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- 2) To assist the descendants of the ancient Jewish community of the city of Kaifeng, Henan province, in their efforts to preserve and maintain the artifacts and documents they have inherited from their forebears, as well as in their efforts to reconstruct the history of their community.
- 3) To support the establishment and maintenance of a Judaica section in the Kaifeng Municipal Museum.
- 4) To promote and assist the study and research of the history of early Jewish travel in China and in the rise and fall of the various Jewish communities that were established in China over the past millennia.
- 5) To publish general information and scholarly materials dealing with all aspects of the Chinese-Jewish experience.
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Points East

中國-猶太學院

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JEWISH CULTURE AND ITS MODERNIZATION PROCESS

by Dr. Zhang Qian Hong
Director, Institute for Jewish Studies
Henan University, Kaifeng

(Dr. Zhang's book, the subject of this abstract, was recently published in China. AL)

This book focuses on the origin, evolution and growth of the Jewish modernity that started at the beginning of the 18th century and is still continuing today. The *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) and the Emancipation movements marked a crucial turning point in the process of Jewish cultural modernization (in Europe). Subsequent to the appearance of these movements, Judaism divided and modern secular culture emerged under the pressure of modernism. Jewish modernization has made brilliant achievements in the 20th century, although there still remain many problems and controversies.

The author has very carefully chosen the term Jewish culture rather than Judaism for the title of this work. The reason is that most Chinese scholars are used to regarding Judaism as the Jewish religion, and many Chinese publications consider Judaism only as the body of doctrines and beliefs. As a matter of fact, in modern usage more and more scholars have accepted the idea that Judaism not only involves a creed and a code of religious life, but also includes the entire intellectual culture of the Jewish People—the phenomenon that has significantly molded its inner life.

The book includes six parts, each of which reflects the orientation of modernization in Jewish culture from different angles.

Chapter 1: A Brief Outlook of Jewish Culture

Jewish culture is very rich, diverse and profound. This chapter begins with the characteristics of Jewish culture. Religiosity is the dominant principle in Jewish culture. It is impossible to understand the nature and essence of Jewish culture without an appreciation of the place given to the Jewish religion. In the course of Jewish history, religion has profoundly affected Jewish cultural phenomena. Even in the contemporary period, the Jewish religion is still the main source and connotation of Jewish philosophy, ideology, ethics and arts. The Jews are well known as "the people of the Book". It is on the basis of the Books (religious scriptures) that Jewish culture is formed.

Jewish culture is closely interlinked with the nationality, which nourished the national spirit and inspired countless men and women. The Jewish religion and nationality were so welded together that it became impossible to separate them. As a result,

(continued on page 4)

JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN HAN CHINA

by Tiberiu Weisz

Ever since I read the original Chinese stone inscriptions back in 1978, when I was in graduate school writing a paper on the "Origin of the Chinese Jews", I could not envision how the Jews could have settled in China as early as the Han dynasty. But written records are hard to ignore and the stone inscriptions that the Chinese Jews left us indicate that "At the time of the Han (Dynasty, 206 BC-220 AD) the religion entered and settled (*ju*) in the Middle Kingdom". Yet we Western researchers could not provide documentation to the existence of Jewish settlers in China that early, and therefore accepted Donald Leslie's differentiation between "trader and settlers" in his encompassing book *The Survival of the Chinese Jews*. Nevertheless, the sudden appearance of the Jews at the Sung court (960-1279 AD), as indicated on the 1489 inscription, poses more questions than answers.

So I took a fresh look at the original Chinese texts as published in Charles White's book *Chinese Jews* and I realized that his translation of the text was in a narrative style, with one event following another. He tried to connect the whole text as one story. This struck me as strange since, in the 25 years of reading Chinese historical texts and documents, I rarely found that to be the case. The writers of the stone inscriptions followed the customary Chinese historiography of the time, to record certain events in a very concise way. And that is how the inscriptions should be treated.

Charles White translated the relevant text as: "Bringing tribute of Western cloth, they entered (the court of) Sung and the Emperor said: You have come to our China; reverence the customs of your ancestors and hand them down in Pian Liang". The same paragraph was translated by Donald Leslie as: "They brought Western cloth as tribute to the Sung. The Emperor said: Come to our China, honor and preserve the customs of your ancestors, remain and hand them down in Pian Liang". Based on this paragraph, Western researchers concluded that the Jews were invited to come and settle to China.

When I compared the two translations to the original Chinese text, I was puzzled by the translations. First of all, several Chinese characters were mistranslated. Second, the Chinese text was treated as one story, when in fact there were two separate topics. The first one was a direct quote and the second one was a statement. In light of these observations the Chinese text should be read as: "They entered to bring cloth as tribute to the Sung. The Emperor said: 'You have returned to my China. Honor and observe the custom of your ancestors.' We abandoned Pian Liang."

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TOTAL:	310

FROM THE EDITOR

Disengaging myself from my 5 year-old grandson and the true object of his desire, the water hose, I come inside on a beautiful summer afternoon to dash off something to wrap up this latest issue of Points East. I'd better do it quickly—I can hear him calling me already!

Our cover articles this month feature a European-American man writing about Han dynasty China and a Chinese woman writing about the early modern Jewish experience. An interesting crossover, wouldn't you agree? You readers who are scholars will be better able than I to discern the validity of both papers, but their value, I think, also lies in who wrote them and why, and what it says about our world today. I also wonder if either, or both, of the authors are Jews. Neither says—and that also says something important too.

Rena Krasno continues her series on the Mir Yeshiva, and the redoubtable Dr. Xu Xin reports on yet another hugely successful tour of the States. In his own way, he reminds me of those speakers from bygone days who crossed the oceans to lecture in distant communities—Mark Twain and Charles Dickens are two who come to mind.

Anyway, it's summer here, my grandson calls, and I'm away.

Anson Laytner

Correction:

The article about the inauguration of the Old China Hands Archive by Robert Gohstand omitted the participation of Marcia R. Ristaino, Senior Chinese Acquisitions Specialist for the Library of Congress, as a speaker in the afternoon panel. Dr. Ristaino is author of a recent book on the subject based on ten years of research and writing.

Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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ter for Judaic Studies at Nanjing, the biggest surprise came from a generous couple attending the Skirball talk: Guilford and Diane Glazer. While Mr. Glazer made an announcement during the question and answer period, that he and Diane would provide a "small" gift for the Center for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University, it was, in fact, the biggest single gift the Center has ever received.

Other highlights, in addition to those experienced on the lecture circuit, included interviews, publicity, and plans for future translations and exhibits. Cynthia Zeiden interviewed me for an educational TV program now in the works: "Safe Haven in China." (See <http://www.safehaveninchina.org/>) The Great Lakes B'nai B'rith chapter taped my talk on "Jews in Old China" in the main sanctuary at Shaarey Zedek Synagogue in Detroit, for the "B'nai B'rith Presents" program on Jewish Television. (This videotape is available for sale through B'nai B'rith Great Lakes Regional Office. Contact Fran White FWHITE6620@aol.com or Bobby Levine, email: bolevine@aol.com, telephone: 248 646 3100. Cost is \$25.)

Gary Zola, Executive Director of the Jacob Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, whom I met during my visit to Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, agreed that the Nanjing University Center for Jewish Studies will translate *The American Jew 1585-1990* by Jacob R. Marcus into Chinese. This will be part of the program to commemorate 350 years of American Jewish history that includes bringing an exhibition on American Jewish experience to China in 2005.

I also had an opportunity to meet the President and Dean of Gratz College and to discuss future plans to provide opportunities for our young faculty members to be trained there.

Besides many articles and reports about my visit and talks in various papers, the *Forward*, a weekly Jewish newspaper in New York, published a most comprehensive article by Daniel Treiman on my current visit, entitled "Far East of Eden, a Scholar's Fascination with the Jews." (See

<http://www.forward.com/issues/2003/03.02.28/faces.html>)

Coincidentally, my second book in English, *The Jews of Kaifeng, China: History, Culture, and Religion* (The KTAV Publishing House Inc., 2003), which discusses the history of the Jewish community of Kaifeng with a focus on its social and religious history, appeared shortly after my arrival in the U.S. It inevitably added excitement and color to my visit and provided interested readers with new material.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all friends, institutions, and organizations that made this visit possible and successful. Now, my wife and I are looking forward to our forthcoming trip to Israel, humbly and with equal gratitude, to accept an honorary Doctorate from Bar Ilan University.

Report from the Institute of Jewish Studies, Kaifeng, China

by Zhang Qianhong

On the occasion of its first year anniversary, the Institute of Jewish Studies, Henan University (Kaifeng, Henan Province, China) hosted on May 15, 2003 an award ceremony for the first annual Len Hew Jewish Essay Competition. The event was well attended. 30 entries were awarded either cash and book prizes or certificates of recognition. Evident from the quality of the submission and the background of the students, the Jewish Essay Competition succeeded in attracting a wide cross-section of student talent on campus.

