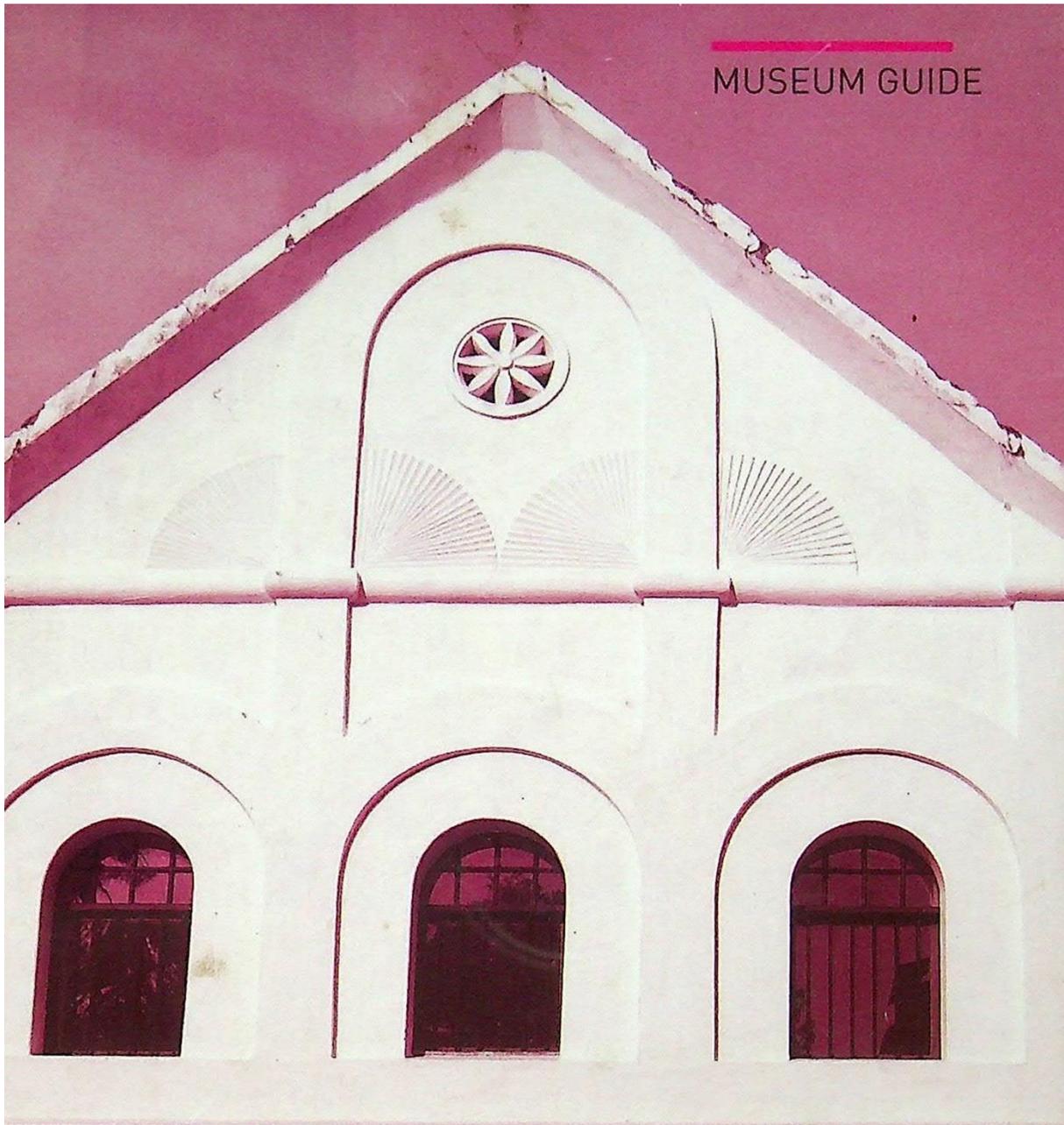


MUSEUM GUIDE



Kerala Jewish Lifestyle Museum
Chendamangalam Synagogue

MUZIRIS HERITAGE PROJECT – OTHER MUSEUMS

Paliyam Kovilakam



The transformation of Cochin Kingdom and life of Nobles after Swarupa period

Paliyam Nalukettu



An exploration into the life of noble families of Kerala under the joint family system

Paravur Synagogue



The history of Jews in Kerala, their migration, rituals and beliefs



Muziris Papyrus

A trade contract from 2nd Century CE
The content is about a banker in Egypt
lending money to a Roman trader for
transporting goods from Muziris to
Alexandria in a ship named Hermapolon.
The contract includes mention of goods that
are available in Muziris, the itinerary of the
Journey and the taxes to be paid at different
places etc. Two pages of the contract have
been recovered. It is exhibited at the Austrian
National Library in Vienna.



Kerala Jewish Lifestyle Museum
Chendamangalam Synagogue

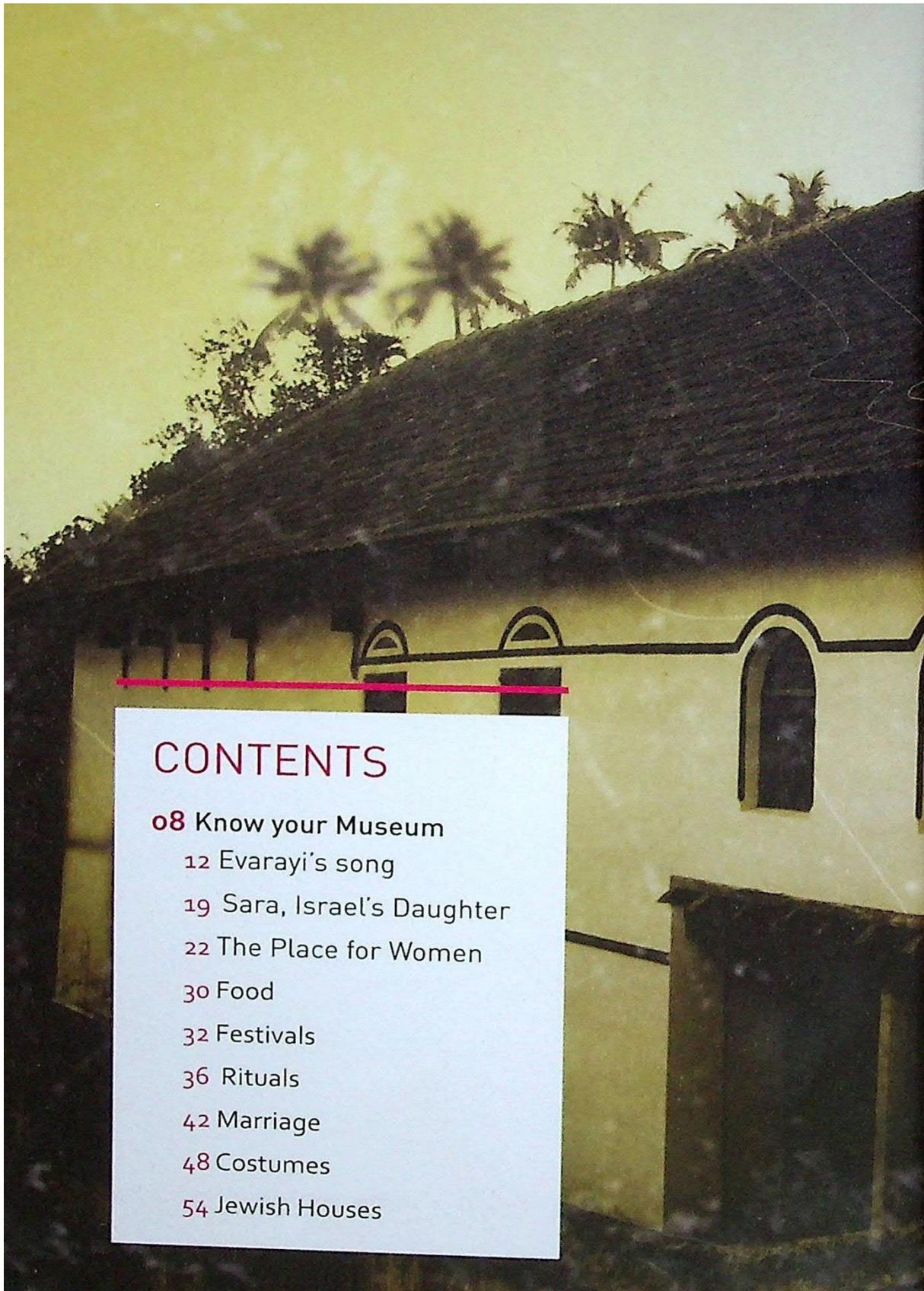


Muziris Heritage Project

In ancient times, Muziris was a renowned trading centre. Later it grew into a melting pot of civilizations. Arabs, Jews, Romans, Greeks and Chinese came here.

The famed 'Muchiri' mentioned in ancient Tamil epics later became Muyirikode, Kodumkooloor, Kodungallur and Mahodayapuram. It was the Yavanas (Foreigners) who gave the name 'Muziris' to Muchiri, the illustrious port town which was situated somewhere along the coast of Periyar river. In the torrent of time, all the insignias of the glorious days of Muziris port were washed away!

The objective of Muziris Heritage Project is to showcase the significance of Muziris to the present generation. Some of the remnants of the great past have been preserved as History Museums. Chendamangalam Synagogue Museum is one among them.











