

*The Jews of Andhra Pradesh* is an engaging and thought-provoking ethnography devoted to the Bene Ephraim—a Dalit group in India that has embraced Jewish tradition. Egorova and Perwez offer a nuanced and theoretically-informed account which explores how the story of the Bene Ephraim challenges and extends contemporary understandings of Jewishness and illuminates radical new directions in Dalit discourse.

The authors' research involved a year of ethnographic fieldwork conducted among the Bene Ephraim, analysis of the community's narratives, and in-depth interviews with the Bene Ephraim, their neighbors, and members of different Jewish organizations in India, Israel, and the US. Presenting the fascinating story of this group and situating it in its wider political and social context, the authors show how the example of the Bene Ephraim can shed light on such topical issues as the caste system and social mobility in India, the conflict in the Middle East, and debates surrounding the Law of Return in Israel. It makes an important contribution to anthropology of Indian Dalits, anthropology of Judaism, the study of religion, and broader theoretical discussions about contested forms of self-identification and pathways to social liberation. *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh* is one of very few detailed ethnographies of emerging Jewish communities and will attract attention among both academic and wider audiences.

YULIA EGOROVA is a Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at Durham University. Her research interests include anthropology of Jewish communities and the relationship between science and religion. She is the author of *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image*, and a co-author (with Tudor Parfitt) of *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity: A Case Study of the Genetic Research on the Lemba and Bene-Israel*.

SHAHID PERWEZ is a Fellow in International Development at the University of Bath. He has conducted ethnographic research involving long periods of fieldwork in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. His research has explored issues of gender, health, social mobilization, religion and caste in India.

# The Jews of Andhra Pradesh

“*The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* by Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez could be the remarkable tale of the search and discovery of one of the Lost Tribes of Israel in India. Or at least that is what the tribe of the Bene Ephraim and its Israeli discoverers (and now the state of Israel) want to claim. Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez’s extraordinarily careful and respectful account of how the Bene Ephraim become Jewish, how they begin in their lives to fulfill the expectations of those still seeking the Lost Tribes to fulfill the Biblical prophecy of the ingathering of the Jews, is not only brilliant field anthropology but a compelling account of how parallel needs create complex and real identities. A must have for those in Jewish Studies and beyond.”

—Sander L. Gilman, Distinguished Professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences;  
Professor of Psychiatry, Emory University

“*The Jews of Andhra Pradesh* is a vivid and resounding demonstration of the ongoing ability of the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes to produce new narratives of identity and belonging. Through its ethnographic exploration of the Bene Ephraim in India, this excellent book shows the interplay of modern religious identitarianism and ancient myth at work on the ground.”

—Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, author of *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (OUP, 2009)

“This book is a fascinating trip through ‘recognized/unrecognized’ Jewish communities from India and the historization of their past, blurring the division between the particularist and the universalist dimensions of Judaism.”

—Emanuela Trevisan Semi, author of *Jacques Faitlovitch and the Jews of Ethiopia* (2007)