitly. In the last two decades, some emigration has been allowed, mostly to America, though some have since left America for Israel, under the leadership of Rabbi Albert Hamra.[10][11]

The older generation from prior to the establishment of the Israeli state retains little or no Syrian ethnic identity of its own and is well integrated into mainstream Israeli society. The most recent wave is integrating at different levels, with some concentrating on integration in Israel and others retaining closer ties with their kin in New York and Mexico.[citation needed]

The main settlement of Syrian Jews was in Manchester, where they joined the local Spanish and Portuguese synagogues, which had a mixed community that included North African, Turkish, Egyptian and Iraqi as well as Syrian Jews. This community founded two synagogues; one (Shaare Tephillah) in north central Manchester, which has since moved to Salford, and the other (Shaare Hayim) on Queenston Road in West Didsbury, in the southern suburbs. A breakaway synagogue (Shaare Sedek) was later formed on Old Lansdowne Road with more of a Syrian flavor; it and the Queenston Road congregation have since merged, while retaining both buildings. They are still known as the Lansdowne Road synagogue and the Queen's Road synagogue, after the names those streets bore in the 1930s. While there are still Sephardim in the Manchester area, a number have left for communities in the Americas. Despite their reduced numbers, there is currently an initiative to acquire a new site for a synagogue in Hale, to be closer to the current centers of the Sephardic and general Jewish populations.

Syrian Jews first immigrated to New York in 1892. The first Syrian Jew to arrive was Jacob Abraham Dwek, along with Ezra Abraham Sitt. They initially lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Later settlements were in Bensonhurst, Midwood, Flatbush, and along Ocean Parkway in Gravesend, Brooklyn. There has been a further wave of immigration from Syria since 1992, when the Syrian government began allowing emigration of Jews.[14]

The largest Jewish community in Argentina is in the capital Buenos Aires. The majority are Ashkenazim, but the Sephardim, and especially the Syrians, are a sizeable community. Syrian Jews are most visible in the Once district, where there are many community schools and temples. For some decades there has been a good-natured rivalry between the Shami (Damascene) community of "Shaare Tefila (Pasito)" synagogue and the Halebi (Aleppan) community of "Sucat David" across the street. The most influential rabbinic authority was Rabbi Isaac Chehebar from the "Yessod Hadat" congregation on Lavalle street; he was consulted from all across the globe, and had an influential role in the recovery of parts of the Aleppo codex. There are many kosher butcher shops and restaurants catering to the community. There were important communities in the Boca and Flores neighborhoods as well. Many Syrian Jews own clothing stores along Avellaneda avenue in Flores, and there is a community school on Felipe Vallese (formerly Canalejas) street. Some important clothing chains such as Chemea and Tawil, with tens of shops each, were started by

Syrian Jews.

The majority of the Syrian community of Brazil come from Beirut, Lebanon, where they had lived since their expulsion from Syria following the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent violent anti-Jewish pogroms perpetrated by their Muslim neighbours. They left Beirut in wake of the first Lebanese Civil War. Most Syrian Jews established themselves in the industrial city of São Paulo, being attracted there by the many commercial opportunities it offered. The community became very prosperous, and several of its members are among the wealthiest and the politically and economically most influential families in São Paulo. The community first attended Egyptian synagogues, but later founded their own synagogues, most notably the Beit Yaakov synagogues in the neighbourhoods of Jardins and Higienópolis. The community has its own school and youth movement, and claims a strong Jewish identity and low assimilation rate. The majority of the community affiliates itself with Jewish Orthodoxy, though few could be described as fully Orthodox. There are approximately 7,000 Syrian Jews in Brazil.

There have been Jews from Damascus and Aleppo in Mexico City since the early years of the twentieth century. Originally they worshipped in a private house transformed into a synagogue – “Sinagoga Ketana (Bet Haknesset HaKatan) located in Calles de Jesús María. The first organized Jewish community in Mexico was Alianza Monte Sinai founded on June 14, 1912, mainly by natives of Damascus (together with a few Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews) and led by Isaac Capon. They later founded the first synagogue, Monte Sinaí, on Justo Sierra street in downtown Mexico City, originally led by Rabbi Laniado, which still holds a daily service of Minha. The Damascene community also bought the first Jewish burial place in Tacuba street on June 12, 1914, which is in use to this day and has been expanded by the recent purchase of the adjacent land.