KNOW YOUR MUSEUM



Panels: Brief descriptions in Malayalam and English about the exhibits in the Museum



Interactive Video: Short clips in Malayalam & English about Rituals, Rites etc



Interactive Audio: Brief Descriptions about Historical Aspects

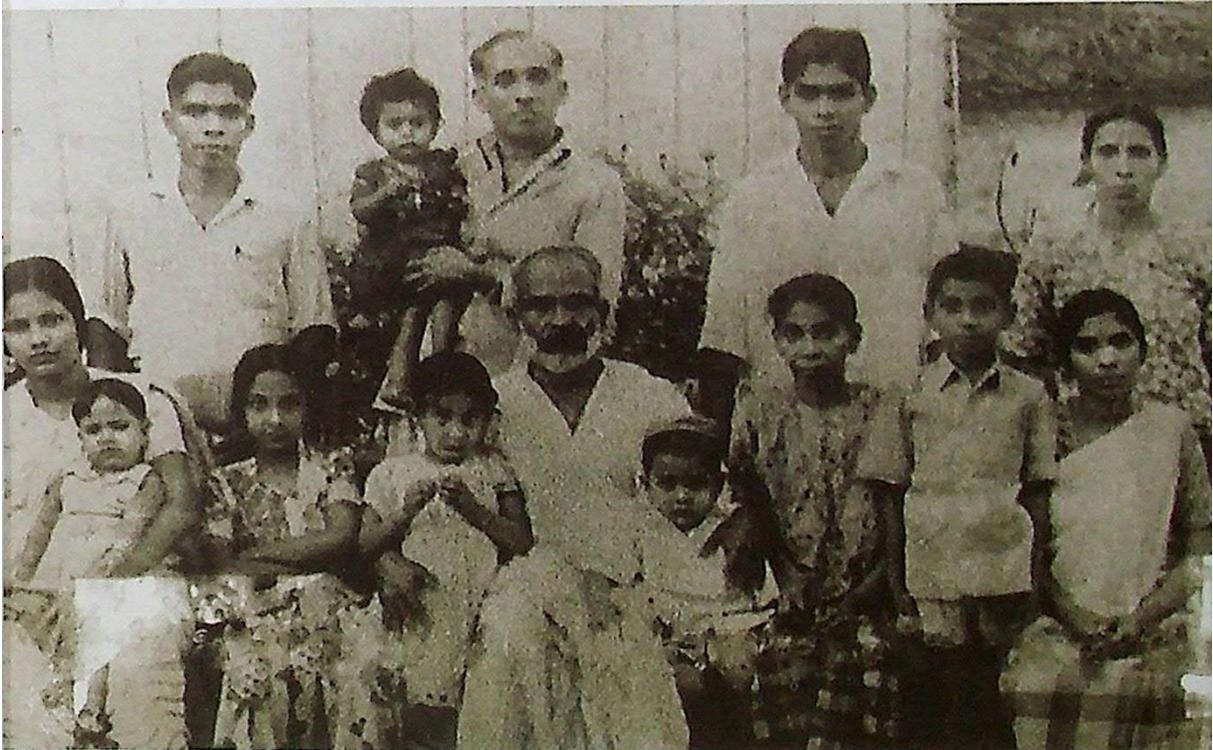


Guide Book: in English & Malayalam



Guides: Services of Trained Guides

Chendamangalam Synagogue





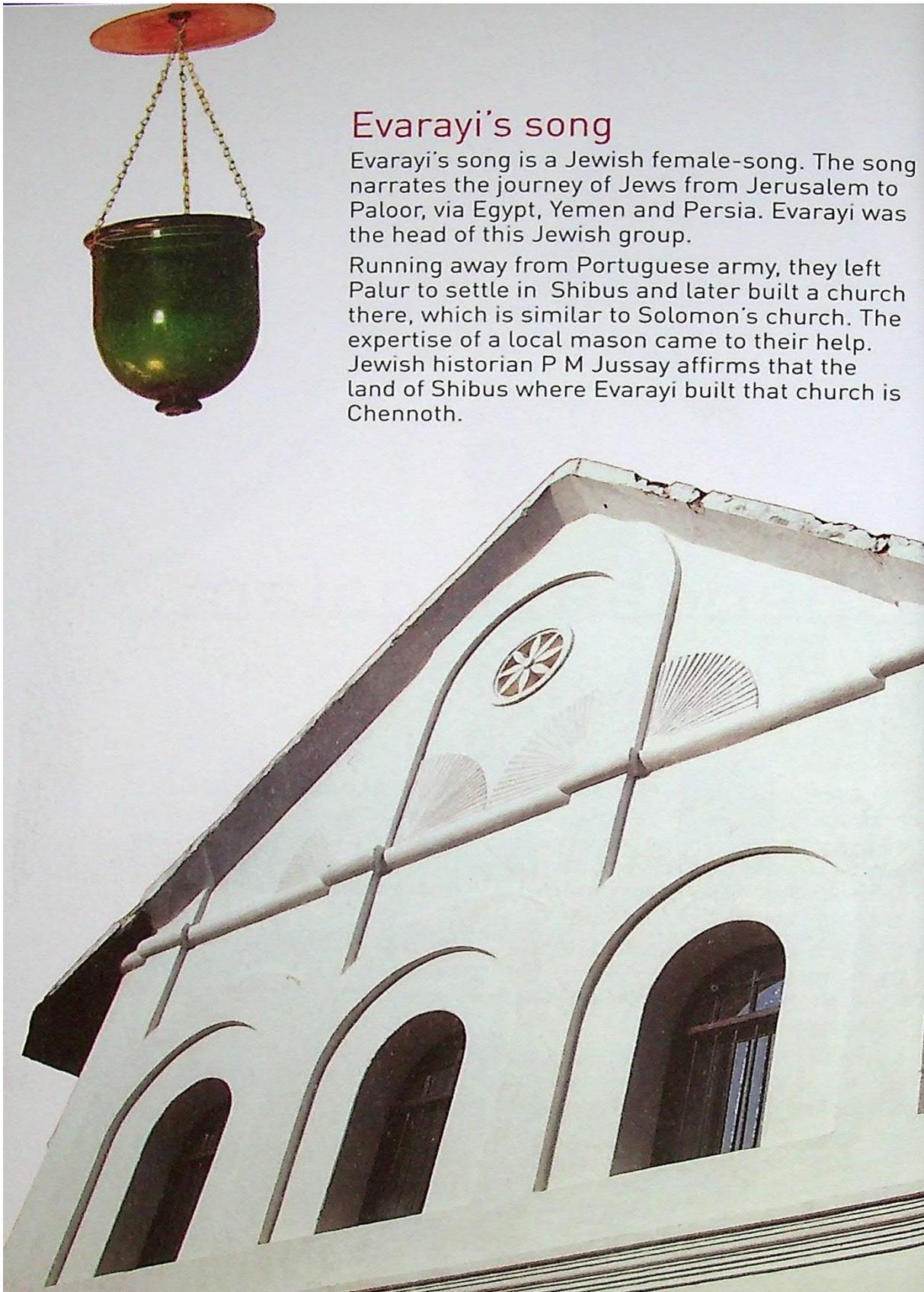
Chendamangalam Synagogue

A place of worship of Malabari jews. In 1420, the jews who came from Kodungallur or Palayur to Chennoth (Chendamangalam) built a synagogue. This synagogue built in the model of Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in a fire, and was rebuilt in 1614, and renovated several times. In the 1960s when the Jews in Kerala returned to Israel the worship here came to a stop.

The synagogue is near the Kottayil Kovilakam hill. Kottayil Kovilakam, the headquarters of the Villarvattom Swarupam, was a local fiefdom in Kochi. It was the king of Villarvattom who offered the land to build the synagogue.

There are mentions about Jews having reached Kerala during the time of King Solomon. Those who came later include traders and migrants. The banks of river Periyar gave safe refuge to them all.

The Chendamangalam Synagogue Musuem showcases the lives and rituals of Kerala Jews who were firm believers and lived in close contact with the local society.



Evarayi's song

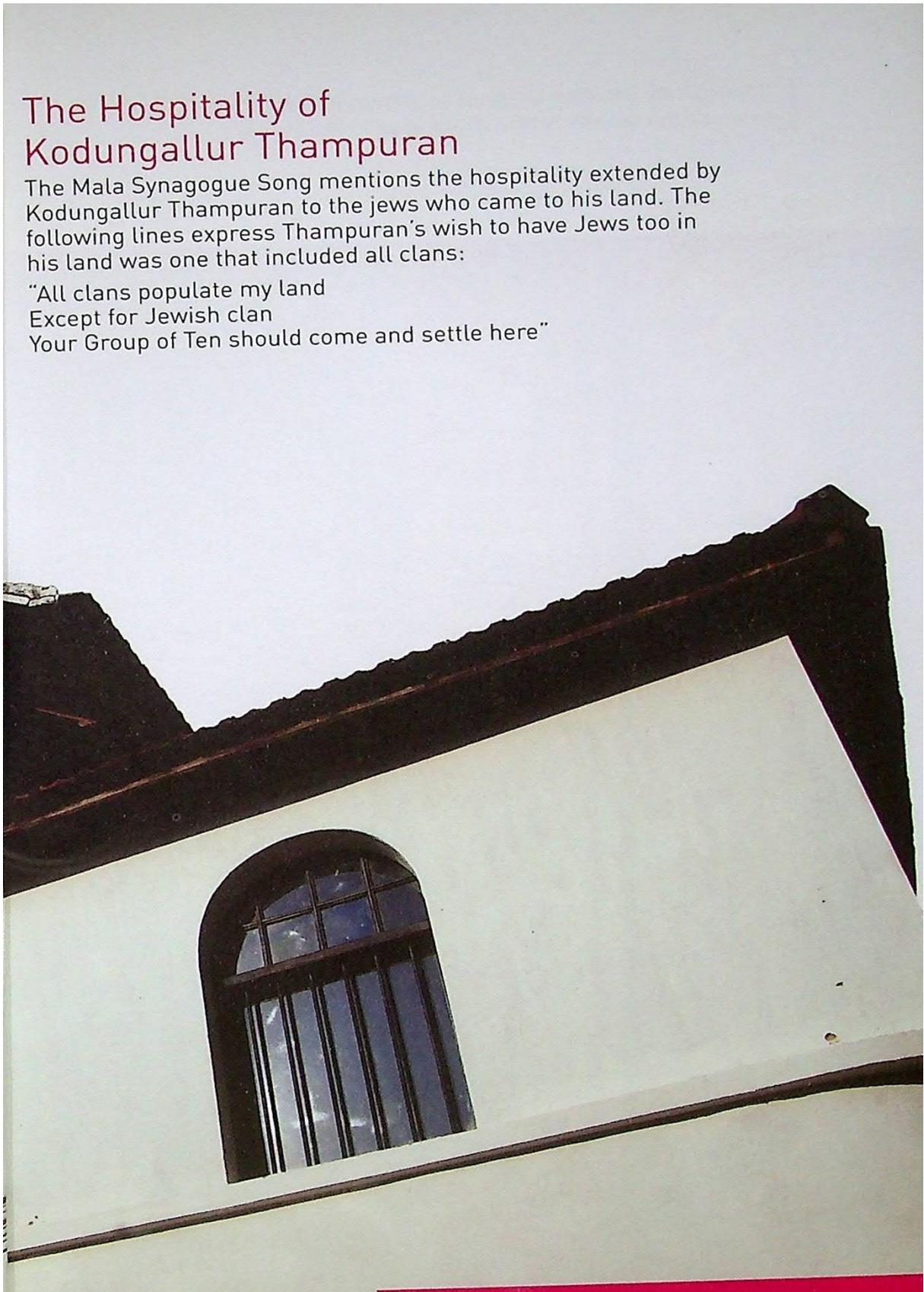
Evarayi's song is a Jewish female-song. The song narrates the journey of Jews from Jerusalem to Paloor, via Egypt, Yemen and Persia. Evarayi was the head of this Jewish group.