The ceremony began with the reading of the congratulatory e-mail from the honorary Director of the Institute, Mr. Len Hew, who was not able to attend because of the SARS situation. In it he declared that the primary objective for the competition was to promote interest

amongst the student population of Henan University in the study of the history and culture of the Jewish people. From the number and the quality of the entries, he concluded that this objective had been satisfactorily accomplished.

Professor Zhang Qian Hong, the Director of the Institute, publicly acknowledged the support Mr. Hew had given thus far to the Institute, and then went on to list many of Institute's accomplishments during its first year of existence. She mentioned specifically that the Institute had now established its own library (the Shalom Library), and had successfully hosted and co-hosted many significant academic events. Examples include: the first annual Jewish Essay Competition, the "International Conference on the Jews in China" and a lecture series by the Israeli author, Gustavo D. Perednik. Such accomplishments, she said, have earned the Institute respect and recognition in Chinese academic circles. She expressed confidence that with the blessings and support of everyone concerned the Institute would continue to grow.

Next, the awards were distributed. Prizes and awards were given out jointly by the Party Secretary, Mr. Li Wen-San, and the Dean of the College of History and Culture, Professor Yen Zhao-Xiang. In his concluding remarks, Professor Yen recognized everyone who had helped to organize this essay competition, and also offered congratulations and encouragements to the winners and participants of this competition.

connected her routine work as a dentist with the policies of the local White Russian newspaper.

Here was a first clue! Leaving no stone unturned, Moustafine pursued clue after clue and, slowly, the story of Manya and other relatives unwound. Moreover, the inner workings of the Stalinist regime became clearer. Thus, **Secrets and Spies: The Harbin Files** not only tells the story of individuals but also reflects the horrors of Stalinism.

How does the story end? I really should not divulge this and let the reader enjoy following the travels of Moustafine, her persistence in face of obstacles, and unexpected encounters that finally led to the unraveling of old secrets.

Briefly Noted ~

From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardi Jewish Life in Shanghai

by Dr. Maisie J. Meyer

Dr. Meyer, who holds a PhD in International History from the London School of Economics, has written a book that traces the history, culture, customs, and relations with Ashkenazi Jews, Japanese and Chinese. Dr. Vera Schwarcz says the book offers "a vivid and compelling portrait of a Jewish community recasting its identity as it reshapes the landscape of Shanghai."

Published by Hoffmans, 50 Leslie St., Edison, NJ 08817, 1-732-572-2680. \$68 US + S&H.

Triumphant Trip: 2003 U.S. Travel Report

by Xu Xin

My eighth visit to the U.S., accompanied by my dear wife, Kong Defang, was initiated by invitations from Kenyon College, Ohio, and the Skirball Educational Center, Los Angeles, and resulted in travel to 11 cities and the delivery of 25 lectures during a six-week period from the end of January to early March.

Credit – or blame—must go to Joseph Alder, of Kenyon, and David Welsh, of Skirball, both of whom had attended the May 2002 International Symposium on the History of Jewish Diasporas in China, which I organized and directed at Nanjing University. Once the word got out about my U.S. foray, many additional invitations for lectures ensued. The result was a very full schedule, although I regretfully had to decline a few invitations because of time limitations.

The whole visit was actually a nation-wide lecture tour with half my talks given at colleges and universities—Northwestern, Yale, Notre Dame, Hebrew Union College, City University of New York, Gratz College, Montclair University, Pitzer College, Claremont University, and Occidental College. Others were delivered to various Jewish congregations and organizations in cities such as Chicago, New Haven, Detroit, New York, Houston, Menlo Park, and Los Angeles.

We "opened" in Chicago, like many of my visits to the U.S., because Chicago is really my home away from home. I was very pleased to spend some time with the Friend family and gave four talks there before setting forth. From the very first moment, the visit was fruitful, enjoyable and memorable – as was the whole trip.

From the very first week – on the bitter cold day that I lectured on "China and Israel relations" at Northwestern University in a session organized by the Citywide Faculty and Friends of Hillel—people kept coming. The surprised Hillel organizer had to add more and more chairs, filling the entire lecture hall. This vivid response exemplified the thirst for such information and foreshadowed all that was to follow. Seeing so many people attend talks renewed my determination to work diligently to further even better understanding between our two peoples: Chinese and Jewish.

As it would take reams of paper to try to replicate the entire experience—including responses to varied lecture topics which included sessions on "Jewish Diasporas in China," "Judaic Studies in China," "Chinese Policies Towards Judaism" as well as

"Israel through Chinese Eyes"—I must limit this to a few of the highlights. One was the touching experience of speaking at Shaar Hashalom in Texas, with its NASA congregants. This was the American synagogue for the first Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon, who was killed during the Space Shuttle Columbia tragedy.

When I arrived about three weeks after the disaster, the rabbi told me that the atmosphere was extremely sad, as people were in deep mourning, and NASA had cancelled all flight programs. The congregation desperately needed cheer. Over 100 people, mostly engineers, scientists and NASA technical staff attended the one-hour talk, and then stayed on for over another hour to pursue the subject. Everyone who shook hands with me commented on how much he or she enjoyed my talk, and that it had fulfilled an important need. I was so pleased to be able to spend an evening with these people. The NASA badges I received as gifts are now memorable symbols of that visit and experience.

The climax of the trip, however, came on the eve of my departure for China—at the Skirball Museum. Over 400 people attended, some arriving over one hour earlier than the time set in order to assure a good seat.

To generate substantial and tangible supports for the expanded Jewish studies center at Nanjing University was a "not so hidden" goal of this visit. Through my travels I had wonderful meetings with Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, former President of Hebrew Union College; Rabbi Arthur Schneier, President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation; and Shalom Yoran, former Vice-president of Israel Aircraft Industries. I had the honor to lunch with the Glazers and Loe David in Los Angeles. During those meetings and others, I described the programs of Jewish studies in China, and was delighted to receive their support. The Sino-Judaic Institute at Menlo Park, CA, prepared a special afternoon event for over 100 people and presented me with a significant check for Jewish studies programs at the Nanjing Center.

Although many people throughout the country have donated to the planned cen-

IN MEMORIAM

It is with sadness that we report the death of Barbara T. Pollak, wife of founding SJI Board member, Sino-Judaic scholar and author, Michael Pollak. Born March 23, 1921, in Minneapolis, she passed away quietly on May 12, 2003, in Dallas. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and a master's degree in Library Science at North Texas University. She was especially interested in art history and children's literature, worked for many years as a volunteer librarian at the Dallas Museum of Art, and participated in numerous other community services. She is survived by her husband Michael, her children Julia, Nancy, Mark, and Susan, their spouses, eight grandchildren, and her brother Stephen.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

I look forward to reading the second part of Rena Krasno's article on the Mir Yeshiva experience, which is quite instructive. Is there an English translation of the book "The Mir Yeshiva"?

I am puzzled, however, by the fact that, at least in the published extracts, nowhere is the name of Abraham Kotsuji (Kotsuji Setsuzo), Japan's one-time leading Hebraic scholar, mentioned. In his autobiography entitled "From Tokyo to Jerusalem" (Geis Associates/ Random House, New York, 1964) Kotsuji details his life-long journey to Judaism, ending with the apotheosis of his formal conversion in Jerusalem in 1959. Kotsuji's version of the story of how the Jewish refugees in Kobe were allowed to arrive and stay almost indefinitely, even though their transit visas for Japan were initially valid for only ten days, seems at variance with what we read in the extracts provided by Rena Krasno.

Kotsuji was, in the 1930s, employed by Matsuoka Yosuke, director of the South Manchuria Railway, as his advisor on Jewish affairs. By the time the Jewish refugees, holders of Sugihara transit visas, began to stream into Kobe, Kotsuji was back home in Kamakura and painfully aware that, as a result of German Nazi propaganda and pressure on Japan, as well as the hostility of some Imperial Army officers, who paraded as "Jewish experts", notably Colonel Yasue, the Foreign Office was becoming increasingly hostile. Extending the validity of the ten-day visas and the refugees' stay in Japan had become problematic. Under these precarious circumstances, Kotsuji obtained an interview with his former boss, Matsuoka, now foreign minister of Japan. The latter lent Kotsuji a sym-

pathetic ear, but could only suggest that he approach the prefectural authorities of Kobe, who held discretionary powers in the matter of granting and extending residency permits. Kotsuji thereupon obtained from a millionaire cousin a grant of 300,000 yen, which he used to travel twice weekly from Kamakura to Kobe, in order to socialize with the men in authority there. He treated the latter to sumptuous dinners in the most expensive restaurants before even broaching the subject of the Jewish refugees. Kotsuji thus claims that, as a result of his diplomatic efforts, the Jewish refugees were allowed to stay on in Kobe until after Pearl Harbor. Kotsuji makes no mention of Makoya whatsoever.