The Rodfe Sedek synagogue, for Aleppan Jews, was established in 1931, largely through the efforts of Rabbi Mordejay Attie. This synagogue, known also as Knis de Cordoba, is situated at 238 Cordoba Street in the Colonia Roma quarter of Mexico City. At the time this neighborhood was home to the largest concentration of Jews from Aleppo in Mexico City. The first mikveh (ritual bath) in Mexico was established within the Rodfe Sedek synagogue. In 1982 a funeral house was built in the courtyard of the synagogue.

Also in the 1930s the members of Monte Sinaí established a large synagogue for Damascene Jews situated at 110 Querétaro Street in the Colonia Roma area. They have welcomed Jews of all backgrounds into their midst, which has allowed tremendous growth over the years. In 1938 Jewish immigrants from Aleppo set up Sociedad de Beneficencia Sedakí u Marí, which evolved into a separate Jewish community: since 1984 it has been known as Comunidad Maguen David. Monte Sinai and Maguen David are now the largest Jewish communities in Mexico, having more than 30 synagogues, a community center and a school each, with Maguen David having at least 5 schools and plans for more (Colegio Hebreo Maguen David, Yeshiva Keter Torah, Beit Yaakov, Emek HaTorah, Colegio Atid and Colegio Or HaJaim).

Panama also received a large number of Syrian Jewish immigrants, mostly from Halab (Aleppo), where they constitute the largest group in Panama's 10,000 strong Jewish Sephardic community. Most of the immigrants arrived in the late 1940s after riots in Aleppo due to the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The community consists of many synagogues all united under its flagship, Shevet Ahim Synagogue, where their late Chief Rabbi Zion Levy officiated. The community maintains close contact with their counterparts in North America as well as Israel. In his later years, Rabbi Levy oversaw the construction of new synagogues in Panama City and worked to smooth relations with the country's Arab and Muslim communities. He frequently phoned the country's imam for a talk. By the time of his death, the Shevet Ahim community numbered 10,000 Jews, 6,000 of whom are Torah-observant. The community now includes several synagogues, mikvahs, three Jewish schools, a yeshiva, a kollel, and a girls' seminary, along with several kosher butchers.

There exists a fragment of the old Aleppo prayer book for the High Holy Days, published in Venice in 1527, and a second edition, starting with the High Holy Days but covering the whole year, in 1560. This represents the liturgy of the Musta'arabim (native Arabic-speaking Jews) as distinct from that of

the Sephardim proper (immigrants from Spain and Portugal): it recognizably belongs to the "Sephardic" family of rites in the widest sense, but is different from any liturgy used today. For more detail, see Old Aleppo ritual.

Following the immigration of Jews from Spain following the expulsion, a compromise liturgy evolved containing elements from the customs of both communities, but with the Sephardic element taking an ever larger share.[17] In Syria, as in North African countries; there was no attempt to print a Siddur containing the actual passages of the community, as this would not generally be commercially viable. Major publishing centres, principally Livorno, and later Vienna, would produce standard "Sephardic" prayer books suitable for use in all communities, and particular communities such as the Syrians would order these in bulk, preserving any special usages by oral tradition. (For example, אַבֿראָחאַם אַבֿראַמװי of Aleppo commissioned a series of prayer-books from Livorno, which were printed in 1878, but even these were "pan-Sephardic" in character, though they contained some notes about the specific "minhag Aram Tsoba".) As details of the oral tradition faded from memory, the liturgy in use came ever nearer to the "Livorno" standard. In the early years of the twentieth century, this "Sephardic" rite was almost universal in Syria. The only exception (in Aleppo) was a "Musta'arabi" minyan at the Central Synagogue of Aleppo.

The liturgy of Damascus differed from that of Aleppo in some details, mostly because of its greater proximity to the Holy Land. Some of the laws specific to Eretz Yisrael are regarded as extending to Damascus,[18] and the city had ties both to the Safed Kabbalists and to the Jerusalem Sephardic community.

The liturgy now used in Syrian communities round the world is textually speaking Oriental-Sephardic. That is to say, it is based on the Spanish rite as varied by the customs of Isaac Luria, and resembles those in use in Greek, Turkish and North African Jewish communities. In earlier decades some communities and individuals used "Edot ha-Mizraá,¥" prayer-books which contained a slightly different text, based on the Baghdadi rite, as these were more commonly available, leaving any specifically Syrian usages to be perpetuated by oral tradition. The nearest approach to a current official prayer book is entitled Kol Ya'akov, but many other editions exist and there is still disagreement on some textual variants.