Running away from Portuguese army, they left Palur to settle in Shibus and later built a church there, which is similar to Solomon's church. The expertise of a local mason came to their help. Jewish historian P M Jussay affirms that the land of Shibus where Evarayi built that church is Chennoth.

The Hospitality of Kodungallur Thampuran

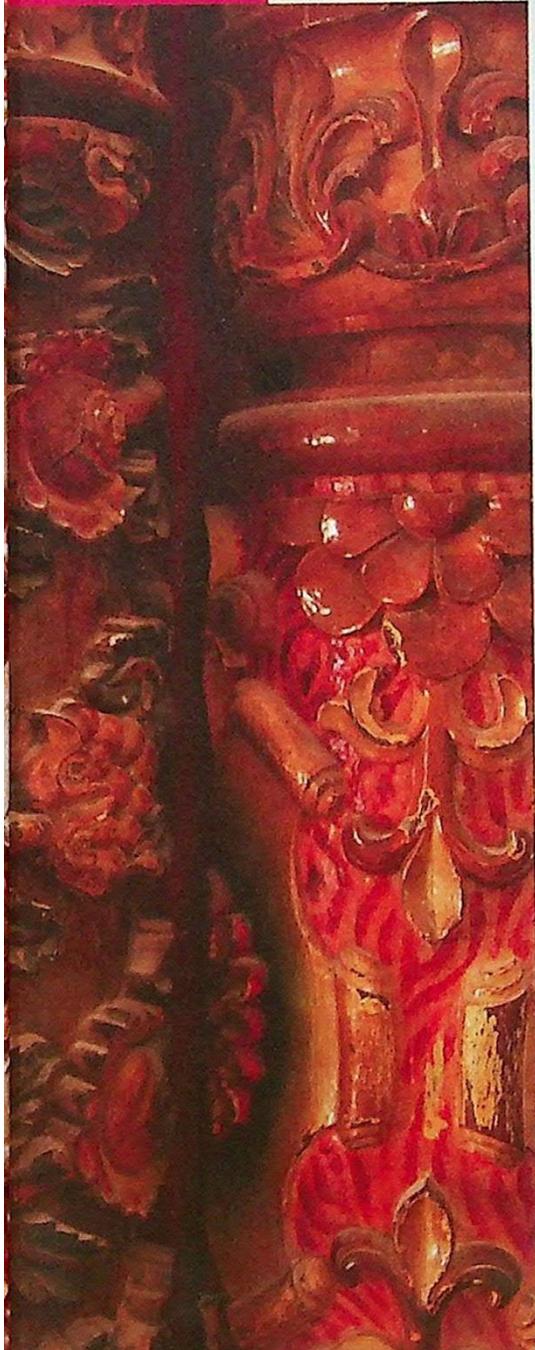
The Mala Synagogue Song mentions the hospitality extended by Kodungallur Thampuran to the Jews who came to his land. The following lines express Thampuran's wish to have Jews too in his land was one that included all clans:

"All clans populate my land
Except for Jewish clan
Your Group of Ten should come and settle here"



It takes only five days of travel both from Kollam and Kozhikode to reach the Jewish centre in Malabar. - *Ibn Batuta*





Kunjakari that Batuta saw

Ibn Batuta who travelled from Kollam to Kozhikode in the 14th century, describes Kunjakari land where a group of Jews who stayed atop a hill. The head of that land was a Jew and he paid tributes to Kollam king. P M Jussay concludes that the Kunjakari that Ibn Batuta saw was Kottayil Kovilakam which was located on the banks of Kanjiri river. Evarayi was the first prominent Jewish person to reach this place. The Jewish self rule was the offshoot of the powers they were accorded through the Jewish Copper Edict.

The Song of the Bird

The song recounts the flight of a bird coming in search of guava fruit and finding a green mansion atop a hill, which Jussay affirms is Kunjakari in Chendamangalam.

Friendship with Kovilakam

Once Kottayil Kovilakam was the headquarters of Villarvattom Swarupam. On top of the hill where the Kovilakam was located, there is a Vishnu temple, and a Jewish cemetery below that. Near the hill one can see Jewish, Muslim and Christian churches. The sight of Jewish Synagogue and Christian Church rubbing shoulders is a marvelous sight. In front of the Synagogue was the Jewish street; and Vypeekotta Seminary was located near the Christian church. This is an example of religious coexistence that prevailed here from time immemorial.

