

myself that it was nice that Chinese people come to study the language. I didn't even think that she was a Jew," Emmanuel said. "...

More than 150 friends and relatives, including some from the Kaifeng Jewish community, attended the wedding, which was organized by Michael Freund, the chairman and the founder of Shavei Israel, a Jerusalem-based organization that helps "lost Jews" return to the Jewish people...

The newlyweds plan to live at Kibbutz Ketura in the Arava...

### Rabbi Steers Israeli Backpackers into Helping Nepal

Young Israelis, who have a reputation for visiting Nepal to party hard and smoke dope, now have a chance to do something more constructive — thanks to a rabbi from the United States.

The Himalayan nation, with its cheap cost of living, has become a magnet for many young Israelis who want to let their hair down after completing three years of mandatory and often gruelling military service.

"They're coming right after their army experience, so they do have a reputation for running around in groups, being loud and using a lot of drugs," said rabbi Michael Odenheimer, who hails from Los Angeles but who has also taken Israeli citizenship.

Odenheimer wanted to change all that and this year set up Tevel b'Tzedek, or Justice in the World, which promotes literacy and aims to improve health care among other projects. He has recruited young Israelis to volunteer their time.

Jewish people have suffered deeply in the past "and now we're in a much more empowered position in the world so what are we going to do with this power that we have?" said Odenheimer, 49, who also works as a journalist in Kathmandu.

Odenheimer said the aim of his programme, which recently took a second intake of volunteers, is to be part of the scene wherever Israelis travel in Asia after their army service. "I would hope that in the next three or four years we will have a few of these places operating all over the Third World," he said.

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1101 West College Ave, Jacksonville IL 62650



# Points East

## 中國-猶太學院

Vol. 23 No. 1  
March 2008

A Publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute

### THE CHINESE OF JEWISH DESCENT AT KAIFENG

by Gustavo D. Perednik  
excerpted from *Alternative Orientalisms*,  
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2007

#### Lack of Judeophobia

...As for the lack of hostility, In China there is no deep-seated, historical Judeophobia. The Chinese, as opposed to the approach shaped by Christian and Islamic history, perceive Jews and Israel free of prejudice. In China, when Jews are a symbol, they are usually a positive one. China is often quoted as the only country where there were never expressions of Jew-hatred and the exceptions to this rule are few.

Some Judeophobic expressions could be felt since the opening of China, when Kaifeng Muslims established links with Muslims elsewhere. This community received assistance from Muslim nations, and adopted much of their prevailing anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish attitude. The Kaifeng mosque propagated anti-Israeli propaganda, and the local Muslim population has developed an increasingly hostile attitude toward Jews. Since few outside Jews ever visit Kaifeng, this hostility is channelled toward the descendants of the Kaifeng Jewish community. This new attitude changed centuries of harmony between the descendants of Kaifeng Jews and the Muslims, with whom at some point they became largely indistinguishable...

During 2002, an incident damaged the relations between the two countries when, due to pressure from the United States, Israel had to cancel a US\$ 350-million sale to China of the Phalcon radar system which gives intelligence to maintain air superiority and conduct surveillance. The Chinese diplomatic response was first to serve pork and shrimps to an Israeli delegation who came to Beijing to celebrate the first decade since the establishment of relations between the two countries. The second expression of disapproval was the demand of China that all references to Albert Einstein's Jewishness had to be removed from an Israeli exhibition about the physicist. Einstein is one of several historical scientific figures held up by Beijing as an example for Chinese students to study and revere. More than once when I lectured at Chinese high schools I saw portraits of Einstein in the classrooms. The Israelis formally told Beijing that they regarded the demand to suppress Einstein's Jewish identity as an insult and the exhibition was cancelled. At a more popular level, however, chat groups on the Internet in China are generally in favour of Israel and critical of the Arabs. There was official condemnation of Palestinian suicide bombings, in which Chinese citizens living in Israel have been victims.

(continued on page 4)

### REPORT ON MY SECOND STAY IN ISRAEL IN 2007

by Song Lihong

Generously funded through Sino-Judaic Institute and indispensably [aided] by Dr. William Fern, I was fortunate to spend this [past] summer from June 19 to September 25 in Rothberg International School (RIS) of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, to attend its summer *ulpanim* of intensive learning in Modern Hebrew.

This was my second visit to Israel. Three years ago, during the academic year of 2003-04, I was admitted as a post-doctoral student to the Department of Jewish History of Tel Aviv University. While the goal of my stay in Tel Aviv was aimed at enhancing my research capability in the specialized field of Jewish diaspora in the Roman Empire, particularly in reading and understanding of Jewish stone inscriptions in Greek and Latin left over from the Roman period, my goal of this summer in Jerusalem was quite different. I wished to achieve competency in Hebrew through Level Bet, which is equivalent to two years of American college-level Hebrew. This was to fulfill requirements of Hebrew competency preparatory to a visiting fellowship for in-service training that will be granted to me by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) of Philadelphia in the coming academic year of 2008-09. However, this time I stayed in Israel not as an advanced student, but as an Assistant Director and as a faculty member of Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies at Nanjing University. Hence, I had the concomitant role of keeping an eye out for all possible ideas and opportunities that might be helpful for the academic advancement and the future development of our Institute.

I felt highly privileged and honored to have this unique experience of staying in Israel both as a young scholar as well as an educator and administrator of the Institute at Nanjing. I must say that I have learned a great deal and gained a deeper understanding of Jewish culture in general and a wider acquaintance with Israeli society in particular during this time.

Modern Hebrew is of paramount importance in any program of Jewish studies or the study of Israel. With few exceptions it is an insuperable barrier for Chinese Judaic scholars. I therefore seriously cherished this chance, surely the best possible for me, to learn Hebrew in the hope that Nanjing Institute will independently offer rudimentary Hebrew courses...

Since I have a background in learning classical Greek and Latin, I am quite good at grammar. But I find speaking and listening—idiomatic and regular Hebrew in particular—are still challeng-

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## SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	199
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Australia	3
Japan	3
France	1
Germany	1
Indonesia	1
South Africa	1
Switzerland	1
Taiwan	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>258</b>

## FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings as we begin volume 23 and the lunar "year of the rat"! Here's my roar:

For years we have all written about the stelae that are stored in the Kaifeng Municipal Museum, available for viewing only by request. (For those of you unfamiliar with the stelae, they are large stone monuments that tell the history, beliefs, values and practices of the Kaifeng Jewish community.) For years, we have lamented their inaccessibility—to us, when we visited Kaifeng. But consider what this means to the descendents of the Kaifeng Jews. Imagine being unable to see or touch artifacts written by your ancestors, particularly in a country that reveres its ancestors. *As Jews and Chinese, we owe the authorities in Kaifeng a huge debt of gratitude for preserving the stelae through the turbulence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.* But now that China has emerged safely into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *we should encourage them to return the stelae to the descendents of the Kaifeng Jews and to place the steles in a location that is accessible first and foremost to the Jewish descendents, and secondarily to those of us, Jews or Chinese or others, who come to visit.* And if the authorities want help, then we, the Sino-Judaic Institute, should assist them to build such a facility.

The Sino-Judaic Institute is growing and changing. Please see the article in this issue with excerpts from our recent Board meeting. We hope that each Board member will become more active in representing SJI in his/her community and will reach out to other local SJI members. We also plan to have a number of committees to assist with our work. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact me at [layt@seattleu.edu](mailto:layt@seattleu.edu).

Anson Laytner

## Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

*Points East* is published by the Sino-Judaic Institute, a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. The opinions and views expressed by the contributors and editor are their own and do not necessarily express the viewpoints and positions of the Sino-Judaic Institute.

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154 Lombard Street, #61  
San Francisco CA 94111

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Deadlines for submitting material to be included in these issues are January 15th, May 15th and September 15th.

## FINANCIAL REPORT AVAILABLE

SJI members interested in receiving a copy of the annual financial report should send a self-addressed envelope to: Steve Hochstadt, Treasurer of the Sino-Judaic Institute, Illinois College, 1101 W College Ave., Jacksonville IL 62650.

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'observant' in any formal sense, still feels reverence for the traditions of halakhic Judaism, and a fascinating comparison of the two. Readers whose ideas of morality have been wholly derived from the Western tradition that stretches from Plato to John Rawls will find their minds stretched by reading this short book. They may even be helped in defining their own 'way'.

Galia Patt-Shamir is senior lecturer in the Department of East Asian Studies at Tel Aviv University.

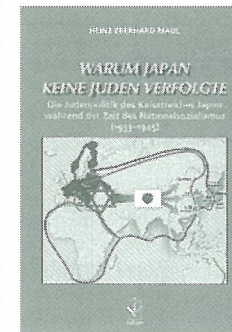
### Warum Japan keine Juden verfolgte: Die Judenpolitik des Kaiserreiches Japan während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (1933 - 1945)

[Why Japan Did Not Persecute Jews: The Japanese Empire's Jewish Policy during the Time of National Socialism (1933-1945)]

by Heinz Eberhard Maul. Iudicium Verlag, 2007. [www.iudicium.de](http://www.iudicium.de).

With comments (in German) by Michael W. Blumenthal, Director, Jewish Museum, Berlin

Shanghai, December 1938: the first wave of European refugees reaches the Chinese metropolis after an exhausting exodus following the horrors of *Kristallnacht*. Shanghai is the only city in the entire world that offers them protection and security from Nazi terror. In the succeeding years, thousands of Jewish refugees follow the first escapees. Japan, an ally of Nazi Germany is at war with China since 1937. The Japanese Army and Navy control the west coast of China's immense empire. They occupy Shanghai - a military center. The German Nazi leadership expects similar persecution and liquidation of Jews from their Japanese allies. The Gestapo spreads its influence in Tokyo and Shanghai. However, Japan resists. This book replies to the question why the Far Eastern Empire of Japan unexpectedly confronted by an ambivalent problem, finalized its own Jewish policy and did not



persecute any Jews. Japan's historic encounter with the unusual strangers influenced the fate of European Jews and, therefore, constitutes an integral part of German-Japanese history.

### A Chinese Scholar of Rabbinic Judaism

[Thanks to SJI member Marcia Shainock for bringing to light the work of Prof. Zhang Ping, now at Tel Aviv University.]

I started my research on the comparison between early Confucianism and Rabbinic Judaism in 1994. The research is accompanied by translating Judaism classics into Chinese. This is both academic and to fulfill my dream of introducing Judaism to Chinese civilization. The translation itself is also a practice of the result of my research, many Confucianism terms were used in my translations, based on my findings of the similarities between the two traditions.

Until now I have two major publications, both in Chinese. The first was the translation of Pirki Avoth, jointly with Rabbi Adin Steinzaltz, which was published by CASS press in 1996. The second is the translation of *Derech Eretz Zuta*, which was published by Beijing University Press in 2003. This translation was accompanied by annotations of textual comparison with Confucianism classics on a sentence by sentence basis, and a long introduction on the comparison between the idea of *Derech Eretz* (the way one should act) in Rabbinic Judaism and the concept of *Ren Dao* (the way of human beings) in Confucianism. This book received very good reviews in China and even a pirated version was produced and sold in China in 2005-2006.

Since 2003 I've been working on my project of translating Mishnah into Chinese. This project will probably last 15 years. The first Seder will probably be published in next two years, and I hope that the rest of the Mishnah can be published at a speed of one Seder per two years.

Unfortunately I don't have many publications in English. My PhD dissertation,

"Bridging Between the Actual and the Ideal in Early Rabbinical and Confucian Literature", was finished in 2000 and was written English but was never published. Recently I'm preparing a paper in English on the subject and hope to get it published.

My real dream, however, is that one day, when I finish translating the Mishnah, I'll have the ability and the resources to organize a group of Chinese scholars to start the translation of Talmud Bavli.

[Editorial Comment: WOW!]