The musical customs of Syrian communities are very distinctive, as many of the prayers are chanted to the melodies of the pizmonim, according to a complicated annual rota designed to ensure that the maqam (musical mode) used suits the mood of the festival or of the Torah reading for the week.[19] See Syrian Cantors and the Weekly Maqam.

Syrian Jews have a large repertoire of hymns, sung on social and ceremonial occasions such as weddings and bar mitzvahs. Pizmonim are also used in the prayers of Shabbat and holidays. Some of these are ancient and others were composed more recently as adaptations of popular Arabic songs; sometimes they are written or commissioned for particular occasions, and contain coded allusions to the name of the person honoured. There is a standard Pizmonim book called "Shir uShbaha Hallel veZimrah", edited by Cantor Gabriel A. Shrem under the supervision of the Sephardic Heritage Foundation, in which the hymns are classified according to the musical mode (maqam) to which the melody belongs. As time passes, more and more pizmonim are getting lost, and therefore efforts are being made by the Sephardic Pizmonim Project, under the leadership of Mr. David M. Betesh, to preserve as many pizmonim as possible. A website to facilitate its preservation, was set up at Pizmonim.com.

It was a custom in Syrian Jewish communities (and some others), to sing Baqashot (petitionary hymns), before the morning service on Shabbat. In the winter months, the full corpus of 66 hymns is sung, finishing with Adon Olam and Kaddish. This service generally lasts about four hours, from 3:00am to 7:00am.

The Syrian pronunciation of Hebrew is similar to that of other Mizrahi communities, and is influenced both by Sephardi Hebrew and by the Syrian dialect of Arabic. Just as Syrian Arabic is less close to the pronunciation of Classical Arabic than Iraqi Mesopotamian Arabic, the Syrian pronunciation of

Hebrew is less archaic than the Iraqi Hebrew of Iraqi Jews, and closer to standard Sephardic Hebrew. This affects especially the interdentals. Nevertheless, Syrian and Iraqi Hebrew are very closely related owing to close geographic proximity and their location, as is the case with most eastern Jewish communities in an Arabic environment apart from Yemeni Jews. Particular features are as follows:

Vowels are pronounced as in most other Sephardi and Mizrahi traditions: for example there is no distinction between patach and qamats gadol ([a]), or between segol, tsere and vocal sheva ([e]).[30] Āliriq is sometimes reduced to [Éª] or [É™] in an unstressed closed syllable, or in the neighbourhood of an emphatic or guttural consonant.[31]

The Aleppo Codex, now known in Hebrew as Keter Aram Tsoba, is the oldest and most famous manuscript of the Bible. Written in Tiberias in the year 920, and annotated by Aaron ben Asher, it has become the most authoritative Biblical text in Jewish culture. The most famous halachic authority to rely on it was Maimonides, in his exposition of the laws governing the writing of Torah scrolls in his codification of Jewish law (Mishneh Torah). After its completion, the Codex was brought to Jerusalem. Toward the end of the 11th century, it was stolen and taken to Egypt, where it was redeemed by the Jewish community of Cairo. At the end of the 14th century the Codex was taken to Aleppo, Syria (called by the Jews Aram Zobah, the biblical name of part of Syria)â€”this is the origin of the manuscript's modern name.

For the next five centuries, it was kept closely guarded in the basement of the Central Synagogue of Aleppo, and was considered the community's greatest treasure. Scholars from round the world would consult it to check the accuracy of their Torah scrolls. In the modern era the community would occasionally allow academics, such as Umberto Cassuto, access to the Codex, but would not permit it to be reproduced photographically or otherwise.

The Codex remained in the keeping of the Aleppo Jewish community until the anti-Jewish riots of December 1947, during which the ancient synagogue where it was kept was broken into and burned. The Codex itself disappeared. In 1958, the Keter was smuggled into Israel by Murad Faham and wife Sarina, and presented to the President of the State, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Following its arrival, it was found that parts of the Codex, including most of the Torah, had been lost. The Codex was entrusted to the keeping of the Ben-Zvi Institute and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, though the Porat Yosef Yeshivah has argued that, as the spiritual heir of the Aleppo community, it was the legitimate guardian. Some time after the arrival of the Codex, Mordechai Breuer began the monumental work of reconstructing the lost sections, on the basis of other well-known ancient manuscripts. Since then a few other leaves have been found.

<http://eduln.org/1569.pdf>

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