Vypeekotta Seminary







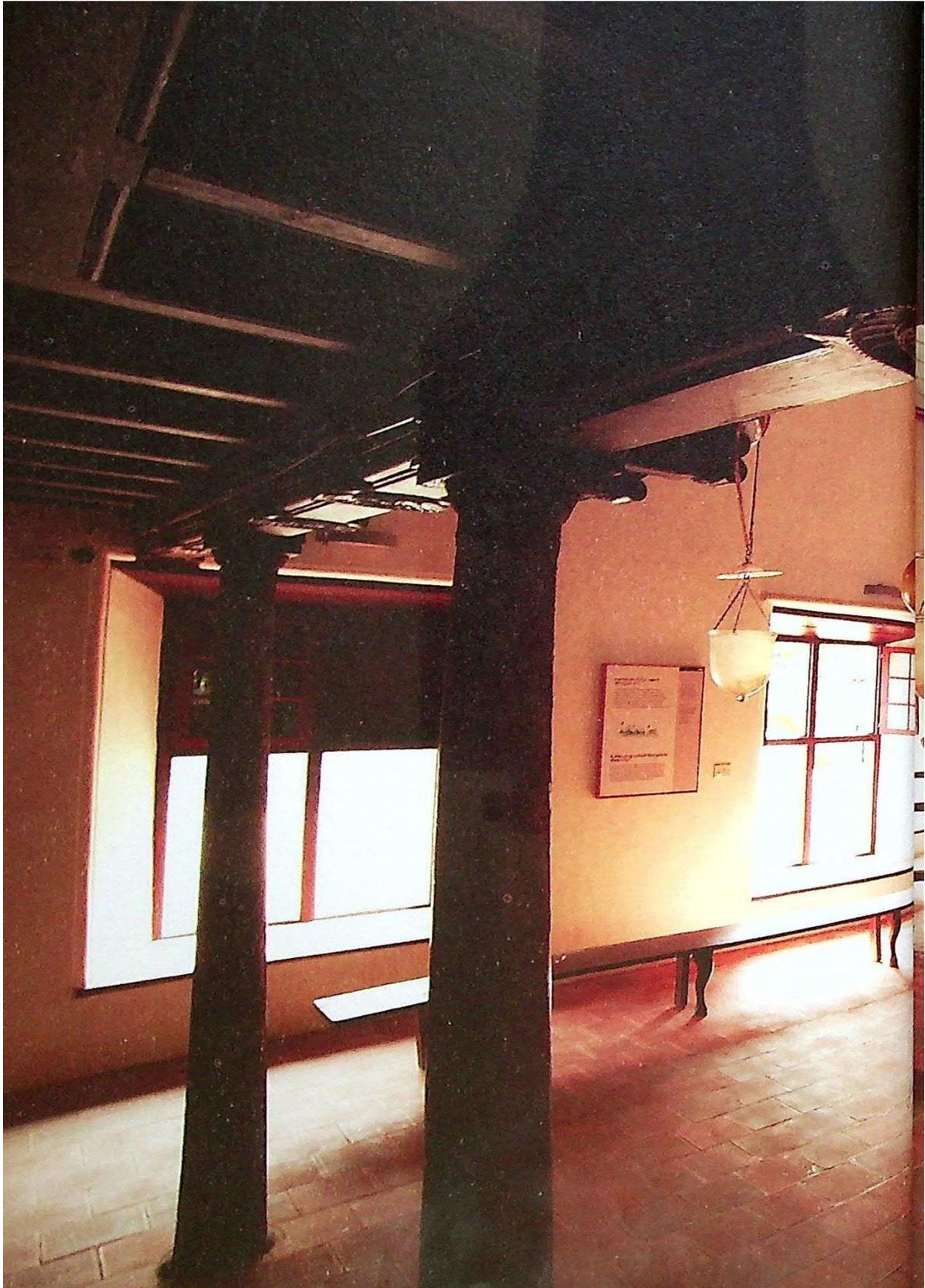
Sara, Israel's Daughter

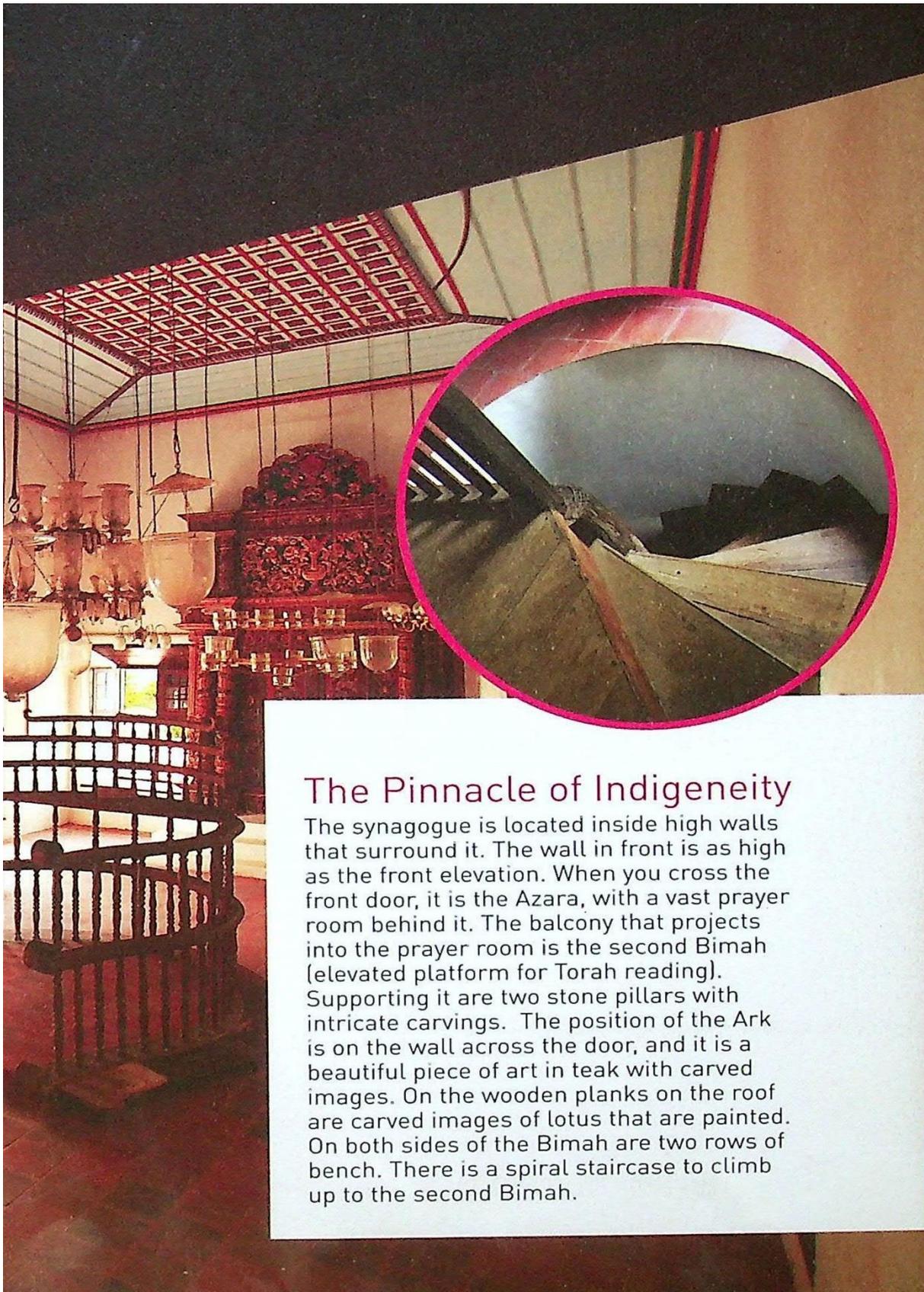
In front of Chendamangalam synagogue there is a rock with an inscription 'Sara bath Israel', written in Hebrew. It is the memorial stone for Sara, a Jewish woman who died in 1269. This inscription may have been brought by the Jews to Chendamangalam when they migrated there during 13th century. Archeologist P Anujan Achan, opines that the first Jewish synagogue in Chendamangalam was built around this time.



Ark

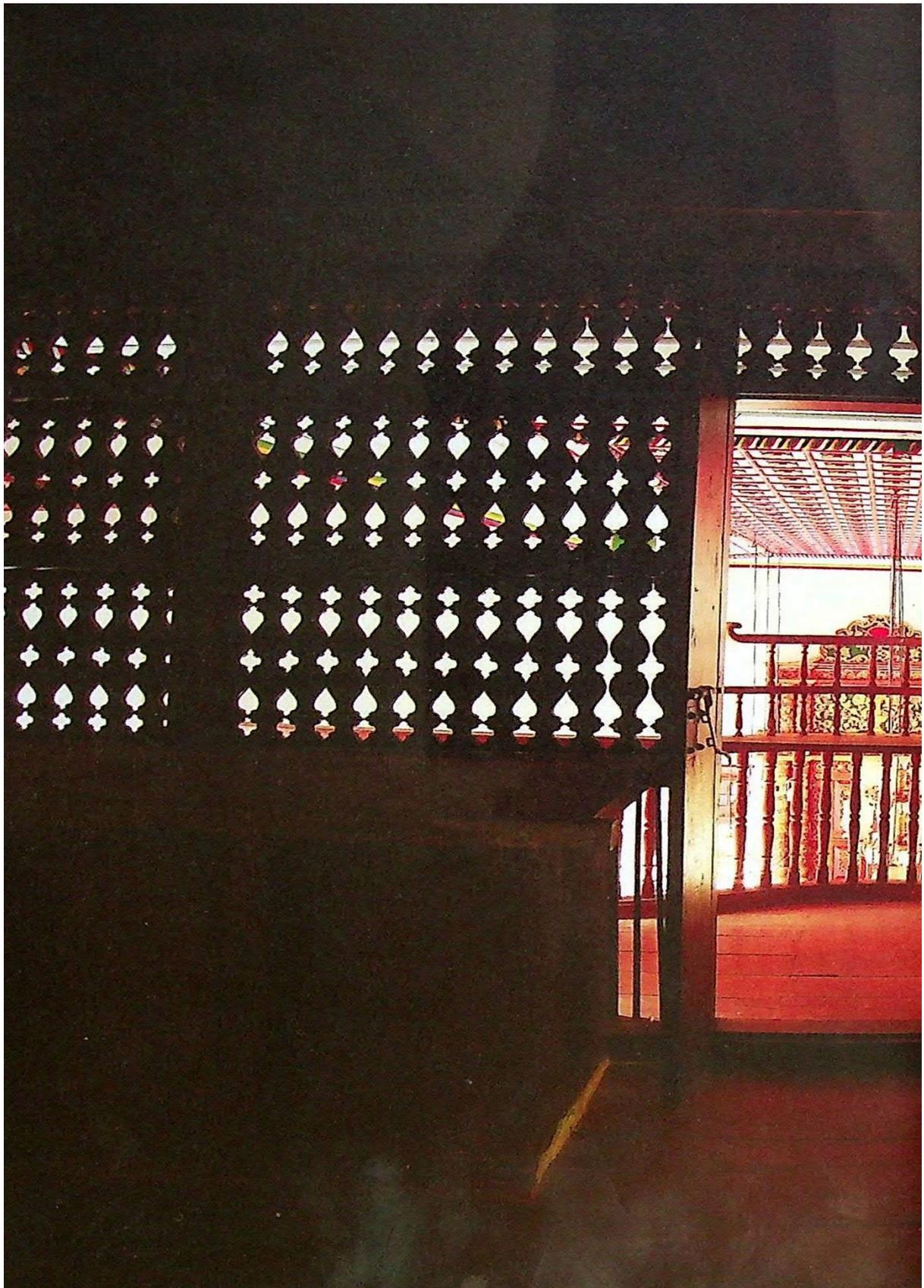
This ark, used to keep Torah scrolls, was carved out of teak wood that was available in plenty. It is carved with Jewish images and is painted with red, green and golden colours.