### Nice Chinese Jewish Girl Finds True Love in Israel

by Shelly Paz  
excerpted from *The Jerusalem Post*, January 25, 2008

It was a case of East meets West in the Middle East Thursday night when Shoshana Rebecca Li, a descendant of the Jewish community of Kaifeng, China, married Ami Emmanuel, a new immigrant from Florida, at Jerusalem's Great Synagogue.

"For me, to have a proper religious Jewish wedding in Israel, it is a dream come true. I am very excited," Li, 29, said prior to the ceremony.

Emmanuel, 25, said he never believed he'd marry an Asian woman until he met Li at Kibbutz Sde Eliahu's Hebrew ulpan in May...

Li made aliya two and a half years ago, and recently completed her conversion back to Judaism with the Chief Rabbi-ate.

"I came to Israel because I am a Jew," she told *The Jerusalem Post* on Thursday while she was getting ready for the wedding. "I was raised knowing that I am a Jew and I made aliya because of our tradition."

The groom emigrated from Florida two years ago, after studying film...

"When I started studying Hebrew at the ulpan I saw Shoshana and I thought to



**The Jews of Singapore: History & Diaspora, Deliverance & Growth of a Jewish Community** by Joan Bieder. Suntime Media Ptc Ltd.

*The Jews of Singapore* is a large book that tells the history of a community founded by Orthodox Baghdadi traders in 1841 and has been home to a thriving Jewish community for nearly 170 years. Bieder's book examines how and why this group of Jews from Baghdad arrived and how it related to their Malayan, Chinese, Indian and Indonesian neighbors.

The book includes the halcyon days of the 1920s when Albert Einstein came to raise money for Hebrew University and the naively simple days of the 1930s, the World War II years that saw the internment of "all Jews on parole," the years that almost led to the community's extinction, the emergence of a Jewish leader who led the colony toward independence and how the community found a way to rebuild and survive.

To give a full picture of the community, the author weaves together information from interviews, oral histories, memoirs, personal letters, family documents, photographs, correspondence and government records from Singapore, Israeli, Dutch and British archives, and traces the histories of the community's larger-than-life leaders and their families.

Told through an introduction and 18 chapters, the author reveals how Jewish community members in Singapore suffered, survived and prospered to the present times.

The book, with 450 illustrations and maps, and peppered with numerous box stories, highlights the contributions that Jewish leaders have made to Singaporean finance, business, medicine and law, while living in a Republic that provides respect, religious freedom, equal opportunity and full integration into society. An extensive bibliography is included.

Author Joan Bieder is a senior lecturer at the University of California, Graduate School of Journalism at Berkley, has taught television production for 17 years and

been fascinated by Singapore since she came upon an unpublished photograph of Albert Einstein sitting with Singapore's Jewish community leaders in 1922. She has done considerable work on the subject, including a video on the Jewish community of Singapore.

For further information or to purchase the book (\$65 plus postage) contact Suntime Media Ptc Ltd., 47 Hill St #06-06, Singapore 179365. Tel 65-6737-5189; FAX 6737-3190. Email: [suntime@pacific.net.sg](mailto:suntime@pacific.net.sg)

**Red Kite and Blue Cap by Rena Krasno and Chiang Yeng-Fong** (Chinese version published in Taipei, Taiwan by Sanmin Publishing Company in 2007)

This book became a best seller almost immediately after publication. It centers on the adventures of two boys, one a Chinese Jew who lived in 12th century Kaifeng, and one a Chinese boy, son of the Emperor. At the time, Kaifeng was the capital of China. It was a beautiful city admired for its culture, creativity and trade.

The title of the book is based on a red kite, a favorite of Didi, the Emperor's dearly beloved son, and on the blue cap (*kippa*) which all Jews wore at the time in China and which distinguished them from the Moslems who wore white caps.

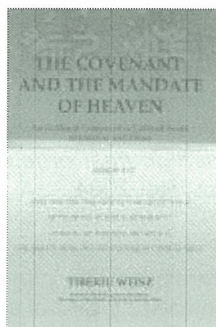
The Emperor permits his son, Didi, to visit the city of Kaifeng for several days outside of the palace so that he can better understand the lives of common Chinese. He meets Momo, a Chinese Jewish boy who is separated from his parents when he jumps out to try and catch his pet parrot who flies away at night while their caravan travels to Kaifeng. As they spend days together, the two boys become close and loving friends. Didi hears many things about Jews he had never known, and Momo learns from Didi facts about China of which he was not aware. As the story advances, the boys share thrilling adventures that create a lifelong bond between them.

The illustrations of the book are based on a famous scroll, the Qing Ming Shan He

Tu, depicting Kaifeng in the 12th century. It is now considered a Chinese National Treasure shown once a year to viewers in a museum in Beijing.

**The Covenant and the Mandate of Heaven: An in-depth comparative cultural study of Judaism and China**

by Tiberiu Weisz. iUniverse, 2007. Available on-line at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), Barnes&Noble or through your local bookstore.



If China is yin there must be an opposing culture that matches her in endurance, sustainability and depth. Is Judaism the yang of China's yin? What cultural bonds tied Judaism and China? Israel and China, past, present and future.

These are just some of the topics explored in this book in a historical setting: not Chinese nor Jewish, but Chinese AND Jewish. The book compares ancient and contemporary Chinese sources with corresponding Western literature to show that these two cultures balanced each other in a cultural relationship of YIN and YANG: one as a religion that deeply influenced Western cultures and the other in an opposing environment secluded, isolated and little understood by outsiders.

The book also presents China and Judaism through the eyes of the people who have faithfully followed their tenets since antiquity. Readers will see these two cultures in a new light: not as "fossils" but as two vibrant cultures tied by invisible bonds to survive and flourish to present day.

**To Broaden the Way: A Confucian-Jewish Dialogue** by Galia Patt-Shamir. Lexington Books, 2006. 358 pages.

Reviewed by Hilary Putnam, Harvard University

*To Broaden the Way* is at once an introduction to Confucianism, a personal statement by a Jewish scholar who, while not

## IN THE FIELD

- **Xu Xin Expresses Thanks**  
"I am very happy to report to all of you...that I am fully recovered from the (post-aneurysm) operation and can go back to work if I wish...I must say both myself and my family are very pleased at this wonderful news. It was certainly a relief. I considered it the best new year's gift and would like to share it with you.  
At this time I would like to thank all of you for the caring, good wishes, and support you kindly extended to me during those difficult days. It would have been extremely hard for me to go through it without your support. Now I am very much looking forward to resuming my teaching and many other writing projects. Best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful year of 2008."

- **Tour of Jewish Central Asia Offered**  
Frédéric Viey, whose article appeared in our last issue, and Jonathan Viey, in collaboration with Oriental House are offering a tour of the Jewish communities of Central Asia, and Uzbekistan in particular, but including Samarkand and Bukhara. Join them as they follow the route of Alexander the Great and the Silk Route. The trip runs from 5-19 August 2008 and reservations must be made by 1 May 2008. For more information contact: Frédéric Viey 06 64 46 53 08 or email: [fviey@hotmail.fr](mailto:fviey@hotmail.fr) or Jonathan Viey at [jdouby@hotmail.com](mailto:jdouby@hotmail.com).

## TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I apologize for complaining again about the publication in POINTS EAST of texts that, in my opinion, have not been properly edited. The title of Frederic Viey's article on Stanislas d' Escayrac de Lauture is to me, as a Francophone, a shocking example of the kind of mistake that I deem inadmissible in an academic journal. The correct name of the organization of which Count de Lauture was an emissary is ALLIANCE ISRAELITE UNIVERSELLE. That name is not even once spelled correctly in the entire article. As for the translation of the address at the head of the letter

of the board of the Alliance to the count it could not possibly be "Sir" or "Sir Count": there is no French equivalent of the English title "Sir". The address would have read "Monsieur le Comte", or perhaps "Votre Excellence"...

The president of the Alliance Israelite Universelle at the time of the writing of the said letter was probably Adolphe Cremieux, the first Jew to rise to a ministerial position in the French government; he was twice minister of justice and a life-long senator. As minister of justice he presided over the abolition of slavery in the French colonies in 1848 and the subsequent awarding of French citizenship to the Jews of Algeria, a law that was abolished by the Vichy regime and reinstated after the war. Cremieux also founded the Mikveh Israel school of agriculture in Palestine. The Alliance Israelite Universelle, of which he was one of the founders, was a humanitarian organization, which had as its goals the raising of education standards of Jews in the Orient, the alleviation of Jewish distress and the protection of Jewish rights in these countries. It is for the latter purpose that Cremieux travelled with Sir Moses Montefiore, the great Jewish financier and community leader of London, to Turkey and Egypt. Educating the Jewish children of these countries meant providing them with a French education, indeed exactly the same primary and secondary education that children enjoyed in France, where public education was highly centralized and of very high academic standards. It is greatly to the credit of the AIU that it pioneered the spread of French education around the Mediterranean, turning the elites, Jewish and non-Jewish, of Morocco, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, and other countries, into francophones until about half a century ago. The AIU exists to this day, but its activity is largely confined to France.

Rene Goldman  
Summerland, British Columbia  
[t.dekur@shaw.ca](mailto:t.dekur@shaw.ca)

To the Editor,

I've been studying the history of the Jews in China over the past semester (I'm a PhD student in my spare time), and I thought the various experiences of Jews in China would be a great jumping off point for a discussion on the issues of acculturation

(a la Joseph in Egypt). I'd love to include music...but we'll see. The selections that I did find by Avshalomav are from the period you mention; although by a Russian Jew who came into China by way of the NE immigration. I'd love to find more.

Thanks again,  
Rhoda Silverman  
[zimriyah@comcast.net](mailto:zimriyah@comcast.net)

To the Editor,

I am currently researching the Shanghai ghetto at University of Bristol, UK and wondered if you could point me towards some primary sources. I've fallen in love with this topic for my dissertation yet it's quite a hard one to do from England!

My interests lie in immigration of German refugees to Shanghai in the late 1930s, how they adapted to life in Hongkou, and how they found refuge in other countries once the war was over. I am particularly interested in questions of identity- how they functioned as a cultural community in Shanghai and how these Jewish refugees saw themselves in relation to the holocaust- as victims or survivors?

I would be so grateful to hear from you regarding any first hand accounts of Jewish refugees in Shanghai or any other information.

Yours sincerely,  
Tamsin Lee-Smith  
[tl5795@bristol.ac.uk5555it](mailto:tl5795@bristol.ac.uk5555it)

To the Editor,

I have been exploring back issues of your publication with great interest and want to commend you on the important work you are doing in documenting Jewish history in East Asia. I also want to invite you and your readers to visit my web site, which focuses on Harbin, Manchuria, as one of the "shtetl" links of the nonprofit Jewish Genealogy site. My inspiration for creating the site was that my grandparents, Isak Grigori and Ethel (Roza) Clurman, came to Harbin from Russia in the early 1900s and raised three children there: my father Charles (Ruvim), my aunt Sylvia (Tziva) and my uncle Johnny (Izra).



Although I was not born in Harbin, I am proud of my "Chinese roots" and fascinated by the history of Jews in that city.

Launched in February 2007, the web site focuses on the Jewish community of Harbin in the first half of the 20th century and features personal stories, photographs and maps, historical information, a bibliography and links to related sites. Our contributors include Professor Jonathan Goldstein of the U.S. and Mara Moustafine of Australia, as well as Professor Dan Ben-Canaan, director of the Sino-Israel Research and Study Center in Harbin. I continue to search for information for the site and encourage any of your readers with Harbin connections to submit photographs, personal stories, historical documents and other relevant materials. My contact information is included below.

Thank you for your consideration.

Irene Clurman  
PO Box 3520  
Evergreen CO 80437  
Tel. 303-674-3789  
Email: isee@indra.com  
<http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/index.htm>

## New Interactive Database of Shanghai Jews ~ A Call for Information

by Uri Gutman, Consul General of Israel in Shanghai

The Israeli Consulate and the Foreign Affairs Office of the Hongkou District Government are in the process of creating an interactive database about the 30 thousand Jews who lived in Shanghai in the 1930s and 40s.