Can one reconcile the two versions of that intriguing story?

Rene Goldman
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C., Canada

To the editor:

Rena Krasno's review of the book, *The Mir Yeshiva*, in the March 2003 issue of *Points East*, contains two assertions (of the book's authors or hers?) that are gross errors. One, that the Japanese Makoya sect used its influence during wartime among "high government officials" to purchase grapes for the Mir Yeshiva to produce otherwise unobtainable kosher wine for Pesach. This, to say the least, is pure myth, because the Makoya sect did not yet exist. It was established after the war's end in 1945. Two, that the Japanese government decided [in mid-1940, A.A.] "to ship the Jewish refugees from Japan to China, to the Japanese-occupied city of Shanghai." Another error, because Japan occupied Shanghai af-

ter the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941.

Sincerely,

Avraham Altman
Truman Research Institute
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, Israel

Rena Krasno replies:

This is a book based on various personal memories and impressions, not one of detailed history. Repeated gratitude is expressed to the Almighty for the salvation of Mir Yeshiva. One writer even muses that the Opium War may have been taken place in order to eventually provide sanctuary to Jews. As to historical facts, I am afraid there are many omissions in the book. For example, when they speak of the Russian Jews arrested by the Japanese, they don't mention that one died very shortly after imprisonment and torture in Bridge House and that the President of the Shanghai Ashkenazi Jewish Communal Association, Boris Topas, had to endure inhuman torture for many months, leaving him crippled both mentally and physically for the rest of his life. In fact, Boris Topas' name does not even appear in this context.

What I did find interesting in the book were personal experiences of some of the members, which were quite different from those of other Jewish refugees in Shanghai, and reflect a special facet of life for a particular group of refugees under the Japanese occupation.

There is no English translation of this book available.

Jewish Culture and its Modernization Process

(continued from page 1)

Judaism was regarded as a religious nationalism. The period of the 19th century was marked by the nationalism in European countries. The nationalistic atmosphere in which Jewish lived, no doubt, affected their outlook on the Jewish nationalism. Many Jewish thinkers tried to interrelate the major religious and nationalistic values in Judaism and wove them into a single unity, but Reform Judaism denied Jewish nationalism and placed its stress on the universal nature of Judaism over an extended period of time.

Jewish culture also has another characteristic, that of universality. It is marked by an open attitude toward other ideologies, extensive intercourse with them, and universalistic influences upon other cultures. Judaism was deeply affected by the cultural phenomena covering the whole range of human experience and has left a visible stamp on world civilization.

The second part of this chapter deals with the modernity of Judaism. Not all Jewish traditional thoughts are in accordance with modernism, but some modern ideals—democracy, freedom, equality, and individuality—go right to the heart of Judaism. In addition, we can also find modern economic ethical ideas in Jewish scripture.

Chapter 2: The Age of Enlightenment — the Pursuing of Modernization

Haskalah, or the Enlightenment, as it is often referred to in English, was a social and cultural movement among the Jews in Europe starting in the late 18th, and continuing through the 19th century. It was the product of the confrontation between traditional Jewish culture and the intellectual trends of modern Europe. Beginning in Germany, the *Haskalah* spread to Poland and Russia. The leading figure of the movement was Moses Mendelssohn, who began life as a poor rabbinical student and later on gained fame as a philosopher and commentator. He sought to bring Jews close to European culture and lifestyle without giving up their own cultural and religious values. In order to break down the walls of the ghetto from both the inside and outside, he wanted Jews to learn German culture. He translated the Pentateuch and the Psalms into German. The influence of this Bible translation was dramatic. From it, many talmudic students

learned the German language and went on to the study of general European culture. In his famous work, *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn outlined his ideals of religious and political toleration, separation of church and state, and the equality of all citizens. He attempted to demonstrate the Judaism was a rational religion. Mendelssohn made a great contribution to the modernization of Judaism and the Jewish people, so he was regarded as the first man who have completed the transformation from ghetto to modern society. The status that Mendelssohn personally had won is an example of what could be achieved by those who adopted the culture of the country.

The *Haskalah* is the starting point of Jewish modernization. It was largely responsible for the modernization of Jewish life. As a result of generations of persecution and isolation, Jews differed from their neighbors not only in religion and education but also in language, dress, and habits. During the age of the *Haskalah*, more and more Jews began to adopt the language and culture of the countries in which they lived and changed their outward appearance and behavior to conform to that of the local inhabitants. "Be a Jew in your house and a man in the street" was a widely spread motto. The *Maskilim* (advocates of the *Haskalah*) hoped to abolish the traditional system of education, and to send their children to schools to be taught the secular courses. They introduced new concepts of freedom, religious tolerance, equality, and reliance on rationalism and enlightenment. The *Haskalah* had made enormous strides in rapid and deliberate Jewish cultural modernization and the forging of modern modes of Jewish spirituality. The *Haskalah* designated the academic view that intellectuals were always the necessary promotional power to cultural modernization.

The *Haskalah* also had a sorrowful influence upon Jewish society—a large part of Jewry was well on the road to assimilation. The generation that followed Mendelssohn adopted the German culture and the way of life, and expected to be accepted by the local people. They considered baptism as the "ticket of admission to European civilization". Many took this step. They thought the prize of Emancipation well worth the price of apostasy. The upper stratum in Germany Jewry, seized with high social ambitions, commonly succumbed to this viewpoint. "Salon

Jewesses of Berlin " and Heinrich Heine are included among of these converts. The trend of assimilation not only depleted the basis of Judaism, but also deprived the Jewish society of some talented sons and daughters. What useful lessons we should draw from the *Haskalah*? That cultural modernization cannot be separated from its traditions, that modern Jewish culture cannot be reborn without the absorption of the quintessence of Judaism.

Chapter 3: Emancipation and Reform—Encountering the Current of Modernization

Emancipation refers to the granting of full and equal civil rights to all the members of a country's minority groups. In particular, it related to the removal of restrictions against the Jews in the western world from the 18th through to the early 20th centuries, and especially during the 19th century. A major factor in this process was French Revolution, which brought Emancipation to the general population of France and Europe. Until that time, Jews had lived for more than a thousand years under the restrictive rule of Christian Europe, which had prevented Jews from fully participating in the social and economic order. The Emancipation marked the beginning of Jewish modernization and ushered in a new epoch in Jewish history. It affected the social, political, religious and cultural aspects of the traditional pattern of Jewish life. Firstly, more and more Jews accepted the secular culture and entered into the fields of European thought. Secondly, with the growth of the Jewish population and the development of European industrialization, more Jewish families left backward areas and moved into big cities. Thus, the modern Jewish history is associated with the rise of modern cities. With the process of urbanization, Jews changed their residential patterns and occupational structure. Jewish bourgeois and professionals now began to appear. They tended to use the new opportunities to extend their economic activities. Finally, secularization and urbanization weakened the characteristics of nationality and religiosity in Jewish culture.

During the process of Emancipation, Judaism became challenged by modernism. Reform Judaism emerged out of the confrontation between age-old Judaism and the intellectual and aesthetic environment of European Enlightenment. Early Reform Judaism started in Germany. There, Israel Jacobson first introduced a number of changes into his synagogue: a mixed choir,

BOOK NOOK

The Only Woman in the Room

by Beate Sirota Gordon
Kodansha International. New York, 1997.
reviewed by Rena Krasno

This is a memoir written vividly by Beate Sirota Gordon, daughter of famous Russian Jewish pianist, Leo Sirota. When Leo was 8, he gave his first recital and then entered the Imperial Music School in Kiev. Among his classmates was Sergei Tarnowski, who would later become Vladimir Horowitz's teacher. At 14, Sirota became head music coach of the Kiev State Opera, and on one occasion accompanied the great Russian singer Fyodor Chaliapin. In 1921, Sergei Koussevitsky invited him to perform Rubinstein and Tchaikowsky in Berlin. It was a triumph. In 1920, Leo Sirota had married the sister of the famous conductor, Yasha Horenstein. The author of this book was born in Vienna in 1923.

Hitler's star was rising in Europe and Leo Sirota thought of leaving Europe. After a triumphant tour in Japan, he decided to move his family there. Beate entered the German School in Omori when she was 6. There were only about 50 students. In 1933, the teachers were replaced by Nazi supporters. Pupils had to say "Heil Hitler" every morning and sing the "Horst Wessel" song. When Beate's parents enquired why she had been given a "C" for conduct, they were told that their daughter was a bad influence. She had been overheard to say that the Saar should be governed by the League of Nations rather than returned to Germany. Teachers began to humiliate Beate in class and finally her parents took her out of school. She was then sent to the American School, a fact that caused her great anxiety, since German teachers had often referred to it as Sodom and Gomorrah.