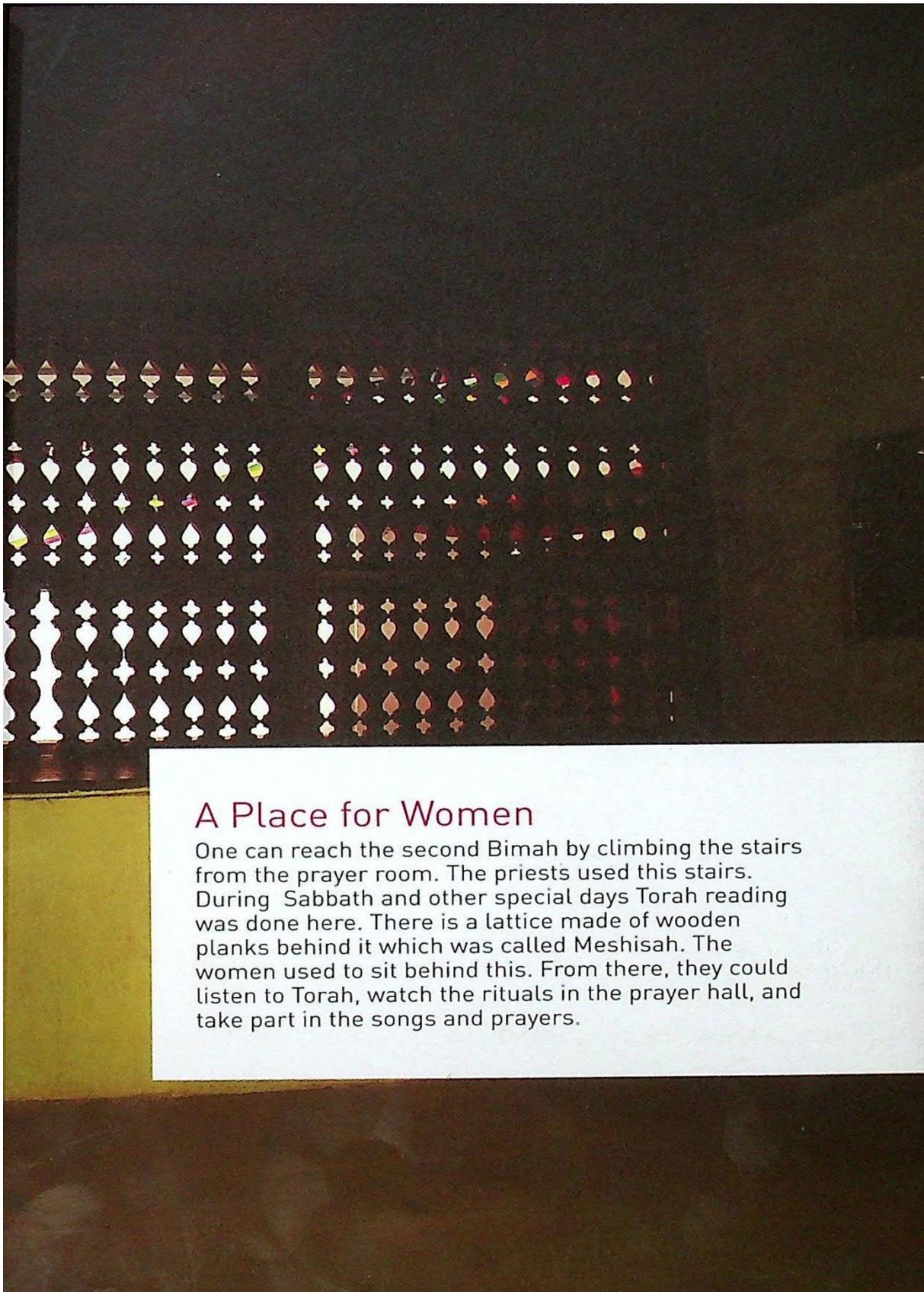




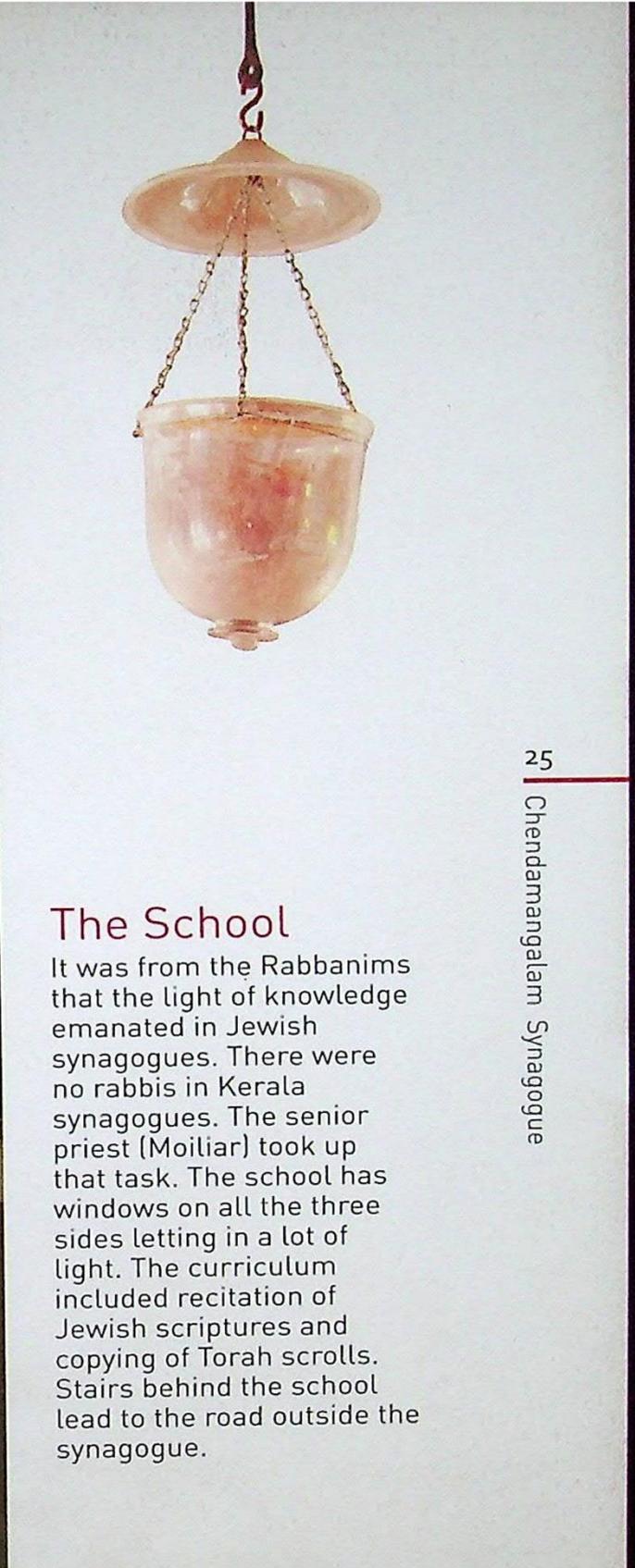
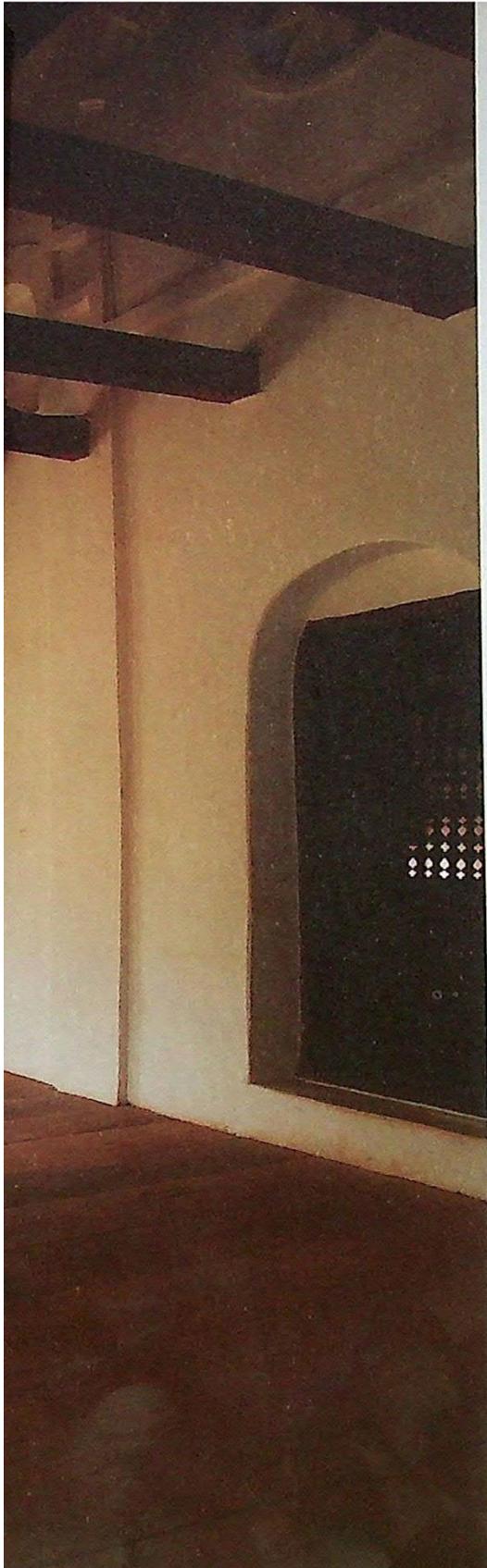
The Pinnacle of Indigeneity

The synagogue is located inside high walls that surround it. The wall in front is as high as the front elevation. When you cross the front door, it is the Azara, with a vast prayer room behind it. The balcony that projects into the prayer room is the second Bimah (elevated platform for Torah reading). Supporting it are two stone pillars with intricate carvings. The position of the Ark is on the wall across the door, and it is a beautiful piece of art in teak with carved images. On the wooden planks on the roof are carved images of lotus that are painted. On both sides of the Bimah are two rows of bench. There is a spiral staircase to climb up to the second Bimah.









The School

It was from the Rabbanims that the light of knowledge emanated in Jewish synagogues. There were no rabbis in Kerala synagogues. The senior priest (Moiliar) took up that task. The school has windows on all the three sides letting in a lot of light. The curriculum included recitation of Jewish scriptures and copying of Torah scrolls. Stairs behind the school lead to the road outside the synagogue.