The objective of this database is to document the history of the city's Jews. The database will be placed at the Ohel Moshe Synagogue, which was restored to its original structure in 2007 and was opened as *Shanghai's Jewish Refugees Museum*.

The database will be launched on Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day in 2008 and will be accessible to all who visit the museum.

In the effort to create this comprehensive collection, the Consulate General of Israel is requesting information about former residents of Shanghai and their relatives.

Such information can include: name, gender, address, nationality, escape route, date of arrival in and departure from Shanghai, vocation, permanent residence/country, photos, contact information of the former residents or their relatives, related events in written/audio/video and more.

Any such information should be sent to following contact details:

Hongkou District Government FAO:  
Attention Rita  
Tel: +86 21 25657923  
Fax: +86 21 25657928  
Email: shdfao@163.com  
Please CC the Consulate:  
Info@shanghai.mfa.go.il  
Please indicate in your subject: Ohel Moshe Data Base Project + your Family name

The database project is the third phase of a charity campaign initiated in 2007 by the Consulate General of Israel in Shanghai. The purpose of the campaign is to show the appreciation and gratitude of Israel and the world Jewry to Shanghai and the elderly people of Hongkou District, who received the Jews into their neighborhoods during Nazi persecution.

The campaign has involved contributions by the Consulate General and 26 Israeli companies. The first phase was the renovation of an Elders' Activity Center in Houshan Park, which is located in the former Jewish Ghetto. The project also included equipping the facility with new furniture, computers, a library, entertainment facilities, musical instruments and medical equipment. The center was inaugurated on Israel's 59<sup>th</sup> Independence Day.

The second phase of the charity project included equipping a home for the elderly in Hongkou with air conditioners on each floor, flat screen TVs in the bedrooms, a piano and projection equipment for the entertainment hall and exercise equipment in the garden. It was heartwarming to see what a significant difference this made in the lives of the residents of this home.

The Israeli Consulate and the Hongkou District government are working jointly to complete the third phase of the campaign, the creation of the interactive database about Shanghai's Jews, at the Ohel Moshe Jewish Refugees Museum. You can help

us preserve the history and memory of the Jewish Community in Shanghai by sending information and spreading the word.

Thank you in advance!

## The Chinese of Jewish Descent at Kaifeng

(continued from page 1)

### Kaifeng Jews' Jewishness

Although no Kaifeng family practices Judaism, some of them consider themselves Jewish and want to be recognized as such. In 1952 the official census registered more than 163 families as Jews (Youtai). The following year, the Maoist government decided that they could not be treated as a distinctive ethnic group because they had completely assimilated with the Chinese (Han) majority and so did not fulfil the criteria<sup>1</sup>. However, the authorities stipulated they should not be discriminated against, since "This will help gradually ease away the differences they might psychologically or emotionally feel exist between them and the Han"<sup>2</sup>. China has fifty-five national minorities.<sup>3</sup> The two largest are the Zhuang (15 million) and the Uygur,<sup>4</sup> the latter being mostly Muslim.<sup>5</sup> There are more than 20 million Muslims in China and they are allowed to retain their study of Arabic and religious observance in mosques, since Islam is one of the five permitted religions in China (together with Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Taoism.)

Judaism is not, and the Jews long ago lost their knowledge of Hebrew and their communal meeting place for worship. Many Jews were over the years swallowed up by Islam, since their customs and practices were perceived there as similar to those of Judaism.

By an oversight, registration books categorizing these people as *Youtai* (Jews) were not amended and in 1986, when China started to issue ID cards, the local authorities merely copied the designation *Youtai*. However, the Foreign Affairs Office of Henan provincial government in 2 July 1984 advised officials that donations to help them "should be turned down with grace if they were religiously oriented or implied a Jewish nation."

Ze'ev Sufott, Israel's first ambassador to China, declared in 1992 that the Kaifeng descendants were "as Jewish as I am Chi-

## BOOK NOOK

**Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma**, by Ruth Fredman Cernea. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2007. 173 pp. \$24.95. Reviewed by Shlomo Deshen, Tel-Aviv University excerpted from *Shofar, An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 23, #1, Fall 2004.

The widely scattered Baghdadi Jews of the Far East in the 19th century constitute an interesting case of a vigorous Jewish society. The Baghdadi Far Easterners were instrumental in creating and funding Jewish institutions in Baghdad. Their role was very different from that of their Ashkenazi peers who migrated to the West from Eastern Europe at about the same time. The Baghdadi migrants included members of the social elite of the community. They commanded the respect of those who remained, and soon the migrants who did well economically became munificent benefactors of the home community. They played an important role in the revitalization of religious and cultural life in the mother community of Baghdad, causing it to fill a prominent role in 19th-century Sephardi Jewry...

This is the context of the particular community described in this book. Rangoon was one of the less prominent, and more recently established, of the Far Eastern Baghdadi communities. Calcutta, the capital of British India in the 19th century, was home to a larger, wealthier, and culturally richer community. A Judaeo-Arabic weekly newspaper was even published there for several years. The Rangoon community, established in the 1850s, was part of the Calcutta orbit, a distance of three days by sea. But Rangoon itself was the focus for a dozen small communities of Jewish Baghdadi traders who lived in inland Burmese localities. These people gathered in Rangoon for the major festivals and family events. Marital matches and business affairs connected the various circles of communities, so that the Far Eastern Baghdadi system as a whole was a tapestry of family, religious, and business ties, with the elite business people of the major centers, Calcutta, Bombay and Shanghai, connecting the system by marital matches and business dealings.

Anthropologist Ruth Fredman Cernea has reconstructed some of the history of the Rangoon community by interviewing descendants of local people currently dispersed in the Western world and in Israel, by studying archives and gravestones, and by consulting with the few Baghdadi individuals still living in Rangoon. Three main topics run through the book. One is the subject of social and cultural identity, well-captured by the title "Almost Englishmen." Another is the nature of community life and the interplay of elements of identity (Jewish-Baghdadi, English, Burmese) in the lives of people. The third main topic is the virtual destruction of the community in the course of World War II, not as an outcome of antisemitism, but as a corollary of the Japanese invasion and of Burmese post-colonialism.

The Baghdadi-Jewish presence throughout the Far East was linked to the British colonial presence, and expressed in trading. The Baghdadis brought with them their hybrid Judaeo-Arab identity, exemplified in particular by their languages, liturgical Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic speech. The political loyalty and cultural preference of the Baghdadis were directed toward the British overlords of the localities in which they based themselves. They were part of the stratum of Europeans and Asiatics of numerous origins who were auxiliaries to the British. The status of this stratum was not clearly defined. Vis-à-vis the Burmese the Baghdadis were considered to be British subjects, but vis-à-vis the British, they were not of the right color. The genteel British clubs therefore refused them membership. And Baghdadi soldiers in the British Indian army were discriminated against when seeking promotion. In their anxiety to distance themselves from people of darker color than themselves, the Baghdadis were vehement in their rejection of the swarthy indigenous Indian Jews, the Bene Israel and the Cochins. The Baghdadis claimed that certain laxities in the religious practice of the indigenous Jews disqualified their claim to be Jewish. The matter came to court before an English judge, and the latter, not surprisingly, ruled that all Jews be categorized as one, the proud Baghdadis with the locals.

The Baghdadis strove hard for acceptance as Englishmen among the colonial elite.

The most affluent even sent their children to be educated in England. Others chose to educate their children in local English Christian schools and pay high tuition. The less affluent sent their children to "the Jewish English School" that was less expensive. In both types of local schools education was strongly modeled on patriotic and bourgeois English lines, with daily prayers for the welfare of the King, saluting the flag, and learning to play violin and piano, not to mention garnering a perfect command of the English language.

The tension that attended their English identity led the Baghdadis to invest little effort in the maintenance of Jewish educational programs. The latter were directed mainly to imparting elementary synagogue skills, but not toward broadening Jewish historical and cultural knowledge. Jewish Baghdadi identity was maintained through the medium of family loyalty, practiced in home and synagogue festivities. Though Judaeo-Arabic speech was soon lost, much of Jewish traditional practice was retained until the dispersion of the community in 1942. Most Jewish shops remained closed on Sabbaths and festivals. People endowed the synagogue with an incredible number of Torah scrolls in memory of deceased relatives (no less than 126, according to the author!). The book has vivid accounts of the warmth of Jewish Baghdadi family life in Rangoon, followed, not inconsistently, by a chapter on the harsh segregation practiced vis-à-vis the Bene Israel. But the community never recuperated from the ordeal of the 1942 flight to India, though the Calcutta Baghdadis received the refugees warmly. After the war, the majority of the Rangoon people dispersed, and in the process lost much of their remaining tradition.

The author has done a service to Jewish studies by this engagingly written book, documenting a community that has largely disappeared. She has also done a service to the descendants of the people described, who are enabled through this book to recognize their ancestral roots. If there is one point of criticism to be made of the book, it is that the colonial context of Rangoon community life could have been spelled out more fully. The term "colonialism" does not even figure in the index.



arships, research, special projects.

### 3. Board Restructuring

[We will be restructuring our Board as follows:]

The SJI Managing Board of Directors will consist of 18 members from North America. Members are chosen for three-year terms by vote of the board itself as vacancies occur. It will meet annually.

Its purposes are threefold:

1. Conducting the business of SJI.
2. Identifying strategies and projects that contribute to achieving the mission of SJI; and
3. Finding resources to enable the success of those strategies and projects.

Member responsibilities include:

1. Supporting the vision and mission of SJI through personal outreach that advances the work of the Institute.
2. Understanding and communicating the values, goals, mission, and objectives of the Sino Judaic Institute.
3. Contributing to the growth of SJI through personal annual contributions, fund-raising efforts, and identifying benefactors who will further the goals of the Institute.
4. Comporting oneself with integrity—including active participation in Board meetings, email exchanges and teleconferences—and respecting opinions and matters discussed in confidentiality.
5. In addition to serving on the full board, each board member is expected to serve on one of the board's working committees (currently in formation). Board committees may also include appointed non-board members from the community when appropriate to the objectives of the committee.

The SJI International Board consists of Board members outside North America.

They are chosen for three-year terms by vote of the Board itself as vacancies occur. International Board members have all the rights, privileges and responsibilities as Managing Board members except that they are not expected to attend the annual board meeting due to the travel expense involved. They are charged with the responsibility to actively represent the Institute in their country and/or community.

The SJI Advisory Council is an honorary body whose members are appointed by

invitation of the Board to assist it with policy and goal-setting, fund-raising and special projects as requested.

### 4. New Board Members

Having distinguished between managing and international board members, we will share the new job description with current board members and invite them to re-enlist, join the international board or the advisory council. Once the final number is determined, we will then nominate new board members based on recommendations to date.

### 5. Outreach

· Al talked about the importance of outreach as the means for recruiting new members (and board members), educating people about our work and its subjects, and for SJI's very survival. He discussed broadening our outreach effort to university-based Judaic and East Asian libraries, academic newsletters, and Jewish and Chinese newspapers. Our website needs to be more engaging and make better use of links in order to reach more people.

· The adoption article by Al generated a lot of interest and it marks a new direction worth pursuing because people are interested in a living sino-judaic cultural expression. We will ask Dana Leventhal for more data on this phenomenon. Jewish Family Life Institute could also be brought in on this and we discussed the idea of a national conference either on sino-jewish families alone or as part of a larger conference on mixed cultured families.

· Each board member should get the names of SJI members in their region to contact, build relations with and sponsor programs with. Each board member should be given extra copies of Points East to distribute in his/her community.

### 6. Name

We also discussed letterhead and the need to include a Hebrew name on it in addition to the English and Chinese. The Hebrew name is "Machon Sini-Yehudi". We also are considering changing the Chinese from "xue yuan" to "yan jiu yuan", which is a more broad term for "institute".

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 in the afternoon.