Beate enjoyed the American School, from which she graduated at 15, and was sent to Mills College in Oakland, California. In the meantime, World War II broke out and she was separated from her family for the duration of the War. In Japan, the Sirotas had to move from Tokyo to their summerhouse in Karuizawa - a mountain resort. They did not realize that in winter the temperature dropped below the freezing point and that there would be neither heating nor food easily available. Furthermore, the

Japanese secret police watched every step of their lives. They suspected all foreigners of listening to short-wave radio and signaling the enemy. Her father was forbidden have any Japanese pupils. Her mother managed to make a little money by giving piano lessons to the wives and children of some foreign diplomats belonging to neutral countries, who had fled U.S. bombings in Tokyo and moved to hotels in Karuizawa. In 1944, the situation grew worse. The number of foreigners sequestered in Karuizawa increased and food became even scarcer. Leo Sirota spent his time scrounging for firewood.

In the meantime, Beate had been studying languages and working in the United States. She tells of her return to Japan when the war ended, her dramatic reunion with her sick starving parents, her work in General MacArthur's headquarters and her part in drafting the women's rights section of Japan's new constitution. When she went back to the U.S. in 1947, she became a cultural impresario and introduced artists, dancers and musicians from all over Asia to American audiences.

Yehudi Menuhin wrote about her book: "A prime example of truth being stranger and at the same time more coherent than fiction."

Secrets and Spies: The Harbin Files

by Mara Moustafine
Random House. Australia, 2002.
reviewed by Rena Krasno

Mara Moustafine is indeed an exceptional woman. Born in Harbin, China, of Jewish, Russian and Tatar extraction, she has led a colorful and adventurous life. Moustafine, who immigrated to Australia as a child, has had a successful and diversified career as diplomat, intelligence analyst, business executive and journalist. And now she has published her first book.

Listening to her grandmother's stories and detecting mysterious undertones, Moustafine became obsessed with the need to find out more about her relatives, some of whom were persecuted by the Stalinist regime, ending in execution or banishment to infamous concentration camps. Her search for the past led

Moustafine to China and Russia, seeking to unearth documents, meet officials able to clarify long hidden facts, and speak to numerous people who had known her family.

At one stage of her voyage of discovery, Moustafine decided to contact the Sino-Judaic Institute and examine their collection of documents at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. When I first met her at lunch, I faced a vibrant, determined woman, excited by the difficult project she had imposed upon herself. She spoke openly, frankly, explaining and questioning.

As a young woman, Moustafine's Aunt Manya, her beloved grandmother's sister, had been shot as a spy in the Soviet Union. Prior to her trip to Russia, Manya had lived in Shanghai where she worked as a dentist. Why had the young woman been arrested and executed when she reached the Soviet Union? Why was she accused of working for a "Russian Fascist paper", Zaria (Dawn), in Shanghai? It was this part of the story of her family that led Moustafine to seek me out.

Here is what Moustafine writes about the result of our encounter: "In May 1999, the writer Rena Krasno takes me to the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University to see a collection of books and papers which belonged to her father, the former editor of a Jewish magazine in Shanghai. Among them is an extraordinary Russian album of photographs of Russians in Shanghai, which was published in 1936 by a Russian Shanghaiander, Captain Jiganoff. Leafing through it I come across a page headed: The Women's Professional School (formerly the Women's Studio of the newspaper Zaria)."

The accompanying article explained that the Women's Studio had been established in 1933 by the Zaria newspaper's management and two years later moved to larger premises, becoming a professional school for women located in the French Concession. Its objective was to help Russian immigrant women learn a profession or craft that would help them make a living. Manya simply had been given the opportunity to fix women's teeth on the spot there. Most certainly she had never

antique market, discounting the line he had been taught to use when tourists asked about graves: that they could not be found.

Mr. Bar-Gal, whose September 2001 posting to Shanghai as an Israeli TV journalist fell through after he arrived, has documented every step of his yearlong headstone hunt. He has shot extensive video footage and taken numerous photographs, both dwelling heavily on the rural recovery process and negotiations with villagers.

What pushes him forward is "Jewish sentiment combined with Jewish history and treasures." For him, the marble slabs, most topped with a Star of David and etched with five Hebrew characters denoting burial, are a physical reminder of Shanghai's rich Jewish heritage. "The Jewish world is very small, and people feel a responsibility for each other," he says.

He's also driven by the thrill of a long-odds chase that he says sometimes makes him feel like Indiana Jones. "The first time I twisted a stone and saw the Hebrew writing, it was very emotional. I'm discovering what a lot of people are looking for," he says, referring to the families of the deceased, and also to the sense of mystery that has long surrounded the apparent disappearance of the city's Jewish graves.

Mr. Bar-Gal is now trying to round up funding to propel his pet project forward, envisaging everything from a documentary and book, to a Web site and even a museum. He is getting some help along the way from benefactors in Shanghai's tiny Jewish community, and the Israeli consulate. "The main thing is to display them in Shanghai," he says...

Request ~ An Appeal to Former Jewish Residents of Shanghai

Dear Shanghailander,

I am writing to ask your help and participation in a project I am launching to save as many stories as possible of the experiences of Jews who fled to Shanghai.

It is absolutely essential, I believe, to save us as much of this history as possible. Despite some books and many articles, the world still knows little of this World War II experience and history should be served by documenting as much as possible the lives of those who fled the Nazis to the haven in Shanghai.

My plans are to publish an "anthology" of individual stories and I am approaching university presses to seek a publisher. I was a Shanghailander, living with my parents, Henny and Salomon Falbaum, in the Hongkew Ghetto from 1939-48 (one to nine years old). I have been a journalist and writer in the Detroit area for 40 some years, including writing four books and one play which was performed here last June. I have recruited a small group of writers to assist me with this new project.

I would like to ask you to send me your experiences either by audio tape or writing roughly 10-15 pages double-spaced, using the attached form as a guide. Be as specific as possible and, most importantly, describe experiences you believe were unique to your family. Also, if you have photos, please copy them (don't send originals) and share them with me, carefully identifying the individuals and scene on the back.

Again, I believe this is an important project, saving some vital history for future generations. I hope you will participate.

Please send the materials by July 31, 2003. I will keep you informed on our progress. If you have questions, please call. I thank you in advance and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Berl Falbaum, President
Falbaum & Associates, Inc.
31731 Nothwestern Hwy, Suite 106
Farmington, MI 48334, USA
(248) 737-1588

Questionnaire Form/Guide For Tape or Written Story Of Shanghai Experience

(Please spell all names carefully and clearly, if handwritten. If possible, give birth dates for all mentioned in your materials. We want to avoid as many mistakes as possible. We would like about 10-15 double-spaced pages from each participant. You can also send an audiotape of your story.)

1. Describe your family and life in (city, country) before fleeing to Shanghai, i.e. what occupations, number in family, etc.
2. Describe the increasing concern your family had about the Nazis and your discussions/plans to leave. Be expansive.
3. Describe how you made the decision to go to China; how you achieved it; the debate in the family, etc.
4. Describe your experiences in China, i.e. arrival, adjusting, living, occupation, illnesses, measures taken to survive, etc. Be as complete as possible.
5. Most important, as we said in the covering letter, tell us stories unique to you and your family. We want as many stories as possible.

a few prayers recited in German, and a sermon in German. Abraham Geiger and Nachman Krochmal laid the main ideological foundations for Reform Judaism. Reformists saw Judaism as an historical developing faith and rejected those beliefs and practices that they believed were contradictory to modernism. They considered Jews a religious group whose mission was to spread ethical ideas. They removed references to Zion from the religious services and eliminated those prayers that they considered inconsistent with modern thought. Although the European Reform movement was centered on Germany, Reform congregations were also established in Vienna, Hungary, Holland, and Denmark.

In the early years of the 19th century, Orthodoxy made concessions to modernism and gave rise to a sect that has been referred to as Neo-orthodoxy, which tried to combine observance of rabbinic law and traditional customs with modern society and western culture. Meanwhile, the Positive Historical School, first asserted by Zacharias Frankel, took a moderate position between Reform and Neo-orthodoxy. They advocated a scientific study of Judaism and compromise between modernity and tradition.

Chapter 4: Tortuous Developments—Secular Orientation in Jewish Culture

Although Judaism makes a distinction between the sacred and profane, it acknowledges that life is good in itself. The Jew is not presented with the stark choice of either gaining the world and losing his soul, or gaining his soul and losing the world. They could have both. They thought that God is interested in many things apart from the purely religious. Obviously, it is difficult to preserve the correct balance between the spiritual and the material aspects of life. In modern times, some Jews, who have lost their belief in God while still attached to what is called "the Jewish way of life", tried to develop a form of secular Judaism.