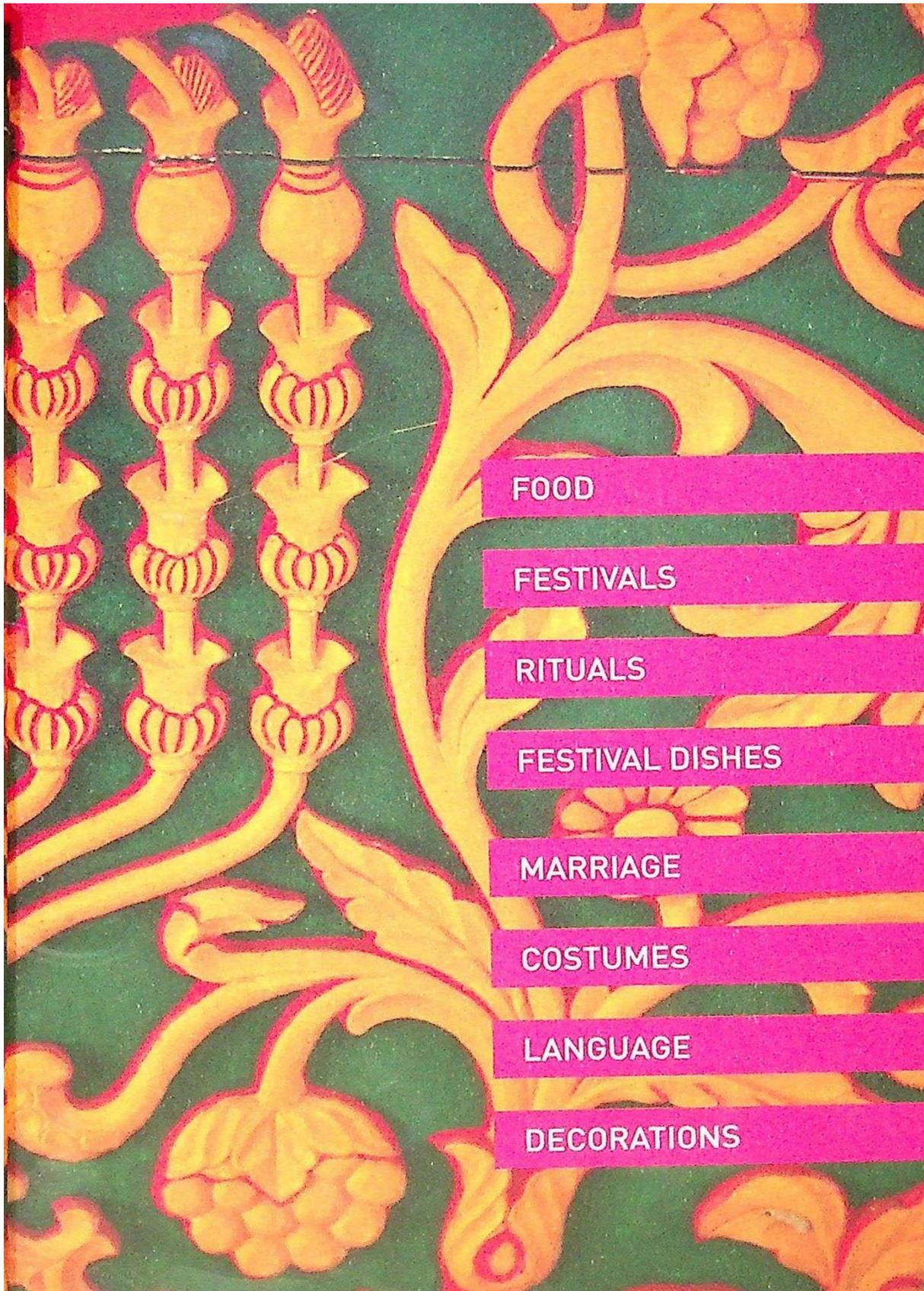




Let there be light!

Light is divine power and guide. So, synagogues were full of them. The worship centres were lighted by several lamps like the Daily Lamp hung in front of the Ark apart from the several candelabras made of metal and crystals.





The cuisine of Jews is as prescribed by kosher or Jewish dietary law. Staple food is rice. The use of tamarind and vinegar is common. On festival and Sabbath days, special dishes are prepared.



FOOD



Kosher

Kosher is clean and appropriate food prepared according to dietary laws. Kosher has to be followed in the choice of food items, modes of cooking and the diet schedule. General principle is as follows; The meat of animals which have been slaughtered according to law, any animal which chews the cud and has a cloven hoof is kosher. Similar is the case with their milk and milk products. Before cooking meat, blood and fat should be removed. Chicken, duck etc are kosher birds; one can eat their egg and meat. Only those fish which have scales and fins are kosher. Lobster, prawns etc are to be avoided. While cooking and eating, certain proprieties have to be followed. Meat is never cooked along with milk; they are also not served or eaten together.



FESTIVALS



Menora

A candelabrum with nine branches used in Jewish worship on Hanukkah

Hanukkah Festival

Hanukkah commemorates the recapture of the land of Israel from Romans.

It is a festival that extends to 8 days. All the streets are decorated with fruit-bearing plantain stems and lamps. In the ritual lamp with nine branches each lamp is lit one by one for nine days. On the 8th day, the scrolls recounting the history of Antiochus, the aggressor are read. After that, Torah will be ceremonially taken out from the Ark and read. At the end of the celebrations the effigy of Bagris, who was chief of Roman army, is burnt. The effigy is made of straw and dry grass, in which salt crystals and leaves of ilanji* tree are tucked in, so that they crackle while the effigy is burnt. There will also be dance and song and distribution of sweets. On this day, children are given money as gift.

Eight day festival

The festival begins on Sabbath day. When the Jerusalem church was recaptured, there was only enough olive oil to light the lamp for one day. Yet the lamp was kept lit for 8 days by lighting one branch of the lamp a day. That is why Hanukkah is celebrated as Eight Day festival.



Purim

In ancient Persia, Haman, royal vizier to the king prepared a plan to kill all the Jews. Esther, a girl foiled this plan. Jews believe their race was not annihilated because of Esther's sacrifice and intelligence. Purim festival day commemorates the saga of courage of the Queen. The festival descriptions are found in Esther's book. Distribution of gifts and charity forms part of the festival. Seudat Purim, is the festive ritual meal on that day. Asu Avaroz's song describes the story of queen Esther.

Pesach (Pass over)

Pesach is celebrated in commemoration of the liberation of Jews by God from slavery in Egypt. It is an eight day festival, and the main ritual is the reading of the sacred Haggadah. On festival days, leavened bread is not made in Jewish homes. This is due to the belief that the liberated Jews had to make bread with unleavened dough as they had to leave in haste. The ritual food consists of unleavened bread, spicy curries made of leaves, and four cups of wine. The prayers end with the recitation of these hope-filled words from Haggadah: 'Beshana abba Jerusalem' (Next year in Jerusalem)



Shavuot

Shavuot is commemorates the day on which God gave Torah to the Israeli people at Mount Sinai. The portions describing the commandments in Torah are read on that day. It is popularly known as 'chukunda perunnal' or 'Fiftieth Holiday.' On this day, children are given a lot of sweet rice balls.



Atonement festival

The holiest day of the Jewish people; according to beliefs, it is the day on which one gets closest to God. The Jews celebrate this festival with a burden of guilt for not being truthful to Torah even after receiving it. Starting on the 9th day of Tishrei month at dusk, it extends up to the next night. Taking a break from all other activities, the whole day is spent in strict penance and prayers, even avoiding drinking of water. The fasting ends with the blowing of shofar (a musical instrument made of horn)

Rosh hashanah

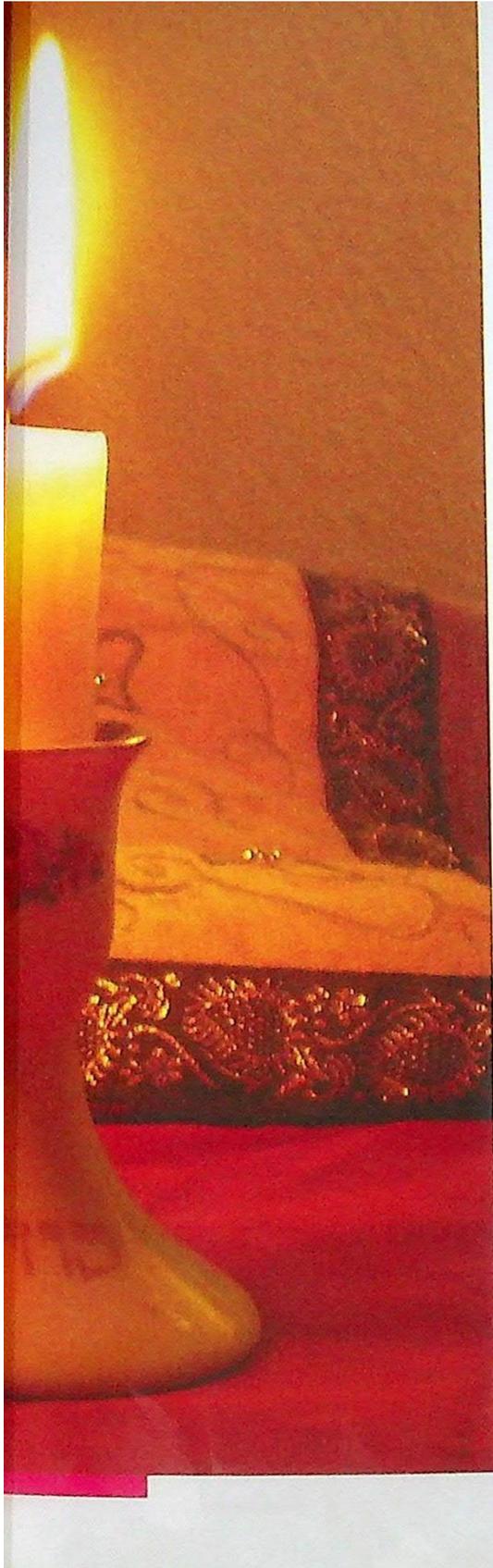
New year day according to Jewish oral tradition. God, as King, will judge each Jew based on the actions in the past. It will be followed by a judgment for the next year. Some believe that creation of the world was completed on this day.



Sukkot

A tent festival commemorating the trials and tribulations of Moses and his group in the desert during their journey to Canaan. It celebrates the greatness of God who never forsook them even in difficult climes at the desert. On the seventh day of Sukkot is the 'valiya osana' (grand hosanna)





RITUALS

Sabbath

The most important day of rest of the Jews. Sabbath marks the day in which God took rest after the act of creation that lasted for six days. Sabbath is observed from the dusk of Saturday to the dusk of Sunday. The word means to keep away from work. Sabbath begins with the lighting of the stone lamps in front of the house. Inside the house women will light the 'chattom' lamp. During Sabbath, the Jews will spend the day in prayers and in studying Torah. On that day, cooking is prohibited, so food that is prepared in advance is eaten. On Sabbath day, the Jews Street in Paravur used to be closed with an iron chain stretched across it. The stone posts installed for the purpose still remain.