## The Jews in Burma: An Update—and Myanmar Shalom

by Ruth Fredman Cernea

After the considerable turmoil in Burma last fall, life has settled down in Rangoon. The small Jewish community in Burma, headed by Moses Samuels—caretaker of the community as well the current trustee of the synagogue, Musmeah Yeshua—is safe and moving on with life. As can be expected, tourism has been slowed in Burma, and therefore few visitors have come to the very beautiful Rangoon synagogue, making it difficult to assemble a *minyan*. However, a new development promises to renew the synagogue, and once again fill this historic building with joy and with song.

Moses and his son Sammy, the heir to the Baghdadi tradition in Burma, have created a travel agency, Myanmar Shalom, which will bring more Jews to Burma through its Jewish heritage and general tours. Sammy, who graduated from Yeshiva University, is based in New York City. In Rangoon, his sister Diana is managing the travel agency, while her younger sister Kazna is studying in Israel until April. In February, Myanmar Shalom is coordinating a Jewish heritage tour for Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, who is leading a group of forty-five Europeans and Americans to Burma. Special features of this trip will be Shabbat services in the 100-year-old synagogue, a visit to the threatened cemetery, a walk through the former Jewish neighborhood of Rangoon, and a Shabbat dinner. The Israeli Ambassador to Burma will participate in the dinner, as well as several members of the small Jewish community in Burma. In the fall, Myanmar Shalom will bring together former residents of Burma, as well as their relatives and friends, for a nostalgic trip to the home they loved and left only because of the tragedy of World War Two and its political aftermath.

Until the present political situation changes, foreign visitors to Burma are the lifeblood for the synagogue and the continuing Jewish presence in Burma. Such visitors also validate Moses Samuels' devotion to his father's memory and to his heritage, and encourage him to continue his efforts to keep the Baghdadi tradition alive in Burma. For further information, see the website:

[www.myanmarshalom.com](http://www.myanmarshalom.com)

nese." Israel's policy towards them is to cordially receive them but not to encourage their expectations to be considered Jewish. This cautious approach may well be influenced by reluctance to interfere in China's internal affairs as much as by the uncertainty of how many would eventually be entitled by the Law of Return to settle in Israel. The problem is that, according to *Halacha* (Jewish religious law), they are not recognized as Jews as they followed patrilineal descent due, among other reasons, to the scarcity of Jewish women available to marry.<sup>6</sup>

In 1996, some of the descendants requested immigration visas to Israel but the Israel embassy in Beijing would provide them only if they could show documentary proof that they were Jewish. The Chinese authorities confiscated their ID cards and issued new ones designating them as either "Hui" (Muslim Chinese) or "Han." China's State Nationalities Affairs Commission claims that in the past it has found no basis for recognizing a Jewish minority and it is disinclined to reopen its inquiries because the Kaifeng Jews' assimilation into Chinese culture has been total. A few descendants, including a provincial-court judge, have been allowed to call themselves Jews in their identity papers.

The official policy is ambiguous. On the one hand, it denies any connection between the descendants with Jews and Israel and makes Jewish religion taboo to them. On the other hand, the city government has generally supported the efforts of Jewish descendants to commemorate their history and preserve their meagre collection of relics; foreign scholars and tourists are free to meet them and to visit their historical site.

The city's leaders hope to use Kaifeng's links with Judaism to bring foreign investment to this overlooked corner of China. Jewish businessmen from overseas have been invited to Kaifeng to inspect the opportunities and the city has approved a "Special Economic Development Zone for Overseas Jews." Since Israel and China established diplomatic relations in 1992, several Jewish delegations came to Kaifeng but none have concluded any firm business, leading suspicions of proselytising. In my lectures to the group, I am aware of the presence of governmental inspectors who monitor the activities of the group. On the other hand, when it comes to foreigners, the authorities turn

a blind eye. Thus, although Judaism is not one of the five religions officially permitted, there are incipient Jewish communities of some hundreds in Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou.<sup>7</sup> Jewish rituals are unrestricted and emissaries of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement<sup>8</sup> have established synagogue services and other facilities.<sup>9</sup>

### External influence

Today Kaifeng Jews know very little about Judaism and their only real Jewish characteristic is their awareness of their origin. Despite intermarriage, the lack of Hebrew reading skills and the loss of written scriptures, they claim Jewish belonging, thanks to memory assisted by oral tradition. Another possible reason is called by Zhou Xun, from the University of London, "the constructing of the 'Chinese Jews:'" Since the local economy of the city is now mainly based on tourism, the enduring Western fascination for its 'Jewish community' has proved to be an essential attraction. This is one of the new meanings for today's living 'Jewish descendants.'<sup>10</sup> It is manifest that external factors helped and still help to keep alive Jewish awareness in Kaifeng.

During the 1860s, the Kaifeng synagogue was dismantled and its remnants sold, marking the end of one millennium of continuous Jewish life in China. In 1900, the remaining texts and scrolls were removed to Christian missions in Shanghai. When the Western Jews in Shanghai saw these Jewish artefacts in Christian possession, they were concerned and established the *Shanghai Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews* to help their brethren in Kaifeng.<sup>11</sup> They brought some Kaifeng Jews to Shanghai who were eager to get financial support to rebuild the synagogue.<sup>12</sup> But it was too late.

Only in 1985 the *Sino-Judaic Institute* was created in Palo Alto, California, to aid the establishment of a Judaica wing in the Kaifeng Municipal Museum.<sup>13</sup> This happened thanks to the work of Professor Xu Xin, of Nanjing University, who since 2002 held seminars on Jewish history and culture for some descendants.<sup>14</sup>

Xu Xin is a main promoter of Sino-Israel relations. In April 1989, he established the *China Judaic Studies Association* and in 1993 edited a Chinese abridged 1,000-page version of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. He built up the largest Judaic library in the country with over 6,000 books. Xu Xin,

whose education was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, learned English by listening to the Voice of America and gramophone records. His career of teaching English and American literature led him to research American Jewish writers and since 1986, he has been lecturing and writing on Judaism and Jews in China and organizing workshops, exhibitions, and conferences on Jewish themes at which both Chinese and Jewish academics participate.<sup>15</sup> During 1995 he researched at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in what Xu Xin calls his experience "from book Judaism to living Judaism." At the HUC, he found fifty-nine books written by Chinese Jews of Kaifeng.<sup>16</sup>

In 1998, a documentary film about Kaifeng Jews was produced—*Minyan in Kaifeng*. Recently, another documentary, *Kaifeng, Jerusalem*, was produced by Noam Urbach in Mandarin, Henanese, Hebrew, and English.<sup>17</sup> It was filmed over six years in Israel and China, following the Chinese Jewish descendants of the ancient capital city of Kaifeng and their quest for cultural revival. It examines the community's odd political situation in which both China and Israel—each for its own reasons—refuse to officially recognize them.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1990s Wang Yisha, former curator of the Kaifeng Municipal Museum and an expert on Chinese Jewish descendants, together with one of them, the aforementioned Shi Zhongyu, worked to reconstruct the genealogies of the Kaifeng Jews.<sup>19</sup> To this end, they requested the *Chinese-Hebrew Memorial Book of the Dead*, which had been researched by Sino-Judaic scholar Donald Daniel Leslie.<sup>20</sup> A researcher of the Chinese Jewish descendants in Kaifeng for over a quarter century, Wang Yisha passed away in 1996, he left the most accurate records and detailed information of Kaifeng Jews in the twentieth century since the aforementioned *Chinese Jews* (1942) by Bishop White, the first major work on the subject. Wang Yisha wrote *Annals of the Chinese Jews*, written in three volumes, as White's book had originally been. One of these was called *Objections to White's Chinese Jews*.<sup>21</sup>

### Common denominators

...One factor that can help a rebirth of the Jewish community is the strengthening of the relations between China and Israel.



Of course, the differences between them are enormous: Israel is four hundred times smaller than China, whose population is two hundred times bigger. One country is the heart of Asia, the other one, the bridge between West and East. However, the common denominators between Chinese and Jews are not few. They are the two oldest and most uninterrupted civilizations (the former is older, the latter is more uninterrupted). True, there are other ancient civilizations, such as Egypt and India, that also had deep memory roots, but these withered over time. Chinese and Jewish traditions, by contrast, have endured over millennia with an attachment to remembrance.

Both were redefined in 1948 and 1949 with the creation of modern Israel and China respectively, and both hold national minorities of approximately 10% of their population. In a world that favours Western languages, both China and Israel are proudly loyal to their respective ancient tongues and their unique alphabets. The renovation of biblical Hebrew in modern times has a parallel in China's simplification of ancient Mandarin. Judaism and Confucianism are based upon deeds and not dogma. For neither of them is theology central; they share a basically optimistic approach to human nature. A maxim which is fundamental in both civilizations is "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you," found both in the Talmud (Shabbat 31a) and in Confucius's *Analects* (15:23). Moreover, both religions are strictly non-missionary and tolerant towards the outside world. Confucius preached at the same time as the Hebrew Prophets, and both civilizations consolidated in writing between the eighth and fourth centuries BCE, through Prophetism in Israel and Taoism in China. Both Jews and Chinese have a long history of suffering and persecution. Their losses during the Second World War (during which their enemies Japan and Germany were allied) brought their tragedy to a nadir. The Chinese tend to compare the Holocaust with the *Rape of Nanjing*. All these similarities strengthen the identity of Kaifeng Jewish descendants, whose current situation is complex. Most of them are aware of their ancestry but few have direct sources indicating their descent; the vast majority is unfamiliar with a Jewish identity in common with Jews elsewhere. This situation may be changing as Jewish groups from outside China continue their efforts to educate the descendants of the

Kaifeng community about their heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance a common language, an area of habitation, and shared customs, attitudes and beliefs.

<sup>2</sup> Xu Xin, *Chinese Policy towards Judaism*, international symposium on *Youtai-Presence and Perception of Jews and Judaism in China*, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> They are declared as such on the basis of common language, traditions and geography. In the 1953 census 41 minority nationalities were specified, some of them with several million people (Zhuang 15, Manchu 8, Hui 8) and some with only a couple of thousands (Lhoba, Gaoshan). In the 1964 census, there were 183 nationalities registered, among which the government recognized only 54. Of the remaining 129 nationalities, 74 were considered to be part of the officially recognized 54, while 23 were classified as "other nationalities" and the remaining 32 were classified as "indeterminate."

<sup>4</sup> The Uygur (also Uighur) is a Turkic people driven out of Mongolia in 840 by the native Kirgiz people; their language belongs to the Turkic group of the Altaic. They live in Northwestern China and Kazakhstan and constitute a majority of the population of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

<sup>5</sup> In the past they have practiced Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Christianity; nowadays they are largely Muslim.

<sup>6</sup> Rabbinical Judaism follows matrilineal descent: a Jew is defined as such according to his mother's Jewishness. However, the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, in adopting patrilineal descent in the 1980s, legitimated a practice that Chinese Jews trace back at least as far as the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

<sup>7</sup> Hong-Kong on the other hand has a long presence of Jews.

<sup>8</sup> Rabbis Shlomo Greenberg arrived in Shanghai in 1998 and Rabbi Shimon Freundlich moved to Harbin in 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Such as kosher café and bakery, library, informal study groups, preschool facilities, and Bar Mitzvah classes.

<sup>10</sup> According to Zhou Xun, this attraction explains why they have been spared the "one child policy" and enjoy a monthly allowance from the central government.

<sup>11</sup> They sent a letter with over 44 signatures chiding the Kaifeng community for having abandoned Judaism.

<sup>12</sup> A father and son of the Li clan, who were later joined by six other members of the Kaifeng community.

<sup>13</sup> And to encourage research and scholarship about

the Jewish experience in China.

<sup>14</sup> The first seminar took place between 14 July and 2 August, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> In May 2003 Xu Xin earned an honorary PhD at Bar-Ilan University.

<sup>16</sup> One of these books, written in both Hebrew and Chinese 400 years ago, traced 10 generations of a family.

<sup>17</sup> Noam Urbach, who wrote a thesis surrounding the Kaifeng Jews for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, lives currently in Jinan, China.