After the Emancipation, activities formerly in the hands of religious bodies, such as education, charity, the administration of justice and punishment, were taken over by secular agencies. Most Jews sent their children to state schools and participated in the secular culture and political process. The secularization of European and American Jewry is within the general context of western modernization. The process of world modernization promoted the ten-

dency of Jewish secularization. Since the 19th century, many Jewish intellectuals identified themselves as "Jewish cultural secularists". Many thinkers, historians, philosophers, and scientists emerged from this group.

Karl Marx was a typical Jewish secularist. Secularists deny their Jewish religion completely and view Judaism and Jewish affairs strictly from the secular point of view. Marx was baptized at the age of six, a practice common among German Jews with ambition for their children. In his adult years, Marx avoided involvement in Jewish life. Only in one article, *On the Jewish Question*, did he deal directly with this issue. In this book he criticized Bruno Bauer's view that the Jewish question was only a purely religious one and insisted that the Jewish question is very complicated and has different manifestations in different countries. He said that true emancipation, for Jews and others, would come only when society was emancipated from Judaism, which he equated with capitalism (a profit-based Judaism) and egoism. Marx's attitude toward Jews and Judaism can be described as "self-hatred", but he was not an anti-Semite. He adopted the stand of internationalism to consider the Jewish question. His purpose was to criticize ingrained bad habits of the Jewish people, not to instigate the feeling of anti-Semitism.

Zionism is the modern secular movement for the return of the Jewish people to Zion, the old prophetic name of Palestine. Two factors have combined, giving rise to the birth of Zionism. One is European nationalism, and the other is anti-Semitism, especially the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were killed. Zionism is a kind of movement to enhance modernity in Jewish culture and society. It attempted to form a modern Jewish personality, a "new man", and realized Jewish modernization. It also set up a sort of modern social ideal based on secularism, collectivism, democracy and freedom.

Chapter 5: Embracing the New World—the Americanization of Jewish Culture

The crucial turning of American Jewish history happened after 1880, the year of the great outbreak of anti-Semitism in Russia. Many Jewish immigrants left Europe and went to America. They settled mostly in the large American cities. The Jews of America represent the largest and the most powerful and prosperous aggregation in

the four thousand year history of the Jewish people. From the earliest days, the lives of Jews in America have been closely intertwined with the nation's expansion and growth. They pioneered in industrial growth, business, science, and in the arts. American Jews attempted to maintain their own Yiddish culture, kept their Jewishness, clung to their special identity. As a result of both external pressures and their own desires, they made their way into American society. To be an American, dress like an American, look like an American, and talk like an American, became a collective goal, at least for the younger immigrants. Most of the Jewish leaders, whether "German" or "Russian", encouraged the outsiders to take on the ways of the New World and to "be an American both in synagogue and on the street". Americanization manifests then main trend of Jewish cultural modernization in the United States.

The steady flow of Jewish immigrants from central Europe in the middle of the 19th century brought the Reform doctrine to both the newly organized and existing Jewish congregations throughout the country. The first to found Reform institutions in the United States was Isaac Mayer Wise. The principles he advocated formed the basis for the Pittsburgh Platform adopted by a conference of rabbis in 1885. The Pittsburgh Platform declared some of the Biblical and Talmudic regulations to be no longer applicable. The Platform separated the Jewish religion from Jewish nationalism and rejected a return to Palestine and the belief in a personal Messiah. Reform Judaism thought of Jews as a group with a mission to spread godliness in the world. A revision of these principles took place in 1937, at a meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Columbus. The Columbus Platform defined Judaism as the "historical religious experience of the Jewish people", thereby including not only Jewish belief and ethics, but also traditional culture and peoplehood. Reform Judaism has a position of great prominence in American Jewish community.

American Judaism has four different branches: Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionism. The history of Conservative Judaism began with the Historical School, which is a branch between Reform and Orthodoxy. Conservative Judaism aims to use modern scientific methods to study the Jewish past and adjust Judaism to the changing conditions and

circumstances. Conservatism saw Reform as too ready to accommodate Judaism to the *zeitgeist* and to abandon various practices and doctrines, especially with regards to Reform's indifference to the system of Jewish law, the *Halakhah*. They agree in affirming the basic institutions of traditional Judaism: observance of the Sabbath and the festivals, the dietary laws, circumcision, prayer, marriage and divorce.

Reconstructionist Judaism was called American Judaism, and concerns itself with the prevailing conditions in American Jewish life. Mordecai M. Kaplan is the founder of the Reconstructionist movement. His book, *Judaism as a Civilization*, has become a classic of modern Jewish thought. It was the first major contribution towards a comprehensive program for creative Jewish life in a modern country. Kaplan defined Judaism as an "evolving religious civilization", attempting to adjust world Jewry to the social and intellectual conditions of the 20th century. He maintained that Judaism is a civilization, in which the secular elements are essential to Jewish spirituality. He is confident that "the contemporary crisis of Jewish life will prove to be the birth-throes of a new era in the civilization of the Jewish people." Kaplan extended the ideological basis of Judaism, and enhanced the rationalism and humanism in Jewish culture. His philosophy of Judaism is the fruitage of Jewish Americanization. He promoted the tendency towards Jewish cultural secularization, democratization and modernization.

Chapter 6: Blend and Reconstruction—Israel's Cultural Modernization

The State of Israel has made great progress in its political and economic modernization since 1948. The small country is proud of its parliamentary system and economic developments. But the construction of Israeli culture is quite tortuous and difficult, because Israel is a multilingual, multi-ethnic, multi-ideological state, and different groups have diverse attitudes toward the national cultural construction. Israeli culture at present is characterized by the following aspects: Firstly, it is based on democracy, equality and freedom. Israeli culture is full of modernity. Israel has never compromised on the issue of its basic values, despite facing many conflicts and contradictions. Secondly, Israeli culture is affected by American culture to a great extent, so that many Israeli people worry about the phenomenon of "cultural conquering"—Americanization. Americaniza-

tion is the act, or the process of conforming to America's culture, ideology and material goods. Some secularists, especially young Israelis, absorb and adopt the latest American cultural innovations rapidly. Sometimes, they even "appear to be more American than Americans". One reason for this perhaps is the fact that Israel does not have an indigenous culture. Jews came there from many different countries with different national cultural backgrounds and traditions. Therefore they are much more open to the process of Americanization. The special relationship between Israeli Jewry and the United States also plays a key role in this process of cultural Americanization. Thirdly, Israeli culture today is notable for its multilingualism, the proliferation of ideologies that inform it, and its diverse effect on the Jewish religion, neighboring cultures, the Jewish past, and the image of Israeli's future.

There is much discussion among Jews about the religious-secular debate in Israel. The conflict between religious and secular is the most important and most difficult problem in the building of Israeli modern culture. Some scholars even say that the separation of state and church is not applicable to the Israeli case, because the Jewish religion is so important to the existence of the Jewish state and people. One of the reasons why the Knesset did not proceed to enact a comprehensive written constitution was the opposition of the religious parties. As is well known, Israeli society is divided into different cultural camps: the secular, the traditional, the orthodox and the Haredi. Each group pulls the quilt of Israeli culture toward its side of the bed.

The Sabbath has been the microcosm of the religious-secular conflict. According to the Hours of Work and Rest Law passed by the Knesset in 1951, businesses are prohibited from operating on the Sabbath. Exceptions are allowed for a few categories of "essential" industries. The strictly Orthodox observe the Sabbath without fail; the completely secular take advantage of their weekends to party, drive to the beach, or watch movies. The former keep strictly *kosher*; the latter have no qualms about eating pork and shellfish. So the Sabbath is always the incident that triggers hostilities. Most of the Israeli governments at the end of the 20th century tried to take imperative steps to make Israel a modern state, while preserving its Jewish and Zionist character. For example, Ehud Barak's government expected to reform its reli-

gious-secular ties and take part in a "secular revolution", but strong opposition from the religious side stopped his civil reform plan completely.

The Jewish response to modernity cannot be defined simply by the polarities of total acceptance and total rejection. It has to reexamine its traditional religious beliefs, practices, and the entire way of life from the perspective of reason and modernism, because no longer can all the ancient traditions serve as suitable guides to action in modern environment. It is the Jewish State's main mission to renew the traditional Judaism, harmonize the tradition with modernity, and accomplish the task of creating a "cultural melting pot" for the foreseeable future.