37

Chendamangalam Synagogue

Pidyon

A ritual conducted within 30 days of the birth of the first born son. The concerned kohen (priest) will place his hand upon the child's forehead and bless it. Then, he will quote a price for the silver waistband that the mother presents. The mother should pay that price and take the child back. Pidyon is observed following the commandment in Torah: "Every firstborn of man among your sons, you shall redeem."



Brit Milah

On the 8th day after birth, circumcision of the male child is performed. It is done by very experienced moilyar (priestly assistant). Herbs are applied to heal the wound. According to rules, it is mandatory for Jews to perform circumcision. It is believed that brit milah is observed following the agreement Abraham made with God.

38

Chendamangalam Synagogue

1420

First synagogue in
Chendamangalam built

1614

Chendamangalam synagogue
renovated

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Jewish initiation to learning

The initiation to learning is done at the age of 5 years. The introduction to syllables is done at the synagogue. After that cake made in the shape of alphabets is dipped in honey and given to the child, which was a tradition among certain Jewish communities. It is to imprint in the child's mind the idea that knowledge is sweetness. This is how Vyloppilli expresses it poetically:

*To the kids, for knowledge
To be sweet, cakes,
made in the shape of letters,
mixed with honey, are given..*

Naming Ceremony

The naming ceremony for the girl child is conducted on the 28th day after birth; this is not practiced in other places. There is also a 'female-song' named 'Naming Song'

39

Chendamangalam Synagogue

1938

Kochi Archeology Department renovates the structure and makes it a protected monument.

2004

The Synagogue was taken over by Indian Archeology Department.

Sabbath Dishes

On Sabbath day, cooking is not allowed. So, food is prepared in advance. Wheat cake, Kubba, Kallappam, black gram cake etc are the main dishes.



Wine

Wine has to be made following kosher laws. Wine forms an essential item in all special occasions. Four cups of wine is the prescribed measure.



Kubba

A dish made of rice paste filled with minced meat or fish; it is cooked in a curry mixed with ladies finger or churakka (gourd). It is served with rice cooked in coconut milk and turmeric



Pastel

A dish made with wheat flour dough filled with meat; fillings usually include beef, fish, egg or potato which are fried in oil.



Uzhunnappam (Black gram cake)

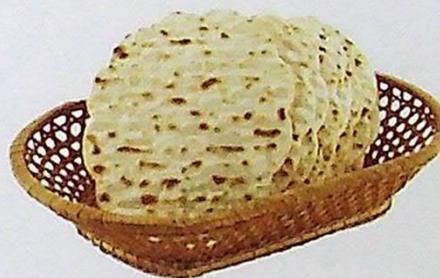
A delicacy made by mixing rice and black gram powder and fried in oil.

FESTIVAL FOODS



Sudat Purim

A traditional feast on Purim day. Dishes are made in the shape of the ear of Haman, the servant of Persian King who conspired to annihilate the Jews. In Osni Haman, jams of various flavours are filled into a sweet biscuit of triangular shape. Samosa named kreplath is made with meat and potato as fillers. Apart from it, there are several dishes made of several varieties of pulses. While in Persian palace, Queen Esther is believed to have eaten only dishes made of pulses to follow kosher. Liquor and wine are liberally served along with food.



Pesach cake

Massa is a cake made of unleavened dough. Jews consider it as a symbol of liberation. As it is affordable to all, it is also called poor man's bread. It is also a symbol of humility.

There are several rites that form part of a traditional Jewish marriage. The influence of Kerala style is also evident. Earlier marriage ceremonies used to extend up to 15 days, which later was shortened to 7 days beginning with Sabbath.



MARRIAGE

Happy beginning

Tuesday is the marriage day. The ceremonies begin on the Sabbath day preceding it. Bridegroom is called Eyruz and the bride Eyrufa. After the Sabbath prayers, the bride's father will invite the bridegroom and his friends to his house, and offer them a feast named 'santhosham' (happiness). The bridegroom's sisters will present the bride with bridal dress. When the bride comes wearing that, they will sing marriage songs standing around her.

Kappu

The kappu ritual is conducted during Sunday night. The bridegroom and party will arrive at bride's house in a procession. They will present the bride with silver for the wedding ring and gold for the thali (marriage pendant). Then they will start singing the song; 'don't you fear for all that..'

Teliba

The ceremony to sanctify the bride: her nails will be manicured; unnecessary hair will be removed, and after that, she is given a bath in a stream or pond. After bath, the bride will get ready by wearing a blouse with full sleeves and a skirt that extends up to her feet. That day, 'the guest's rice' will be served.





Chirianandan

The bridegroom is imagined as Joseph Rabban (Chirianandan), the Jewish noble man who won the position of 'Anchuvannam'. Wearing gold chain and silk over the wedding dress, and a crown on his head, the bridegroom will dress up like a king. He will be provided a throne-like chair to sit.

Indigenous marriage

One can find Kerala rites in Jewish marriages. Most important among them, is the tying of the 'tali' (marriage pendant). A marriage song starting with the lines, 'God, who created twice- seven, fourteen worlds..' , the practice of throwing betel leaves and coins after swirling them above the heads of newly wedded couple to ward off evil eyes, doing 'kurava' (a melodious chorus of women produced by the tongue and throat on festive occasions) when the bride reaches the synagogue, the practice of greeting the elders by touching their feet, the gifting of wedding dress to the bride etc are adopted from local customs. The tali is made with seven strands of thread, which is found among Syrian Christians too.



Tying of Thali

A thali (marriage pendant) is tied around the neck of the bride, who is dressed up. It is done by the married-sister of the bridegroom. The thali is threaded with seven silk strands. And while tying the thali, senior women will sing songs. After that, the bride and her party will go to the synagogue in a procession. There she will offer prayers, and kiss the Torah scrolls.



Putting on the Wedding Ring

One of the main marriage rituals according to Jewish belief. It is performed at the tent prepared near the Ehal. Pulling out a thread from the shawl (shishid) worn by the bridegroom, it will be tied to the wedding ring and dipped into a wine glass. After that, the bridegroom will drink some wine from it. Then taking the wedding ring out of the wine cup, the bridegroom will put it on bride's finger.



Ketubah

Ketubah is a marriage agreement. The elders fix the marriage after agreeing upon the gold, money and date. It will be written on paper and considered as a contract. The ketuba will be decorated with paintings. After wedding ring is worn, the ketuba is read, and then handed over to the bride. It is an assurance about the conduct of the bridegroom in their future life together. Ketubah is kept safely in the bride's house.



A marriage ketubah of a marriage held at Chendamangalam synagogue in 1942.

A wedding song

She put on a beautiful dress,
A silver belt on her waist
And a magnificent bundle of keys too.
With *alikkatt* earrings to her ear,
She is blessed with *chadura* earrings.
A nice necklace worn around her neck,
On her hair – a magnificent flower garland.
Her anklets and toe-rings are curves of gold.
Her body smells from a distance with
Musk and powdered ambers and all fragrance –
She's the lady who bathed in lotus dew.
With a chain studded with precious stones
And a chain of corals, blazing in abundance,
Rings, bracelets and armlets –
She is dressed up with so many decorations!

- *alankaramanka*



COSTUMES

Costumes

It is difficult to make out the Jews from their dress. The Malabari Jews dressed like Keralites. The Jewish women wore lungi, jacket and frock. They were fond of colourful dresses. The male members wore lungi or mundu. They wore a cap on their head and had a shawl over their shoulder. The color of the cap changed on special occasions. The traditional dress consisted of violet trousers, white dress and cap.



Kippa

A hemispherical cap, usually made of cloth, worn by Jews. It is mandatory to wear kippa inside the synagogue during prayer time. It is men who usually wear kippa.

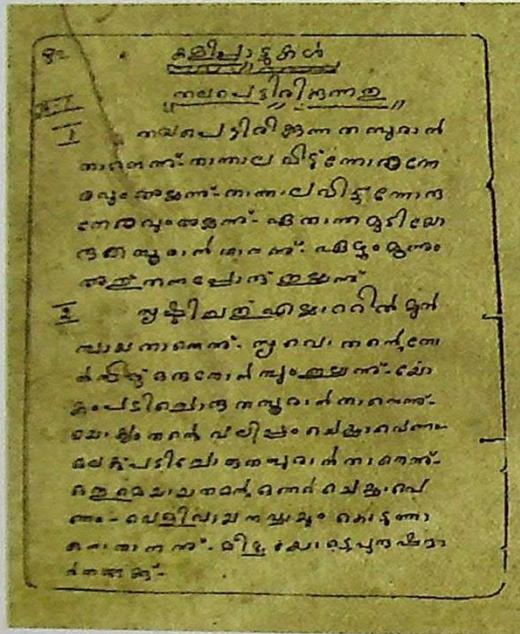


Sheitel

A wig or half-wig worn by Jewish women. It is mandatory for married women to wear sheitel