<sup>18</sup> The director follows the Jin family—father Shlomo, wife Dina, and their daughter, now settled in Jerusalem after leaving China through Finland in 1999 with the assistance of a Christian Zionist group.

<sup>19</sup> In particular of the Shi clan

<sup>20</sup> The Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati agreed to donate to Kaifeng two microfiches of this work.

<sup>21</sup> Wang Yisha had found 123 errors or misleading statements in White's book.

### Report on My Second Stay in Israel in 2007

(continued from page 1)

ing. And, compared with my Jewish classmates, my speed in reading is slow, partly because I am held back by my vocational habits. I get used to paying full attention to every detail of a text. But in general, Hebrew no longer looks esoteric in my eyes after three months of hard work. I have brought back to China all important class handouts, the textbooks and CDs from Level Aleph to Gimmel, so that they can be used as materials both for teaching in the future, and for self-review and self-improvement. The result of my study was noticeably encouraging through the fact that, on my way back to China, I answered all those questions of El-Al's safety examination in Hebrew and was treated much nicer this time.

Aside from learning Hebrew, I also had some professional activities to perform. Invited by Prof. Wayne Horowitz, the Academic Director of Undergraduate Studies of RIS, I delivered a guest lecture for an international Bible workshop in the Bible Institute. In it, I outlined the development of Biblical and Jewish studies in China and reflected upon some of its features and trends that seem to me salient and important. The response was quite favorable. The part where I compared the different perspectives of Chinese and western scholars on Kaifeng Jews aroused many comments and questions. This lecture has been accepted for publication by *Contemporary Jewry*, the journal of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry in USA. I will revise it and add references when I return to China.

tures of two boys, one Chinese and one Jewish who lived in 12th century Kaifeng in China's Henan province, has just been published in Taiwan. Her co-author for this book is the well-known Chinese writer, Yeng-Fong Chiang.

Rena wrote in the Preface for the Chinese translation of her book *Strangers Always*, "It is hard to convey my feelings arising from the fact that Chinese readers will be able to read in Chinese about the experiences and thoughts of a young foreigner during a troubled period in China's history. My emotions are a whirlwind of longing, of nostalgia for my youth...I have returned to China a number of times now. Not only do I feel love for China but great pride when I observe how Shanghai is booming, the people appear healthy and content, and look forward to an even more promising future".

On 2pm Sunday, Oct. 28th, *Strangers Always* Chinese publisher Sanlian and the book's China agent BoAiTianShi, jointly organized a book launching and signing at Sanlian's main bookstore in Shanghai on Huai Hai Road, the main road in the former French Concession. An avenue with buttonwoods trees of that era is still lining both sides of the road. Young students and old folks, Chinese and foreigners, showed up to have their books signed by Rena and have pictures taken with her.

I told Rena emotionally "For each heart and mind the book could touch in China, it will bring happiness and satisfaction to us, and love and understanding cross culture, history and time." Then and there, through Rena and the book, the past and the future, the Chinese and non-Chinese, the Jews and non-Jews, Shanghai, Jerusalem, and San Francisco, are all seamlessly connected and integrated. Maybe that, after all, is what life is all about - a river of individual events, an endless sequence of generation after generation, the constant themes of love, hate, life and death, and the invisible hand of time that connects all of us here and there, past and future.

In the morning of Oct.30th, Rena and her party also visited Prof. Pan Guang and his colleagues at the Center of Jewish Studies in Shanghai, with lively and interesting conversations on the history of Russian Jews in Shanghai. And throughout her two weeks trip, there were also many other activities - lectures to various communities, interview with different journalists, a visit to Ohel Moshe, etc., all organized

with the very capable and helping hand of Tess Johnston, with the most helpful assistance by Rena's travel companion and good friend, Edith Benay, and many others. Both the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office and the Consulate General of Israel played an important role in Rena's very successful visit.

On Nov.1, after two wonderful weeks in Shanghai, the plane carried Rena back to the Bay area to her husband and home. But Shanghai will always be an inseparable part of her life, and hers an integral part of the soul of Shanghai. This is not the ending, but the beginning, a link to connect the infinite chain of past and future, a soft sound to awaken the city and its people at different points and dimensions. As Rena put it, "I want to live up to least 100 years, so that I can come back to Shanghai again and again." And I believe she will, and that will be a blessing for me, and for the city.

Michael Li divides his time between Seattle, Washington and Shanghai, where he currently conducts most of his work.

### Excerpts from the Minutes of the SJI Board Meeting, 9 Dec. 2007

Present: Anson Laytner, Josh Stampfer, Steve Hochstadt, Al Yee, Den Leventhal. Linda Frank called in for a portion of the morning.

Anson convened the meeting at 9:30 am noting the poetry in the fact that the SJI was meeting at the Oregon Jewish Museum, which is housed in the heart of Portland's Chinatown.

#### 1. Review of SJI Mission and Activities

Anson met with Mary Anne Graham, a former English language teacher at Henan U, in Kaifeng. Having lived there for a year, she became friends with Prof. Zhang, who heads the Jewish studies program there and also with a number of Jewish descendants. He also talked about American Jewish Committee's Asia and Pacific Rim Institute, which has hired Jim Busis as its director. AJC's focus, like that of other American Jewish organizations, is on politics and modern China. They focus on Beijing and Shanghai. Linda noted that AJC San Francisco will be getting a new director and it is likely to join Seattle AJC in doing work in China too.

Anson suggested that, while cooperating with these organizations whenever appropriate, SJI's focus should remain on Kaifeng and the various Jewish Studies programs in China, Henan U in particular. He noted that he had made an overture to the Igud Yotzei Sin to discuss a possible merger—or at least better website links. Bev Friend's China Judaic Studies Association is another candidate for consolidation of purpose with SJI.

The Board agreed that SJI's foci will be:

- Working as appropriate with the Kaifeng Jewish descendants
- Supporting Jewish studies programs in China, and the one at Henan U in particular
- Publishing *Points East* and *Sino-Judaica*.
- Improving the SJI website and its links with the Igud and CJSA and pursuing talks with the Igud and CJSA about cooperative efforts leading to a possible merger.
- Exploring modern Sino-Judaic connections such as adoptions, mixed cultures, contemporary thought, etc.

**Revised Mission Statement**—something short enough to say on an elevator ride or whilst sipping a (small) martini:

*The Sino Judaic Institute (SJI) is a non-denominational, non-political and non-profit organization, founded in 1985 by an international group of scholars and lay persons for the purpose of promoting understanding between Chinese and Jewish peoples, and to encourage and develop their cooperation in matters of mutual historic and cultural interest.*

**Objectives**—once you have the other person's interest:

These are:

- *The study of the ancient Jewish community of Kaifeng and assisting its descendants as appropriate*
- *The study of Jewish life in Shanghai, Harbin, Tianjin and elsewhere in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*
- *The support of Jewish studies programs in China*
- *The study of cultural intersections between Chinese and Jews, for example adoptions, literature, diasporas, etc.*
- *The study of Sino-Israeli relations*

#### 2. Treasurer's Report

Given a steady membership, SJI nets about \$5000 each year. We have \$74,000 in savings. These funds are used for schol-



Union's collapse, this region along the Chinese border has become one of the nation's most important centers of Jewish life.

Last September, Sheiner opened the area's first formal synagogue in seven decades. The Freid Jewish Community, the main Jewish organization in Birobidzhan, now runs a school attended by about 100 children that meets on Sundays, teaching Hebrew, Jewish traditions and activities such as dancing.

The community has also purchased a building in which it plans to open a Jewish school, probably next year, that would start with a limited number of grades but eventually serve kindergarten through high school, Sheiner said.

"There's no question that the Jews there feel much more Jewish than anywhere else in Russia, and not because of their history or what they've gone through, but mainly because of the new opportunities they have there," Russian Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar said.

It's not that the area has the nation's largest population of Jews. Out of the 190,000 people in the autonomous region, Lazar estimated that only about 5,000 are Jewish — although it is difficult to count because children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers may think of themselves as Jews but are not considered so by religious law unless they formally convert.

But Birobidzhan, a city of 77,000, has a Jewish flavor that belies its small Jewish population.

Numerous signs are in Yiddish as well as Russian, including the lettering on a monument marking the city boundary...In front of the train station, a huge menorah rises out of a fountain. One of the main streets is named after Sholom Aleichem, the Yiddish writer on whose stories the musical "Fiddler on the Roof" was based...

Now, the Freid Community — which is aligned with a nationwide Jewish organization headed by Lazar, one of two chief rabbis in Russia — sponsors the Birobidzhan Jewish People's University. It has 60 students, said Lev Toytman, the community's chairman.

The community also runs 10 clubs, with 600 members, that bring together people with various special interests, he said. And the city has a theater with performances in Yiddish...

## Rena Krasno Visits Shanghai: Two Accounts

### 1. She Came, She Spoke by Avigail Gutman

"In the 1920s Chinese residents of Shanghai were known as Shanghainese, while expatriates residing in the city were called Shanghaianders", explained Rena Krasno to a wide-eyed audience of contemporary Shanghaianders in the city. Rena emphasized that she was proud of her even-higher status of "Shanghai-BORN Shanghaiander" in the 26 years she lived in the city (1923-1949).

Rena Krasno was in Shanghai on a zap-speaking tour, on the occasion of the translation of two of her books into Chinese, the children's book *Red Kite and Blue Cap* about a Chinese boy and a Jewish boy in 12th century Kaifeng, and her well known *Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai*. During this time, she gave public talks at Deke Erh's gallery, M-on-the-Bund, and had speaking engagements which included: the Consular Spouses of Shanghai (at the Australian Consulate), Prof. Pan Guang's Institute of Judaic Studies, a reception at the homes of the Israeli Consul General and a luncheon at the Russian Consulate General. She also spoke in the neighboring mountains of Moganshan to a group of 60 teenagers from the International School of Hongkong, among whom were two Israelis.

Over the months leading up to Rena's visit, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue was being renovated in Shanghai's Hongkou District...Having read in a Shanghai newspaper of these plans, Rena informed the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office, which had initiated the reconstruction, that the original designer of the synagogue, in 1926, was her father's twin brother - architect Gabriel Rabinovich (Uncle Gava). She supplied the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office with a copy of the original blueprints signed by him and, to her great joy, the renovations were completed in time for her arrival in Shanghai.

During her visit, Rena met with the District officials at the reconstructed Synagogue and, in a warm spirit of friendship and co-operation, they agreed to rename the newly created museum there: "The Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum." She is also doing her utmost to supply the Museum with copies of additional docu-

ments, films and other items...

[Rena had many anecdotes that made her] rendition of the colonial history of the city so colorful, with descriptions of the cultural rivalries between the French, the English and the Americans and their lives alongside the local population. She highlighted the generosity of the local Chinese population towards Jewish refugees segregated by Japanese occupying forces during those difficult times. Rena's perspective is also colored by her growing up as a stateless Jew in the city with her optimistic view on life and her family enjoying the many-faceted, inter-cultural existence.

Avigail Gutman currently lives in Shanghai where her husband serves as the Israeli Consul General.

### 2. She Conquered by Michael Li

Shanghai's October is perfect - not hot and humid as summer and damp and cold as winter. Mostly sunny days, one only needs to put on a jacket when evening approaches and the air gets cooler. The Huangpu River is more peaceful, in a kind of meditation mode, moved away from its summer's restlessness and anxiety. On October 17th, the airplane from San Francisco landed in Shanghai after crossing the Pacific, and Rena, the author, traveler, humanist, and my Jewish grandma, stepped out.

At age 84, this will be Rena's fourth trip back in Shanghai after she and her family left the city of her birth in 1949. Rena Krasno was born in Shanghai in 1923 and studied at the College Municipal Francais and later at the Jesuits' Aurora University. She is the author of *Strangers Always - A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai*, *That Last Glorious Summer*, and a number of children's books. Her latest trip to Shanghai is particularly meaningful due to several events. The Chinese translation of her well-known book, *Strangers Always*, based on her diary through the 1930s and 40s while she and her family lived in Shanghai, was just completed and about to be published in China several days after her arrival.