Jewish Settlement in Han China

(continued from page 1)

By using the word "return" (*gui*), the Emperor indicated he was aware of the presence of the Jews in China. In the second sentence, the Emperor (we do not know which Emperor) basically "blessed" the Jews and allowed them stay in Kaifeng, capital of the Sung. In my view, this paragraph indicated that the Emperor gave permission to the Jews to establish themselves in the city of Kaifeng. The translation of the two characters (*liu yi*) in the third sentence as "remain and hand them down" seemed odd to me since when put together they mean to "leave behind, abandon", which would indicate that many Jews joined the fleeing Sung (1122) from Kaifeng to Hangzhou. I think there was an unaccounted time of several decades, if not a century or two, between the audience and the fleeing from Kaifeng.

According to my interpretation, the two sentences are not connected. What the Emperor said probably occurred toward the beginning of the Sung—around 1000 AD would be the appropriate historical context. The next sentence, "We abandoned Pain Liang", was inserted by the writers of the stone inscriptions to indicate their activity, i.e. that they too had fled Kaifeng along with other loyal Chinese residents when the Sung fell to the Jurchen. It is a kind of a historical footnote, which, historically, I would put around 1122, when the Sung fell. (In point of fact, not all Jews fled Kaifeng and, as a matter of fact, the Jurchen treated the non-Chinese

were indigent were housed in the Embankment Building owned by the Sasoons or in "Heime," dormitories in the few surviving buildings converted into shelters, or schools. Sir Victor Sassoon worked tirelessly to help the newcomers get settled.

Shanghai was a city of contrasts. China was defeated by the British in 1842 after the Opium War. The city became one of the open ports as a result, developing into the largest trading center in the Far East. A Jewish community established in 1845 by Sephardi Jews who came, not as refugees, but to trade. Among them, the prominent Sassoon and Kadoorie families. They originated from Baghdad and made their fortunes in the cotton trade. They came to Bombay, India and then expanded their lucrative business in Shanghai. Widely known as the "Rothschilds of the East", they were observant Jews and ardent Zionists, who helped to establish a Jewish school to further religious education. A synagogue was soon built and Jewish dietary laws were observed. They kept their offices closed on Sabbath and holidays.

Sir Victor Sassoon worked tirelessly to help the newcomers get settled. A hospital sprang up over night to care for the sick. Unfortunately Jewish refugee doctors were not yet experienced enough to handle tropical diseases like cholera, typhoid, malaria, and amoebic dysentery. My mother was among the first to succumb to tropical illness.

There were bright spots. Horace Kadoorie established a magnificent school for us. He engaged an outstanding faculty. We studied English, French and Hebrew along with music arts and sports. A relief committee arranged for all students to have porridge for breakfast in the morning. Sometimes it was a little burnt, and it was hard to get it down. We ate it gratefully.

Times were tough. My parents borrowed money and opened a little restaurant. It was a storefront with improvised curtains, modestly furnished to seat twenty people. The old concrete floor was newly covered with linoleum. Wooden tables and chairs could easily be shifted to accommodate small parties. A screen door at the entrance kept the flies out. A hand-painted sign placed in the window, announced the specials of the day.

My mother, a fine cook, labored hard in the kitchen preparing tasty, European-style meals. One of her specialties was *sauerbraten* (marinated beef), with potato pancakes. To produce such a dish was quite an art itself considering the primitive stoves in the kitchen fueled with charcoal. A hand-operated fan would increase the flames, since charcoal was constantly added. Although the kitchen window was kept open, the carbon fumes released were very unhealthy. No wonder that there was so much tuberculosis in China. Since there were hardly any deliveries, my parents got up very early in the morning to buy meat and vegetables at the nearby market. Sometimes I came along. With the beginning knowledge of Chinese I picked up in the street, I helped by bargaining for a good price.

My father, professionally untutored and somewhat clumsy, waited on tables. After school, I helped in the kitchen, peeled potatoes and cleaned vegetables. Hygienic conditions were deplorable. My mother slaved over a red-hot stove twelve hours a day, seven days a week. But soon our family's new life and new routine would be tragically altered when my mother died, five months after we arrived, at the age of fifty-three, of amoebic dysentery, a disease caused by contaminated water.

To carry on the business, my father hired a cook. I had to drop out of school to assist Gerda, our new Jewish cook in the kitchen. I learned so much from this talented lady that at times when she got sick, I was able to take over to keep the place going. "Do you have a new cook, Mr. Cohn?" some guest would ask my father, "Your Hungarian Goulash was very good today. I hope your cook is sick more often."

The cooking skills I acquired in the slums of Shanghai helped me to survive the bitter war years. I even negotiated to bring my father a meal that I brought him after work. He eagerly awaited the food and often stayed up for it till I came home. Needless to say, after my culinary experiences in Shanghai, I was never out of a job for the rest of my life. There were always employment opportunities in restaurants and hotels in years to come—in Australia and the United States.

Shanghai's Tomb Raider

by James T. Areddy
excerpted from the
The Asian Wall Street Journal 23 May 2003

Obsessions

Angling his video camera next to a filthy, algae-covered creek, trying to get a better look inside a dark drainage system, Dvir Bar-Gal hit pay dirt: Hebrew characters etched on a flat marble slab.

Credit another historic find to Shanghai's self-styled tombstone sleuth. "I knew it was Jewish, so we dug it out," says the 37-year-old Israeli, who is on a mission to reassemble a remnant of Shanghai's Jewish past, one headstone at a time...Mr. Bar-Gal estimates their number at around 3,700.

So far he has found 70 of them, as well as many Christian headstones, mostly in poor villages among the crisscrossing canals surrounding Shanghai that are home to migrants from all over rural China. They have put the headstones to use as washboards, floors, tables, steps, bridges and even parts of home foundations. "They see it as a useful stone, [and] not as political or racist" to use them in those ways, Mr. Bar-Gal says, noting that most are happy to take his standard \$10 payment for each stone...

In 1958, nine years after coming to power, the Communist Party ordered all foreign graves dug up and relocated to a new "international" cemetery, where the Jewish ones were mixed into a Muslim burial ground. The following decade, during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, the headstones were removed from the graves and dumped in the vast wetlands surrounding Shanghai.

Traces of the cemeteries appeared lost until last year, when Mr. Bar-Gal's job as a tour guide specializing in Shanghai's Jewish ghetto and his instincts as a journalist fused into an obsession. Hebrew characters had been spotted on a headstone in a local

in Bet Aharon, made a point to include in their daily menus foods containing much Vitamin B. Thus, *beri-beri* was conquered, never to return during the rest of the yeshiva's sojourn in Shanghai.

At Bet Aharon, tables and benches had been prepared in classrooms for the yeshiva students. However, the *yeshivabocher* were used to stand while studying texts placed on at what they called in yiddish "*shtanderim*". Nobody in Shanghai had ever seen nor heard of a *shtander*. Nevertheless, Hacham Abraham was determined to help the *yeshivabocher* follow their traditions of prayer and studies. No artists were to be found in Mir Yeshiva, so very simple sketches were drawn and shown to talented Chinese carpenters, who managed to construct what was demanded. A photograph shows row upon row of *shtanderim* standing close together in a large hall.

The first Rosh HaShannah in Shanghai approached. It was hard to believe that only a year ago members of the Mir Yeshiva had lived in Lithuania under conditions of persecution and terror. Now, here they were in Shanghai's International Settlement praying freely. Again and again, they expressed their gratitude to God and their thanks to Shanghai Jews for their great efforts to help them.

When the Sukkot festival arrived, Hacham David Abraham even managed to provide the yeshiva with an *etrog* (a special citrus fruit) - the most important element of the "Four Species". In the Bible, the *etrog* is described as "fruit of a goodly tree" and Talmudic law stipulates that it should be fresh, whole and free of defects. Fortunately, when David Abraham had left Bombay for Shanghai some 20 years previously, he had brought along an *etrog* plant. Thanks to the expertise of a Chinese gardener whom Abraham guided, it grew into a healthy tree and bore fruit, which its owner shared with several other religious Jews in Shanghai. Now, Hacham Abraham was glad to give the Mir Yeshiva some of his precious *etrogim*.

The author of this particular memoir writes that, after Pearl Harbor, under Japanese occupation in Shanghai, obtaining *etrogim* became a problem. The Abrahams, like some other Sephardi Jews who held British colonial passports (India at the time being a British colony) were incarcerated

in camps by the Japanese authorities for the duration of the war.

As a result, the Abraham villa and grounds were requisitioned by the military and the *etrog* tree, the only one of its kind in Shanghai, was out of reach. The desperate yeshiva then hired a young Chinese to climb secretly over the wall of the property and pluck some *etrogim* for their Sukkot celebrations. Unfortunately, the Japanese found out what taken place and without much ado chopped the tree down!

A search for *etrogim* followed. A delegation of Mir Yeshiva even traveled into the Chinese countryside where it was rumored that every kind of fruit grew. They found what the concluded might well be a "Chinese *etrog*", but it had some appendages that looked like fingers.