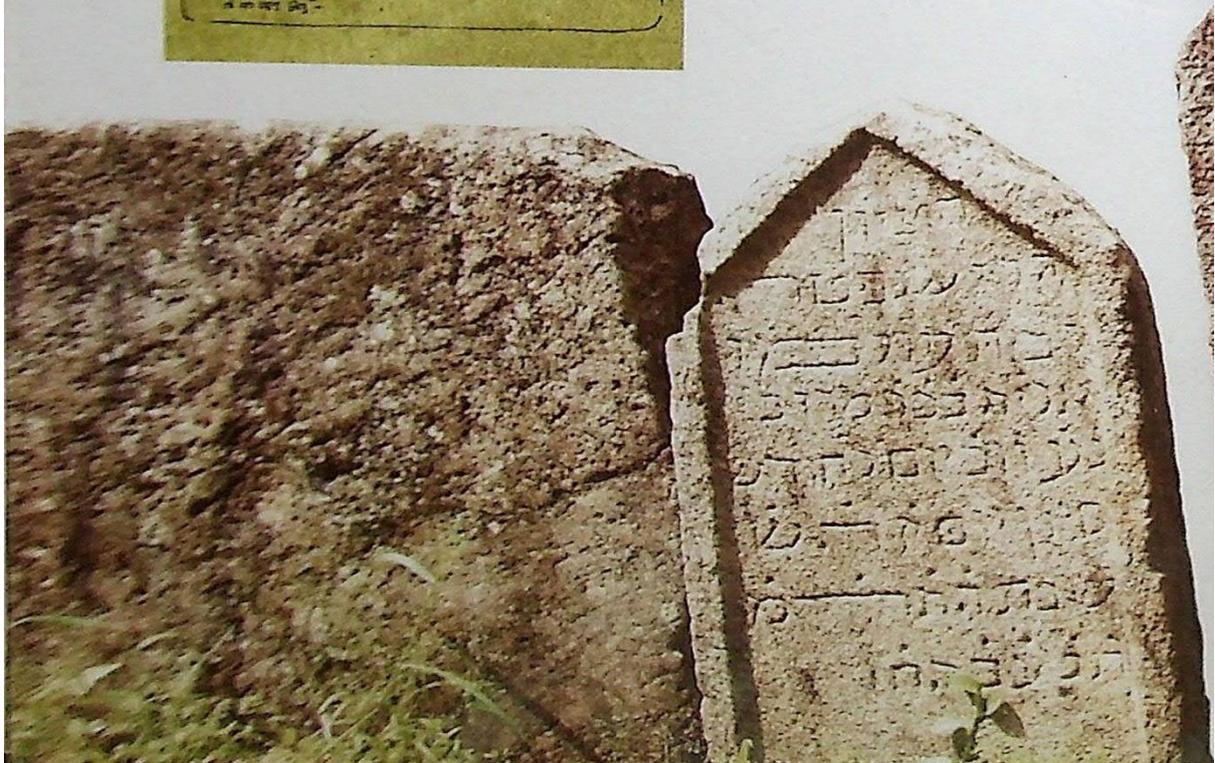
Jewish Malayalam

The Jewish Malayalam differs slightly from the general Malayalam. It is due to its relationship with Jewish religious literature and music. One can also find in it words from Hebrew, Sanskrit and other Dravidian languages. Script used was that of old Malayalam. The female songs were in Jewish Malayalam.



From a Kola

A page from a Kola on which Jewish Female Song is written. The song is in Jewish Malayalam.



LANGUAGE



Elementary Text

A page from a notebook in which Malayalam- English and Hebrew meaning of words are written down as part of learning.



Hebrew inscriptions on stone.





Mezuzah

A piece of bamboo stem or metal which is inscribed with verses from Torah. It is usually fixed on the front door of Jewish houses. It is customary to kiss the mezuzah when one enters and goes out of the house.



Star of David

A Jewish symbol. It is a hexagon consisting of two equilateral triangles. It became popular after 19th century, and is commonly found in Jewish homes today.



Shofar

A musical instrument made from the horn of a ram. The Jews celebrate new year by blowing the shofar. Though it sounds like a bugle, there are no devices to control the pitch. Shofar was blown in Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

DECORATIONS



Heikal screen

According to the occasion, screens are hung in front of the Ark. On the Holy day of Atonement, white screen is used. On Simhath Torah all screens are hung in a row. The middle portion which is decorated with shining silk threads is from the bridal dress. All the edges are embroidered with fixed design. The screen is also used to cover the hearse.



Torah Crest

A casket used to keep the torah scrolls. The top end is shaped spherically like a pomegranate. One can see pendants with colorful stones on the crest. In the picture is a Torah crest inscribed with Hebrew words saying 'the Torah Crest of Palu (Paloor) synagogue'. This crest is an evidence of such a synagogue having existed in Paloor



Torah cask and crown

The cask where Torah scrolls are kept. Cylindrical in shape, it is made of wood and is decorated by painting it with silver. The crown is the upper cap of the cask. It may be made in silver or gold, and is usually decorated with figures of leaves, creepers and flowers.

Jewish houses

The street was in front of Chendamangalam synagogue. Most of the houses are two-storied buildings facing the road. It is difficult to make them out from their architectural style. On the door front one can find the mezuzah and in the walls, stone lamps. The ground floor was used for trading or to store goods. Dining and cooking too were done there. Bedroom was upstairs. The population of Jews in Chendamangalam was always below 300. In 1842 there were 50 families, out of which only 19 remained in 1980.





P M Jussay

A highly respected Jewish historian whom the Israelis hailed as 'the wise man from the East'. Born in Chendamangalam on June 19, 1919, he taught at several institutions like Annamalai University, Kozhikode Regional Engineering College etc. He was also the chief editor of Kerala Times.

He was awarded scholarship for his study of Kerala Jews. Calicut University published his 'The Jews of Kerala' in 2005. His articles on Jews were published by Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. He was the chairman of the Jewish Study Global Conference held in Jerusalem. He died on March 29, 2007.



The Jews Of Kerala – P M Jussay

A Study about Jews in Kerala,
Publisher: University of Calicut



The Last Jews of Kerala – Edna Fernandez

The much forgotten history of 2000 years of the
Jewish community in India
Publisher: Skyhoard Publishing



Ruby of Cochin – Ruby Daniel

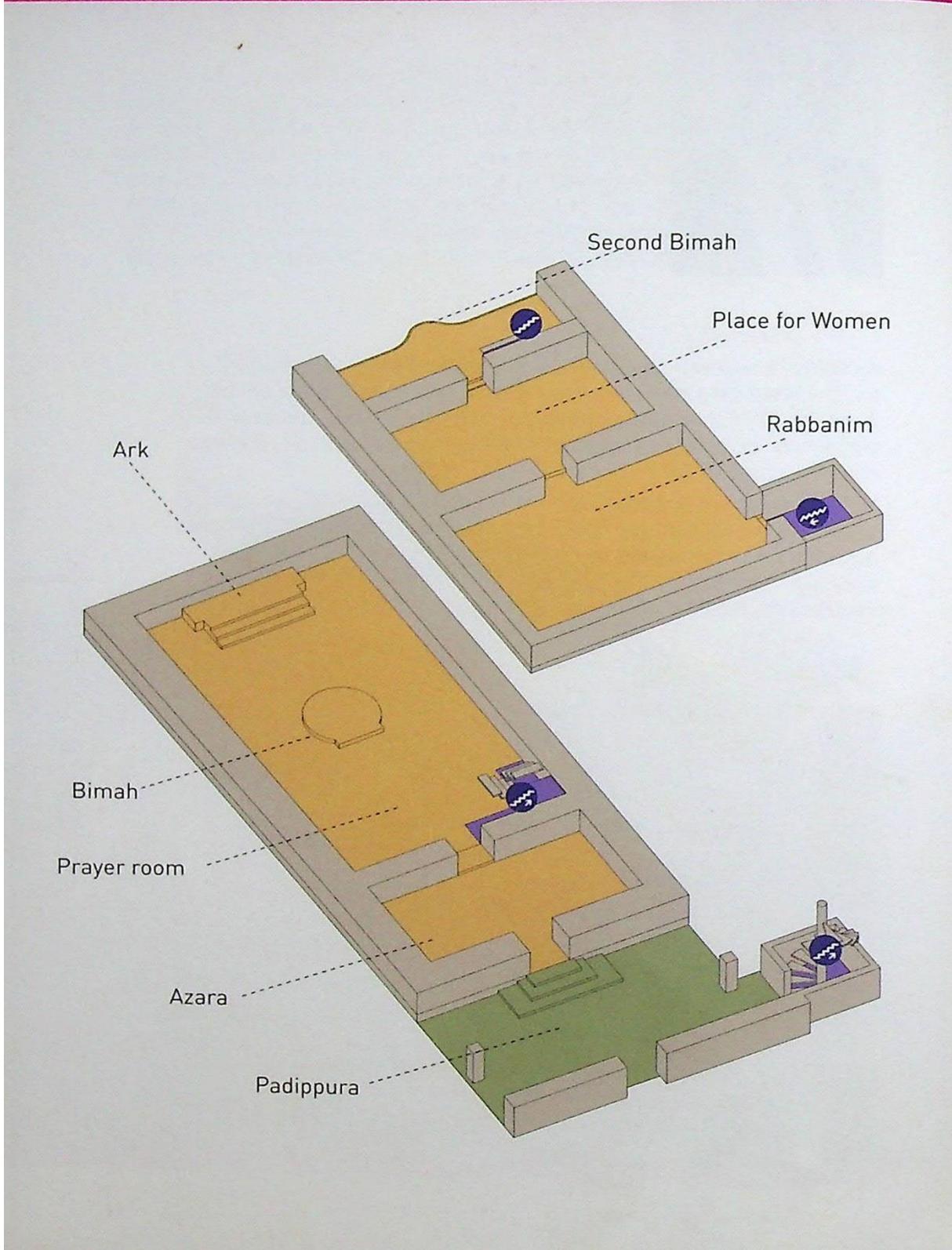
Memoirs of Rubi Daniel who was born in the Jews Street of Mattancherry
Publisher: Jewish Publication Society



Karkuzhali, Yefefiah – Dr Scaria Zachariah, Barbara Johnson

Translation to Hebrew: **Ophira Gamliel**
Anthology of 50 Jewish Female Songs
Publisher: Ben-Zvi Institute

Chendamangalam Synagogue 3D view





MUSEUM GUIDE

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864

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