This will be one of the first Chinese translations for books on Jewish families and their communities in Shanghai. The Chinese version of her other book, *Red Kite and Blue Cap*, the story about the adven-

Since our Institute has an exchange program of students with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Prof. Fred Lazin who is in charge of this program invited me to visit Beer-Sheva. We mainly discussed the study and living arrangements for the second visiting graduate student from our Institute, who would arrive at BGU in August. Prof. Lazin also kindly guided me through the Negev desert and the kibbutz where Ben-Gurion spent his retirement. While driving, we exchanged ideas with regard to the further cooperation between us. This included the possible financial support for continuing this exchange program, the possible donation of books to the Judaic library in Nanjing from Beer-Sheva, and his lecturers on immigration problems of Israel when he visits Nanjing next time.

The Ministry of Education in China has newly launched a huge project that intends to send abroad thousands of PhD candidates to study in the "top-ranking universities across the world". Hebrew University is the sole Israeli university on the list. A PhD candidate in our Institute has fortunately been selected for the project. However, since this is a brand-new project and the scholarship from our Ministry will not cover the tuition but only the living expenditure abroad, there are still some problems concerning the successful admission and the remitting of tuition. Under the introduction of Prof. Aharon Oppenheimer, my supervisor in Tel Aviv University, I visited Prof. Isaiah Gafni, the former Director of Graduate Studies of RIS and incumbent chair of the Mandel Institute for Jewish Studies. Prof. Gafni said that he would talk with RIS regarding our student's letter of invitation. He also enquired about the plan of development of the Institute in Nanjing, and gave me some advice on how to apply for RIS scholarship for our students in the future. Knowing that I will visit RRC next year, he hoped that I would contact him then because he will be visiting the University of Pennsylvania around the same time...

I chatted with Prof. Shaye Cohen, the Director of Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, in a cafeteria on the campus of Mt. Scopus. He gave me a copy of his second edition of *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (2006), a classic and still the clearest introduction to the formative era that shaped Judaism and provided the context for early Christian-

ity. Christianity is spreading very fast in today's China. The current image of Jews and Judaism in China is to a large extent closely connected with the widespread interest in Judaism on the part of Christians. One of the most frequent, and a bit unexpected, questions asked by students is why Jews don't believe in Jesus. To my best knowledge, however, we lack any serious book in Chinese on the separation of Christianity from Judaism, or on the development of early Judaism in its own right rather than just as a backdrop to the rise of Christianity. Therefore the need for translating Prof. Cohen's book, an important Jewish perspective on this crucial era, into Chinese is significantly relevant to the study of this subject in China.

Introduced by Prof. Jerold Gotel of London Jewish Culture Center, an old friend of our Institute, I had a meeting with Ms. Richelle Budd-Caplan, the Director of International Relations of Yad Vashem. Discovering that millions of click-through rates on the website of Yad Vashem came from China, Ms. Budd-Caplan is conceiving a Chinese web page for Yad Vashem, in which Chinese-speaking visitors can find out 40 core encyclopedic entries about Holocaust. She hoped that I could take on the translation work. She also agreed to put the logo of our Institute on the web page of Yad Vashem, as a sign of cooperation. We reached a gentleman's agreement that the cooperation would start once Yad Vashem decides which entries to be put on its website. Since the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has no Chinese web page till now and the study of Holocaust is on the research agenda of our Institute, I am really looking forward to this groundbreaking and surely consequential cooperation. She was also very responsive to my suggestion of donating the duplicate copies from Yad Vashem library to the Judaic library in Nanjing.

Apart from establishing new professional relationships, I also renewed old friendship in Jerusalem. When I visited the new Yad Vashem, I felt highly privileged to be guided by its senior research fellow, Dr. Irit Abramski. Her article expounding the educational philosophy of Yad Vashem will come out in a Chinese volume of international papers on Holocaust that I edited. Under her revelatory guidance, the new approach to presentation of exhibits in the new museum, which combines subjective and objective elements, is truly

persuasive and powerful. I expressed my sincere gratitude to Prof. Robert Wistrich, the Director of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism of Hebrew University, for his Center's donation of all of its publications to us. He gave me his recent books and happily agreed to write reference for our students who will apply for the Israel government scholarship to study in Israel.

Prof. Wayne Horowitz and I had lunch together frequently, discussing everything from Chinese food to his lecture about Jews in the ancient Babylon for his next visit to Nanjing. Wayne also invited me to Shabbat dinner in his house in Kefar Adumim, a Jewish settlement with a population half religious and half secular. While sitting together in the synagogue, he patiently explained to me the Yemenite, Russian, Sephardic and Ashkenazic elements in religious services. I was deeply impressed by their juxtaposition and the casual atmosphere in particular—young girls were freely walking about for example, which was quite different from the scene that I saw in an Orthodox synagogue in Ramat-Gan three years ago.

Jerusalem is also *the* place to observe the sharp polarization of Israeli society into the religious and the secular, a social phenomenon not easily observed in Tel Aviv. On my second day in Jerusalem, when I returned from my first trip to the downtown, all buses were suspended by a gay parade. The street of King David was full of sound and fury. The *haredim* (ultra-Orthodox), blocked outside of the street, shouted in English "Gay Pigs, Get AIDS"; while the people on the street responded with waving the billboards in Hebrew: "God hates hatred". On my last trip to the downtown on the eve of Yom Kippur, [I observed religious Jews sacrificing roosters as atonement for their sins] and a protesting secular crowd screaming "atone with money, not with death"...

Now, while sitting in my home in Nanjing, and typing this report, I cannot help reflecting on the question that my friend Prof. Samuel Heilman, who is always a driving force for me to think deeper, once asked of me when I finished my first stay in Israel: "What's your gain from your experience in Israel?" I understand he was trying to know whether there had been a sort of chemical reaction within me after my stay in Israel. To be honest, I did not know the answer, and the question has



lingered on my mind. But now, after spending three additional months in Israel, after having a basic grasp of its language, after visiting many people and places old and new, I think my answer to that question is clearer and clearer. I am more and more interested in Judaism as a living organism, not merely *the* Judaism reflected in stone. Judaism is becoming more and more tangible and concrete, and I am more and more curious, with my nose pressed to the glass looking in, to its colors, its smells, and its breath.

I am sincerely grateful for each and every one—particularly Al Dien and the Sino-Judaic Institute, William Fern, Wayne Horowitz, and Xu Xin—who made my stay in Jerusalem possible, and my study and life this past summer so fruitful and unforgettable. And I hope that I will have another opportunity to continue my learning of Modern Hebrew in the next summer in Jerusalem, since I really hope to grasp this language, in order to be equipped with a pair of sharp eyes for Judaism as a living organism.

*Dr. Lihong Song is Xu Xin's younger colleague at the Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies, Nanjing University. He may be reached at slihong512@hotmail.com*

## THE LOTUS AND THE MENORAH: UTK JUDAIC STUDIES GOES TO CHINA

by Gilya G. Schmidt

"Ni hao."—The morning air was brisk and cool on the campus of Shanghai University, as I wended my way along the canal, over the little bridge, past all the bicycles, towards the lotus pond at 6 AM. As I approached a group of five individuals, I noticed that they were practicing Tai Chi. Passing them on the sidewalk, something suddenly made me stop, and instead of continuing on, I joined them. I stayed a bit outside the group, so as not to disturb them, and carried out all of the same motions that they practiced to the music on an old tape recorder. They gave me an occasional glance, but otherwise did not seem bothered by my presence. What made this group most enticing was that each of them carried a large sword. I do not practice Tai Chi, although I enjoy watching my eighty-year old Chinese neighbor in the morning carry out his regimen of exercises on his lawn. This atmosphere was almost magical. I don't know

if it was the sight of the swords, or the magic of being in China, people moving so freely under the open skies, that put me under a spell. We worked our way through five or six different sets of exercises when another woman came along on a bicycle and stopped. She got off and joined us. With her she had two swords. She looked at me, and without hesitation handed me one of them. It was large and heavy, but I did not refuse it. Proudly I tried to continue, but it was much harder to turn and jump with an outstretched sword as an extension of my arm. It was also thrilling. For a moment I was propelled into the world of the Mandarin, not make-believe, but real. It is a moment I shall treasure forever.

One would think that China and Judaic Studies would make strange bedfellows, since there is not even one indigenous Jewish community in China today. I learned otherwise.

In the fall of 2006, Vice Chancellor Emeritus Phil Scheurer of the University of Tennessee arranged for me to attend a dinner with a delegation from Shanghai University with whom UTK has established a linkage that is meant to facilitate the regular exchange of faculty and students. He sat me, as Head of the Religious Studies



Department, next to then Vice Dean of the Graduate School at Shanghai University, Changgang Guo. Professor Guo is a scholar of Early Christianity in the Department of Religion at Shanghai University. We hit it off and conversed about academics. I told him that my specialization was Judaism. His eyes lit up. He had recently been approached to organize a conference on the Holocaust at Shanghai University. The project is an interesting one. Originating in Sweden, and organized by the London Centre for Jewish Culture, the International Task Force Seminar on Teach-

ing the Holocaust is supported by about 25 countries who financially support the undertaking and provide a representative to the seminar. A relatively new enterprise, the conference had previously been held in Nanjing and Kaifeng, and was planning to move to another Chinese city for 2008.

I mentioned to Professor Guo that my specialization is European Jewry, which includes the Holocaust, and that I teach the Holocaust at my university. He immediately offered to send me an invitation to the conference. I told him I'd be happy to attend and looked forward to his invitation.

Although I have colleagues who regularly travel to Asia for research and conferences, the idea of traveling to China was mind-boggling to me. I am used to traveling to Europe and to the Middle East. The only other out-of-the-ordinary locales I had ever visited were Japan and South Africa. But this was exciting. I was on research leave in spring 2007, and when I returned at the end of May 2007 I began in earnest, with the help of my assistant, to put together bibliographies on Jews and Judaism and on the Holocaust, and to write two lectures, all of which are posted on our Judaic Studies website at <http://web.utk.edu/~judaic>.

I also started to learn about China. I have long been a fan of Chinese art. One of the most amazing collections of Chinese art can be found in the Peabody Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. My great grandfather was an ivory carver, and although I have never tried to sculpt or carve anything, as a child I would spend hours looking at the exquisite treasures he created. The elaborate and majestic temples in the Belz collection in Memphis inspired the same awe and reverence for absolute beauty in me, just on a much grander scale. Likewise, no Chinatown in the United States is safe from me, be it New York, San Francisco, or Philadelphia. When I teach world religions, I regularly include sections on Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, so I was not totally ignorant of the culture, but I was poor on the history, with one exception, which did not come up in conversation. And I still find the various dynasties confusing. Being in China and discussing historical events and periods with the students—who are very serious teachers about their country's history—was a real bonus to my education.

In 1964, advocacy came from the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai that, in order to enforce foreign studies, a number of institutions specialized in studying neighboring and peripheral countries be put in place. It was in this spirit that the Institute of Southwest Asia Studies, the first of its kind in Yunnan, was established in May of that very year. For four decades, thanks to the efforts made by generations of the intelligentsia, with Yang Zhaojun, Shi Ziyu, Fang Dezhaoh and Zuo Wenhuan standing on the forefront, this institute has been able to exert considerable influence on Middle East studies on a word-wide basis with its marvelous academic achievements and talented and capable graduates.

As the key constituent of Yunnan University's School of International Relations, the Southwest Asia Studies Institute boasts a team of great expertise, competent to carry out research activities. To make up of the staff, there are 5 professors, 4 associate professors and 15 other specially invited research fellows. Subordinately under the institute are two specialized centers which are the Iran Studies Center and the Energy Research Center.

The institute covers a range of academic fields in Middle Eastern ethnicities, religion, culture, international relations in the Middle East, the relations between big powers and the Middle East, Islam, energy-related issues in the Middle East, terrorism, regional security and African affairs.