The author writes: The delegates returned and brought with them the "Chinese *etrogim*" which they gave for leaders of the yeshiva, who examined the fruit very carefully. However, many doubts arose and opinions were divided. Some decided to use the fruit without a blessing... others merely to display them in memory of the *mitzvah* ...others refused entirely to use them and remained firm in their opinion that these were not the *etrogim* prescribed by the Torah...

(to be continued)

A New Life

by Hans Cohn

The "Conte Biancamano," a Lloyd Triestino Liner, laid anchor on April 29, 1939, in the International Settlement of the fascinating city of Shanghai.

I was dazzled by the sights, sounds, and smells - so startlingly different from Europe. The harbor was situated on the shores of the Wang Poo River, near the Yangtze, which enters into the China Sea. Nearby, facing the waterfront, was Shanghai's most famous avenue - the Bund - sometimes called the "European Wall Street." The spring air that day was filled with a fishy odor commingled with smoke emanating from the chimneys of the many ships, waiting to be unloaded. Sampans, fishing boats and water rickshaws, interspersed

with junks and their pole masts, formed a lively silhouette along the imposing waterfront.

Amid the horrendous traffic, coolies carried their loads with antiphonal chants of "Hey" - "Ho" to ease their heavy burden. Beggars in tattered clothes were lying in the streets. How unlike Europe! I wondered if I would ever get used to this alien culture, but I knew that only time would tell!

Walking down the gangplank, I disembarked with my parents and hundreds of other refugees, entering a new world. Expelled from our German homeland and robbed of our human dignity, we had made our way to China, because that country agreed to accept to its gates 20,000 souls like me and my parents - stateless refugees with invalid passports marked with a red "J" and the added name Israel or Sara.

We were processed on the dock. Some of the newcomers were met by relatives who had come a few months earlier. Those who could afford it moved to the International Settlement or the French Concession and were able to settle into a comfortable life. The majority, however, had no money. We had no idea where we would spend even the first night, but we were ready for anything.

An International Relief Committee stood by the waterfront to welcome us, and we were loaded onto open trucks and driven to Hongkew, the poorest district of Shanghai. Hongkew was a rubble-torn reminder of the two-year Sino-Japanese War, which had started in 1937. The Chinese fought fiercely but were defeated by the Japanese army, which occupied Manchuria, the greater part of North China, and the outskirts of Shanghai including Hongkew. The International Settlement and the French Concession remained unscathed, but Hongkew's bombed out buildings resembled the ancient ruins of Athens. Conditions were deplorable.

It was mainly the Sassoon and Kadoorie families who extended a helping hand to us from the moment we arrived in Shanghai. These families were among the Sephardi Jews who immigrated to Shanghai in 1845 and established a Jewish community, not as refugees but as merchants. The Sassoon and the Kadoorie philanthropy was boundless. For them, homeless Jews did not exist. Those refugees who

Points East

residents of Kaifeng quite well. Those who stayed were probably better off than those who fled.)

We have to remember that the steles are an account of rebuilding of the synagogue and not a historical record of the Jews in Kaifeng or China. The next two sentences refer to the year 1163, during the reign of Xiao Zong, but the only reason the date is given is to indicate the start of the building of the synagogue. (The Jews who wrote this still honored the Sung Dynasty calendar). Then the text jumps to the Yuan Dynasty (1279). But, as to the initial presence of the Jews in China, it happened many centuries earlier.

In order to trace the Jewish settlement in China we have to explore the relationship between China and the local tribes in Central Asia. Without going into details, we have to keep in mind two simple facts: First, the Jews lived along the main trading route between China and the West, on the so-called Silk Route. Two, there were Jewish *kehilot* (communities) who lived side by side with other nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes between the Eastern shores of the Caspian Sea and the Talmakan Desert, the Gate to China. Some of these Jews, if not a majority of them, moved into China during the Han Dynasty and became Chinese subjects.

During the Han Dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD), this area, the Western Region as the Chinese called it, was populated by many non-Chinese tribes (including Jews who lived among them in their *kehilot*). The Chinese had a love and hate relationship with these tribes. The Han loved the luxuries that the Western traders brought with them (horses, cloth, etc.) but they hated the physical and "uncivilized" characteristics of the people of the Western Region. As Mencius (371-289? BC), a Confucian idealist, said: "I have heard of using Chinese (culture) to change the barbarians, but I have not heard of being changed by the barbarians". The Chinese also loved the buffer zone that those settlements provided from the nomadic warriors but they hated that those settlers were too weak to confront the harassing nomads.

During the Han, the Chinese developed several policies that directly affected the area and the people who lived there. Of particular interest to us are the events that occurred between the years 91-102 AD. Reischauer -Fairbanks in their book *East*

Asia: The Great Tradition described a military campaign under the leadership of Pan Chao (*tu hu*), Protector General of the Region. In 91 AD, Pan Chao led an expeditionary force against the harassing Xiung Nu "barbarians" beyond the Pamir Mountains. He expanded the Han border and established a firm control over the Western Region as far as the shores of the Caspian Sea. In other words, the borders of the Chinese empire extended all the way to shores of the Caspian Sea and all the people in the area were brought under Chinese control.

During the 11 years of Pan Chao's Protectorate, he instituted some reforms that greatly impacted, if not completely changed, the life of the local population, including the Jews. Since Pan Chao's commission was to secure the Northern borders and defend them, he was determined to gain the support and the cooperation of the local tribes of the Western Region. He brought the entire region, most of the Central Asian settlements, towns and cities under Chinese protection and control. He offered the local tribes the option of surrendering peacefully or being subdued by force. Many of the settlements accepted the offer and surrendered willingly. As a matter of fact "the border people were eager to migrate hinterland and settle down" wrote the Chinese historian Sa Mengwu in his book *The Social and Political History of China*.

At first the local tribes were organized under indirect Chinese administration known as "inner subject" (*nei shu*). The "inner subjects" enjoyed great autonomy and ran their own affairs with very little interference. Yu Ying-shi in his book *Trade and Expansion in Han China*, described the special position that these tribes occupied in the Han Imperial order:

"On the one hand, although surrendered, they still shared the barbarian nature of all others, but different from them in being accepted by the Han government as candidates for full membership in the Chinese civilization. On the other hand, like the Chinese, they too were subject to the Han Emperor, but unlike the Chinese they were transformed into regular members of the Chinese State. ...Gradually toward the end of the Later Han (221 AD) the "half barbarian half Chinese" status became less visible, their obligation to China in terms of taxes and labor services became more or less regulated."

Those who did not surrender of their own will, mostly rebellious nomads, were nevertheless subdued and organized in the "subject state" system, (*shu guo*) under direct Chinese administration, with little or no autonomy at all. They were considered hostile and needed more time to make the adjustments. Though the final goal of the "subject state" system was similar to that of the "inner subject" system, they were to be gradually integrated into the Chinese administrative system and became sinicized.

People from all over Central Asia, Persia, Parthia, India (*tian chu*), from all walks of life and with different customs and beliefs—Zoroastrians, Manicheans, Buddhists, Jews and others—all migrated to the safety of Chinese protection. Life under the Chinese rule appeared more secure to life under the constant fear of the nomadic tribes (Mongols, Huns). Not that the Chinese had control over their borders. Once people passed through the Gate of China (the area of Tun-huang), the whole country was open to them. They were free to migrate and settle wherever they pleased. The Book of the Later Han (*Hou Han shu*) recorded mass migration east, into the area of Gansu; south, into the rugged mountainous area of Sizhuan; and some people even reached the valleys of the Yellow River. Wherever they perceived safety, they settled and, in some cases, formed their own dynasties.

The Jews were among those migrants. They also sought the safety of the China and joined the mass migration. But we lost track of them. As ancient Chinese historians treated all barbarians the same, our knowledge of them came only in bits and pieces. We learned of Buddhist and "other religions" being persecuted in 446, and again in 574, in Northern China. We also learned that Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527-565) hired two Persian priests to smuggle out silk eggs from China so he could learn the secrets of silk. Then we learn that, 300 years later, the Tang Emperor embarked on a campaign to purge all barbarian religions from China, in the so-called Great Religious Persecution of 841-845. At this time all the foreign religions were driven out of China. None of the religions survived with the exception of Muslims and Jews. We only found out about the Jewish survival by accident. Had they not carved in stone their experience in China, perhaps we would not have known about them. Other kinds of evi-

dence, such as gravestones, artifacts, or whatever other legacies that the Chinese Jews might have left, were permanently lost.

After their entry into China, Jews probably migrated to the mountainous areas of Sizhuan, but until recently, that region was off limits to foreigners. Nevertheless, documents that were excavated in the Tang I Azae, Tun-huang, and elsewhere in the region, written in Persian with Hebrew square letters on paper (718 AD) and a page from a prayer book written in Hebrew, indicated that the Jews in China were in relative continuous contact with their brethren in Central Asia. Jewish merchants brought prayer books, Torahs and other material to the Jews in China, while the Jews in China corresponded with their brethren in Central Asia. But as the overland route became more difficult to navigate, the crossing more dangerous, the contact between the Jews in China and those in Central Asia became more infrequent. *The documents found in the desert were carried by Jewish traders who did not complete their journey.*

Though the Jews settled in China during the great migration in the Han Dynasty, their sinicization started several centuries later. We can credit or blame it on the Imperial examination system. Any Chinese who passed the imperial examination got instant recognition and fame, not to men-

tion a job in the civil service. This was the pre-requisite of success in China. The Jews in China, like their counterparts in the West, preferred to live in their own *kehila* (community) side by side with the Chinese. They gradually adjusted to the local life and realized that the civil service was the key to their survival. On the one hand, they intermingled with the local people; on the other hand, they observed their religion for as long as they could. Three factors contributed to their rapid sinicization: one the desire to succeed in the new environment; two, the lack of religious pressure; and three, the indifference of the local Chinese to their strange habits.

Nine hundred year later, we hear from the Chinese Jews again in the form of a stone inscription dated 1489. By this time the Jews bear proper Chinese surnames with proper Chinese characters, pointing to an educated class. An Emperor of the Sung Dynasty (960-1279) granted them an audience, and leaders of Jewish communities in China, most of them *not* residents of Kaifeng, came to the audience. They petitioned the Emperor to grant them permission to settle in the city of Kaifeng. The Emperor granted them their request. Accordingly, the Jews settled in Kaifeng in the early Sung and only started building the Synagogue in 1163.

The history of the Jews in China has not been written yet. So far we have found very little evidence of their whereabouts, but I think that is about to change. Several factors contribute to my optimism. First of all, China has opened its doors to the world and I can see travelers, adventures, archeologists etc. focus their attention on the largely unexplored rugged terrain south of the Western Regions, (e.g. Sizhuan). Along with the opening of the country to outsider, China has also opened its archives to research. Many Chinese archeologists and historians have revived their interest in this area, but this time, they are equipped more than ever to face the difficult tasks. They are more knowledgeable, more attuned to the different habits and religious beliefs of Westerners and in more cooperation with outsiders. Finally, we Western researchers have made great strides in learning about China within the Chinese context. Today's western researchers are more proficient in Chinese, have access to Chinese literature, archives and original sources. It is just a matter of time (and luck) before more evidence of the Jewish settlement in China will be presented to the world.

The author is professor of Chinese at ADC Corporation, has translated the book *Jews God and History*, by Max Diamant, into Chinese, and is writing a comparative social history of the Chinese and the Jews.

after leaving the Ottoman empire, underwent a remarkable process of Anglicization but nevertheless maintained strong links with their Judeo-Arabic heritage. The concluding article by Marcia Ristaino, presents a unified interpretation of the Baghdadi Jewish experience in South, Southeast and East Asia and proposes an innovative and challenging framework to explore and understand the Baghdadi experience in these areas of the world.

Price is \$25; \$20 for members. There is a charge of \$2 for postage and handling for each copy; \$5 for mailing overseas.

ANNOUNCING . . .

We wish to announce the publication of *Sino-Judaica: Occasional Papers of the Sino-Judaic Institute*, volume 4 (2003). India, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai: Identities of Baghdadi Jews of the Diaspora.

The contents are:

Joan G. Roland. Baghdadi Jews in India: Communal Relationships, Nationalism, Zionism and the Construction of Identity.

Joan Bieder. Jewish Identity in Singapore: Cohesion, Dispersion, Survival.

Caroline Plüss. Sephardic Jews in Hong Kong: Constructing Communal Identities.

Chiara Betta. The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora in Shanghai: Community, Commerce and Identities.

Marcia R. Ristaino. Reflections on the Sephardi Trade Diaspora in South, Southeast and East Asia.

This may well be the first scholarly attempt to weave together an integrated picture of the diaspora of Baghdadi Jews in India, Singapore and China between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. The articles by Joan Bieder, Joan Roland, Caroline Plüss, and Chiara Betta focus on issues related to the overlapping identities of Baghdadi Jews of the entrepreneurial diaspora who,

Dear Friends,

With China at the end of the SARS crisis we would like to update you on the latest news and extend a welcoming hand to our friends and business travelers who would like to start returning to Shanghai, and visit the Shanghai Jewish Center.

We are pleased to let you know that the World Health Organization effective June 13, 2003 removed its recommendation that people should postpone travel to most regions in China.

Although many of you were advised not to come here, Shanghai was actually never under any warning and was not really affected by SARS other than to spread panic! A city of 17 million people had only 8 cases. Last case reported on May 23, 2003 more than 3 weeks ago.

In light of the above, we would like to know if you or your staff plans to come in the near future. As a large part of our operation to visitors had all but stopped due to lack of visitors, we reduced our

staff and Kosher supplies and now we would like to prepare appropriately for the next influx of friends and visitors.

If you are planning on coming to Shanghai for a Shabbat or even just during the week in the next two months, please let us know by REPLY to this email.

Wishing you a safe trip and best regards,

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The Mir Yeshiva (Part II)

by Rena Krasno

In August 1941, the *Asama Maru*, carrying members of the Mir Yeshiva, sailed down the Whangpoo River. The Shanghai heat was cruel. When the stunned *yeshivabocher* landed, they stared in horror at the hundreds of haggard rickshaw coolies darting between cars in the streets. The noise, poverty and confusion were bewildering, even frightening.

Where would they be taken? There had never been a yeshiva in Shanghai. How would they be lodged? What about sacred books? They were able to bring along only a very limited number. How would they continue their religious studies?

Almost immediately a tall handsome bearded man approached the dazed *yeshivabocher*. It was Rabbi Meir Ashkenazi - the spiritual leader of the Shanghai Ashkenazi Jewish Communal Association - accompanied by a welcoming group of Russian and Ashkenazi Jews.

One of the members of Mir Yeshiva writes in his memoirs: "...Prior to their arrival at the wharf, the representatives of the Shanghai Jewish communities had already found solutions to our problems...They told the leaders of our Yeshiva: 'You will be lodged in the Bet Aharon Synagogue at No. 50 Museum Rd., in the International Settlement...Everything has been prepared for you there: lodging and study halls, kitchens and dining-rooms. *Hakol*

beseder! (Everything is all right)! The buses that will drive you there are waiting for you right here'...."

Beit Aharon, an architectural gem, had been built in 1927 by Silas Hardoon, a Sephardi Jewish tycoon. Although the synagogue stood on Museum Road in the midst of a business center, the location was relatively quiet. Road and street noises hardly reached the premises.

By the time Mir Yeshiva reached Shanghai, Hardoon was long dead. He had been a very controversial figure, caused strife in the Jewish community, and was generally disliked. Hardoon had staunchly refused to pay for Beit Aharon maintenance expenses and, in spite of efforts by Sephardi Jews, the building was beginning to fall into disrepair. Hardoon would certainly have been surprised at the central role his synagogue would eventually play in Jewish survival.

At first, members of Mir Yeshiva were accommodated on the top floor of Bet Aharon. Later, some modest lodgings were found for them in the International Settlement, where they were housed far better than other less fortunate European Jewish refugees, who lived in primitive conditions in cramped *Heime*.

Rabbi Kahana of Mir Yeshiva writes: "The Sephardi Community led by Hacham David Abraham saw to all our needs. Abundant food was served to us and Chinese servants treated us with honor. The

morning after our arrival, after the break of dawn, doctors arrived to check our state of health."

Nevertheless, Shanghai's summer heat and humidity began to affect the newcomers' physical condition. All clothing clung to their heavily perspiring bodies. Respiratory problems became common.

Kashrut was very strictly observed in kitchens. Food was plentiful and served in two dining-rooms which were comfortably and attractively furnished. Unfortunately, a growing number of Mir Yeshiva members began to develop symptoms of an illness they had never heard of: *beri-beri*.

One of them writes: The first signs were deep cracks that developed on the tongue that were very most painful. They caused real torture. ... Dr. Zeligson - a very kind and devoted man - was dispatched by the Russian Jewish community to give urgent care to the victims. ...Because such sores were common among the Chinese poor, Dr. Zeligson decided to invite a prominent Chinese doctor for consultation. He confirmed that the symptoms were indeed those of *beri-beri* and was the result of a lack of vitamin B.

Upon the advice of the Chinese doctor, patients were given large quantities of yeast, which is rich in Vitamin B, and recovery was rapid. In order to avoid a recurrence of the illness, dedicated Russian Jewish women, who volunteered as cooks