The nation-wide recognition of Professor Xiao Xian (director of the institute), as a leading expert for his accomplishments in the studies of the State of Israel, the Jewish people and Islam comes with international credit given to him for the same reasons. Apart from this, for good of the institute, Professor Yang Mansu, Professor Wu Lei and Professor Liu Hongwu are also internationally acknowledged for their fruition in the fields of the history of international relations in the Middle East, Middle-East energy and African affairs respectively.

Ever since the resumption of China's graduate education program, the institute enrolls graduate students for master's degree majoring in Middle-East affairs on an annual basis with a doctorate program being launched in 2000 for the same ori-

entations. At present, the institute is qualified and authorized to grant doctorate degree in such specialties as Middle-East history, Middle Eastern ethnology and international relations in the Middle East and master's degree in the aforesaid majors plus Middle Eastern energy economy. So far, some one hundred students (international students included) have earned their master's degree and a dozen more their doctorate degree. In 2006 alone, the institute admitted nearly 50 MA candidates and 6 PHD candidates.

Altogether, since 1990, the academics with the institute have had 25 academic works and over 500 theses published on Middle-East studies and they are now undertaking more than 10 research projects at national, provincial and ministerial levels academically.

The institute enjoys partnership with dozens of domestic and overseas establishments specialized in research on and teaching of Middle Eastern affairs to facilitate cooperation by means of joint research panels, exchange of scholars, co-sponsorship of academic seminars and resources sharing, all of which are aimed to boost Middle-East studies to a new high and to make our staff still more competent.

Over the past a few years, the institute stage a series of academic exchanges with its partners which includes 3 large-scale photograph shows entitled *Israel Today, Rabin Commemorated and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the State of Israel* cosponsored by the institute and the Israeli embassy in Beijing; the organization and reception of an investigation team made up of economic officials from African nations; a seminar under the subject of *the Middle East at the Turn of the 21st Century* held in Kunming in collaboration with the China Association of Middle-East Studies; the 2001 annual session that took place in Kunming under the auspices of the Chinese Association of International Relations; the international symposium with the title of Multi-national Asia: Peace, Cooperation and Sustainable Development jointly organized in Kunming by the institute and Asian Resources Foundation; a conference on religion, culture and ethnic development, a trio by this institute, the World Religion Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Chinese Philosophy Society based in Taiwan with participants from across the Tai-

wan Straits, to name only a few.

The library of the institute has available a collection of over 30,000 books and maintain regular subscriptions to over 100 Chinese and foreign periodicals and magazines, furnishing research and teaching with adequate information and data.

As the Middle East continues to be a focal part that catches world-wide attention and has an important influence on world peace and stability, this institute will further devote itself to the studies of Middle Eastern affairs so as to enhance international cooperation in this region and facilitate dialogs and integrity among the Middle Eastern states, nations and religious groups, thus making its unique contributions to world peace and stability.

## In Russia's Far East, a Jewish Revival

by David Holley  
excerpted from the *Los Angeles Times*, 7 August 2005

BIROBIDZHAN, Russia — The pioneers came in the late 1920s, lured to the uninhabited Siberian forests and mosquito-infested swamps by a mixture of communist ideological fervor and their dream of a Jewish homeland.

They pitched tents and planted farms. They were followed by thousands of others — cobblers and barbers, haberdashers and milliners — fleeing famine and the Nazis, hoping somehow to make a better life.

Josef Stalin encouraged settlers in the Jewish Autonomous Region to develop a community that would keep alive traditions such as the Yiddish language and Jewish songs and dances. But the religion itself — synagogues, holidays, formal worship — was stamped out.

"Stalin's idea was to get inside the fruit, take out its heart and leave only the peel. That's why there were signs in Yiddish, and there was a school in Yiddish, but as far as the religion [was] concerned, it simply wasn't there," said Rabbi Mordehai Sheiner, who moved to the region's capital, Birobidzhan, from Israel in 2002. "Maybe somewhere in a basement someone observed some rites."

But today, as religion makes a resurgence across Russia in the wake of the Soviet



the tribes would serve as a buffer zone between them and the Huns, and at the same time the settlers would be exposed to the Chinese culture. This was the first step of sinicization. Many, if not most of the domesticated tribes preferred the protection of the Chinese to the uncertainty and unpredictability of the Tatars. They migrated and settled in the area of Gansu Province of today. At the beginning of the second century CE, when the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) started to disintegrate, the Chinese abandoned the Western Regions and the settlers followed their journey unobstructed into the heartland of China. Thus the descendants of the isolated Jewish community, who left Babylon several centuries earlier and established a settlement at the outskirts of the Taklamakan Desert, found itself migrating again, this time into China proper. Based on the reading of the inscriptions, part of the community remained in the Gansu area while others dispersed to other regions. With the rising anti-Buddhist sentiments in the Tang Dynasty (609-960 CE), the Jews joined the mass exodus of religions out of China and went back to the Western Regions. Then, at the invitation of Emperor Taizong (976-998), the second Song emperor, the Jews returned to China and were bestowed land to build their place of worship [5] They remained in obscurity until 1605 when Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary, reported an encounter with a Chinese Jew in Beijing. Later missionaries also confirmed the existence of the community, but the strongest evidence of the legacy of the Jews in China was contained in the stone inscriptions.

Three of the four inscriptions were dedicated to the rebuilding of the temple. The community went to extraordinary lengths to preserve and restore the temple and one may wonder: what was so important about the temple to deserve such dedication? Reading the existing literature, the impression is that it was an ordinary synagogue: it functioned as a place of worship and community center. But when the text was juxtaposed with biblical history, it revealed that the temple played a far more important role. The Jews in China continued the biblical tradition that accorded the servicing of the temple to the Levites and *kohanim* (priests) who performed the rituals that were associated with the First Temple (960-586 BCE). The temple became the focal point of the community. Besides being used as a place of worship

and sacrifice, it was also a source of pride that provided the Jews a sense of belonging, and they attributed their long survival to the Temple. In the absence of the temple, the function of the *kohanim* would have ceased to exist and the community would have vanished without a trace. In addition, the temple work (*avodat kodesh*) supplemented the income of the *kohanim* who received a salary from local sources and from teaching. Each time the temple was destroyed, the *kohanim* lost this source of income and they could barely provide the necessary services to keep the community together. After each disaster, the community lost members and some of them dispersed never to return. To rectify this situation, the entire Jewish community in China contributed resources to rebuild the temple. Some contributed their salary; others contributed labor, while the *kohanim* contributed their skill to restore the scriptures...

In light of the new translation and readings of the inscriptions it is evident that the orphaned colony was Jewish in origin with roots that went back to the exile period. Does that mean that the Jews in Kaifeng today and their offspring are Jewish?...since marrying a foreign woman was not a biblical precept, the Chinese Jews continued the tradition that was widely practiced in exile. They followed a tradition that was pre-rabbinic, and they had never heard of any development in Judaism that was post-exilic. The *halakha* started to develop after Ezra returned to Jerusalem and did not become the Oral Law until several centuries later, by which time the Chinese Jews had already been isolated for generations. They had never heard of Mishna, Midrash, Talmud etc., such terms being unfamiliar to them. They were unaware of the split between Judaism and Christianity, still calling themselves Israelites. In a sense we have a pure sect of observant Jews that lived according to the precepts of the Torah and not the oral tradition. Circumstances forced them to adapt to the environment, and to maintain their beliefs, formulating their own *halakha* incorporating many of the local customs. They did the same thing that our sages did in Jerusalem, Babylon and the Diaspora: they developed a set of rules that accorded with the local conditions without compromising the sanctity of the Torah. They followed their own *halakha* for over 1500 years in isolation and, even as late as the 18th century, when the missionaries encountered the

Jews of Kaifeng, were still living by the same precepts. They never abandoned the ways of the Torah and never ceased to believe in Elohim; they built and rebuilt the temple, the symbol of their existence, and the Kaifeng Jews left the stone inscriptions so that future generations might know how to be a Jew in the sea of Chinese culture.

#### Notes

- [1] The last segment of the 1512 inscription contained the Chinese version of the Amida (see Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions, pp. 29-30)
- [2] Graetz, H. History of the Jews, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1902. (6 vols.)
- [3] Jian Bozan, Qin Han Shi [History of the Qin and Han] Taipei, Taiwan: Yunlong Publishing, 2003. (Copyright Beijing University Press, 1999) (Chinese).
- [4] The Western Regions (Xiyu in Chinese) is roughly the area of today's Xinjiang Autonomous Region in NW China. The Silk Route passed through it.
- [5] Some of the Chinese Jews still claim today that they had owned land in antiquity. The book, Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions traces that claim to the returning Jews and the imperial audience.

Tiberiu Weisz, is author of *The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions: The Legacy of the Jewish Community in Ancient China* (iUniverse, Inc. 2006) and the just published *The Covenant and the Mandate of Heaven: An In-depth Comparative Cultural Study of Judaism and China*. He may be reached at kaifengstones@yahoo.com

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### Southwest Asia / Middle East Studies at Yunnan University

Yunnan University's Middle East studies is traceable to the 1930s when a group of Yunnanese scholars, represented by Ma Jian and Na Zhong, who, after returning to Yunnan with what they had learned from Azhar University of Cairo, prepared and offered courses on the history, languages, culture, religion, geography and politics related to the Middle East, thus laying a solid foundation for the further development of this research field at Yunnan University.

As someone who never had a course in Chinese history, learning about Mao and the Long Walk in the 1930s and the 1937 Nanking massacre (while being in Nanjing on the anniversary) were powerful lessons.

The five-day conference in July, "Teaching the Holocaust," on the 15-year-old campus of Shanghai University, was a superb experience. It gave me an opportunity to teach and meet with faculty and students, 80 in all, from a number of Chinese universities. The Chinese educational institutions that participated included Shanghai University, the Shanghai Centre for Jewish Studies, Shanghai Teachers' University, the China Academy of Social Sciences, Yunnan University, Henan University, and Shandong University. All of the faculty from these institutions teach Judaic Studies and the Holocaust—none of them are Jewish—and the students were all graduate students who work with these scholars and will be future scholars in the field of Jewish Studies. The interaction was exhilarating as well as humbling. While I had recently become aware of a colleague at Nanjing University, Professor Xu Xin, who had founded a Center for Judaic Studies, I had no idea that there were these many Chinese scholars dedicated to the study of Jews and Judaism. The topics of conference papers ranged from the basics about Judaism to the basics about the Holocaust—why we teach the Holocaust, and how to teach the Holocaust—to the many refugees who found refuge in Shanghai from 1938-45, to German pre-history in the interwar years, and gut-wrenching survivor testimony by a Jewish child survivor from England. All of these history lessons were augmented by workshops in which students could ask questions and discuss issues. There was great interest in the traumatic consequences of the Holocaust to the survivors as well as the lessons learned by humanity. We learned about Jewish, Muslim, and Christian minorities in Chinese society, and about Jewish and Holocaust studies in China today. Communication went very well, thanks to two excellent translators who would translate from Chinese for us Westerners and from English for the Chinese participants. Many of the participants, students as well as faculty, spoke very good English. And Jerry gave a good part of his opening speech in Chinese, throwing in even phrases from the Shanghai dialect! Other Western scholars at the conference represented their respective countries for the

Task Force: Dr. Wolf Kaiser, Wannsee House in Berlin; Dr. Daniel Greene, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., and Irit Abramski, a child of a survivor, from Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. The organizers of this very large-scale event were Professor Changgang Guo, Shanghai University, and Jerold Gotel and Trudy Gold from the London Jewish Cultural Centre. A simultaneously heart-breaking as well as triumphant presentation of survivor testimony was made by Joanna Millan, from Great Britain. Joanna was only a year old when the kindergarten in Berlin where she stayed while her mother worked was raided. She was deported to Theresienstadt, where she was one of about 100 children out of 10,000 who survived.

Some Chinese faculty and students travel to Israel for various lengths of time to learn Hebrew. The students even take on Hebrew names. My student guide in Nanjing was a young woman named Ahava. In some instances, English can easily be skipped in conversation in favor of Hebrew. In fact, Dr. Zhong Zhiqing, from the China Academy of Social Sciences, introduced herself to me in Hebrew. She had spent time at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva and worked with Israeli poet Amos Oz. Recently she translated his very complicated and detailed autobiography into Chinese. Oz was to visit China in August of 2007.

Student contact was excellent. Five days with the same group of individuals gave me a chance to meet many of the students more than in passing. I got a sense of the legendary European dedication of students to their professors—which I have always envied just a wee bit—when students would find every opportunity to engage me in conversation about some aspects of research in which they were involved or some question on their mind. While taking a walk on the beautiful campus of Shanghai University, "Jim" engaged me—no, grilled me—on American pluralism. How could the American president, she wanted to know, claim to support pluralism when he quoted the Bible in official speeches. This led to a very involved history lesson about the origins of our country and the Constitution, which she, of course, knew too. That's why she asked the question. Although male and female students quite openly asked me many questions, female students clearly saw me as a role model. When we were taken on

a tour of what used to be the Jewish quarter in Shanghai, one student, "Nancy," sat down next to me. She was interested in discussing career choices. She wanted to know how I had gotten where I was, as a woman. How did I know what decisions to make, what paths to take, so that I would succeed. This conversation took all afternoon—in between we got on and off the bus—and had much to do with self-knowledge. A third student was writing a paper on American synagogues. He had many questions. It is a difficult subject to research in China, because the many books on synagogues in the West are not available. I gave him the names of great American synagogues like Touro in Providence, R.I. and Ahavat Achim in Atlanta and told him to look up their websites, but I wasn't sure that he had access to any of the Internet sites I mentioned because I don't have a sense of how open access to the Internet is in China. In addition, our communications in English often needed circumnavigation of words that were unfamiliar. Other topics included the state of Israel, anti-Semitism, the Nanking Massacre and the Holocaust.

"Jewel" and "Gordon," Dr. Guo's assistants for the conference, were models of dedication to the cause. In spite of their very long hours, they took the time to help all of us with whatever we needed, especially technical support, and checking our email at midnight — always with a smile. I became very fond of them and endeavor to keep our contact alive. When the conference was over, Jewel gave me the grand tour of the Yu Gardens which date from the Ming Dynasty and Old Shanghai, including a delicious noodle lunch (a bit of a challenge to eat with chopsticks) and flower tea. She also drew me a most elaborate map when I left the campus for good—so I would not get lost—a work of art with its maze of streets and English and Chinese names.

The openness and kindness of students and colleagues was touching and disarming, activating the Jewish mother in me. To my surprise, they mothered me right back, fulfilling my every wish before I could even utter it as such. I didn't realize that Shanghai University (perhaps all Chinese universities?) does not sell T-shirts and caps in the university store. When I merely inquired where I could buy one, a T-shirt and cap magically appeared with apologies because they had been manufactured for a particular school.



So why all this interest in Judaic Studies in a country where there is no living indigenous community today? There is no easy or simple answer. I found it most interesting that this nation with a population of nearly a billion looks up to the Jewish people, whose worldwide population is smaller than the population of Shanghai. It appears that the root of the curiosity is not far removed from the Dalai Lama's question of how the Jewish people have managed to survive for two thousand years in exile. Although the Chinese question doesn't have to do with exile, it does have to do with minority status and basic values. As near as I could tell, some Chinese admire the Jewish people because of our integrity. With everything Jews have had to suffer – including the Holocaust – why haven't we lost our moral compass? This was a direct question to me during the conference. I see in this curiosity a yearning for some of the traditional values that were swept away with the Cultural Revolution. The values are basic—a love for family, including life cycle events, childrearing practices, and respect for the elders; pride in one's identity, even if a minority in all countries but Israel; the love for and retention of ancient traditions and rituals, ethnic music and poetry, and a moral basis in the laws of the Torah. One student asked, "How did Jews regain their moral values after the Holocaust?" The answer is, of course, that there was a remnant, survivors, who continued the tradition, based on the surviving ancient texts and commentaries that teach us how. It was with considerable joy and some pride that I answered their many questions during the seminars we conducted. A Chinese initiative to build character in young Chinese is the "Green Long March" to save the environment.

One of the highlights of the trip was a meeting with my counterpart at Nanjing University, Professor Xu Xin, who not only started a Center for Jewish Studies there in 1992—the year in which China recognized Israel, and a year before I started our Judaic Studies Program here at UT—but whose center is named after major donors Diane and Guilford Glazer, some of the first big donors to my endowed chair here at UT as well. Professor Xu Xin has worked tirelessly to raise money for scholarships so that Chinese students can study in Israel, and he regularly brings Israeli scholars to join his faculty in Nanjing. The physical space on the eighth floor of the Administration Building is very impressive, with a library that is still in

need of expanding and a study area for students, a large multi-purpose conference room with conference table and chairs, an exhibition of Judaica, and an Ark with a Torah. The director's office is large and spacious and can also be used for small meetings. I owe Professor Xu Xin many thanks not only for a warm collegial relationship, on which I hope we can build in the future, but for a wonderful evening with the famous Chinese Acrobats in Shanghai.

The conference, though central, was augmented by other profound impressions both cultural and technological. One cannot help but be impressed by the engineering marvels of the maze of highways in Shanghai, the tremendous skyscrapers, and of course the Champs Elysees or Fifth Avenue of Shanghai, the elegant and vibrant Bund, the bold architecture, the exquisite art in floor and ceiling mosaics, pottery, sculptures, the delicate yet powerful layout of the many gardens, and the beauty of the pagodas and temples; the challenge of food for a Jew; the great variety of teas; the bargaining over a purchase; the "backwards" escalators that go up on the left and down on the right; the hunt for a western-style toilet, the pitiful hovels of the poor next to western-style luxury hotels; the former "ghetto," or neighborhood of stateless refugees in Shanghai; the giant-size book stores, the high-speed bullet train, the city wall of Nanjing, and the silk factory in Suzhou. The torrential downpours of the summer rains and the instant accumulation of nearly knee-deep water are also impressive. The immensity of Shanghai gave me an idea of the size of the country, and why it takes a whole day to get from Beijing to Shanghai by train. No, I did not see the famous clay soldiers at Siam or take a boat ride on the Yangtze River, but there is always next time.

This summer – 2008 – I plan to return to China. Our Chinese colleagues are very much interested in continuing and expanding the relationship between our institutions, not just in Judaic studies, but in religious studies as well. For the future, it is my hope that some of my colleagues in Judaic Studies and Religious Studies will also be able to participate in the exchange. In addition to Shanghai University and Nanjing University, I also hope to visit Henan University in Kaifeng, where the oldest and longest-lasting Jewish community was located. I'll wait to visit Beijing University until after this summer's Olympics.

The various Judaic Studies programs also have a need for books on Judaism. In November and December we held book drives at the Arnstein Jewish Community Center which yielded about six large boxes of books. We will divide them and send them to some of the Judaic Studies Programs in China that expressed a need.

The China trip was one of the most profound learning experiences of my professional life, and I look forward to nurturing the relationships I established and creating new friendships in the future. "Shie, shie" to my Chinese colleagues and students for their exemplary hospitality and interest in learning about Judaism, and my gratitude to the University of Tennessee, which supported this trip with a SARIF travel grant, to the Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies for additional funding, and to Guilford and Diane Glazer for their generous donation in support of this undertaking.

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#### IN MEMORIAM MORRIS FEDER 1917-2008

Morris Feder passed away on January 10, 2008 in New York at the age of 90. Born in Czechoslovakia in 1917, he was in Shanghai on business for the shoe company Bata when World War II began, and he got stuck there.

Feder's first job in Shanghai was as a policeman with the Shanghai Municipal Police. He worked in the office of the Bureau of Stateless Refugees Affairs, interpreting between the refugees and Ghoya. He held that job from 1942 until Ghoya was replaced by Harada in 1944. After the war, Feder worked for UNRRA and the Joint, helping refugees obtain the necessary affidavits and documents to emigrate to the U.S. and other countries. He left for the U.S. himself in 1947.

In the U.S., Morris Feder began as a longshoreman and rose to a distinguished career in the maritime industry. In 1991, he retired as Executive Vice President and Director for the Maritime Overseas Corporation, one of the largest U.S. owned shipping companies.

#### The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions Revisited

by Tiberiu Weisz  
excerpted from Covenant, Vol 1, #3 (October 2007)

What are the Kaifeng stone inscriptions and why are they important? Why the need for a new translation?...Differences of opinion would not justify such an endeavor, but when inaccuracies and mistranslation of characters went undetected for almost a century, that prompted me to take a closer look at the Chinese text. I came upon those errors while researching my book on a comparative cultural study of Judaism and China...This prompted me to re-examine the stone inscriptions with a Jewish and Chinese historical context in mind. To my disappointment, neither Western nor Chinese literature published on the Chinese Jews correlated the inscriptions to any historical context, let alone in to a Jewish context. I asked myself, why not? The obvious reason could be that the original text did not contain history, and the uninterrupted and unpunctuated text left us a story that we did not understand. Some of the style was standard Chinese but some extended segments contained irregular grammatical structures that appeared completely meaningless and incomprehensible. Could it be that those segments held the key to the inscriptions? They puzzled researchers and went unexplained until now.

To start with, I broke the Chinese text into individual phrases and sentences and set each phrase on a new line. The key was in the details and I kept an open mind to every possibility. The text contained many parallel structures and incomplete quotes that I found to be traceable. As I traced those quotes to their source, I started to get a picture that was very different from any previously translated texts. The 1489 inscriptions, for instance, revealed three different styles that I attributed to three different composers. I made a note of this in the introductory chapter on the "Testimony of the Inscriptions" (p. xix) in my book *The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions*. Then the style of the 1512 inscription reminded me of the writing of some Chinese neo-Confucians that depicted a tapestry of daily life in China. But the real revelation came when I realized that the last segment of the 1512 inscription resembled a Hebrew prayer. This particular segment puzzled many scholars because it contained a peculiar structure that

hardly related to anything. It portrayed a vision and since it invoked the name of Heaven, I realized that it was a prayer. And indeed when I juxtaposed it with the Hebrew prayer book, I realized that it was the Chinese version of the *Amida*, a prayer that the Chinese Jews had memorized and, as time passed, composed their own version. Nevertheless it was the Eighteen Benedictions.

This information also shed some light on the antiquity of the Jews in China: the text emulated a pre-Yavneh version composed in exile by members of the Great Assembly (*Knesset Hagdola* ca. 500-300 BCE). It did not include the *birkat haminim* (benediction against the heretics) or the nineteenth benediction which was added later, in the first century CE. I also realized that the English language compounded the problem. The Chinese Jews did not know English or any other Western languages, and they handed down the prayer through oral tradition in the original Hebrew. As time passed they remembered less of the Hebrew but still remembered the spirit of the *Amida* and composed a Chinese version. The Chinese Jews added the text of the prayers to remind future generations of their tradition [1].

The 1663a inscription confirmed my findings. It was composed by a non-Jew who described either what he had seen or what he had been told by his Jewish neighbors. Like the previous inscriptions, the 1663a stele described the rituals but, unlike the other stele, did not repeat the actual words of the prayers. The reason: the composer was a bystander who neither knew the prayers nor understood them. He jotted down his observations and noted that the Jews prayed three times a day and that was "when man was to see Heaven" What he added after this observation was interesting. He recapped what he had heard the Jews say or chant at the conclusion of the ceremonies and when I juxtaposed this with the Hebrew text, I realized that it was the pronouncement of the *birkat hakohanim* [Priestly Blessing]. That custom was prevalent during the Temple periods when the *kohen hagdol* [high priest] performed the sacrificial rites. Then he would come down from the altar and, raising his hands over the whole assembly of Israel, pronounce the Priestly Blessing or the *birkat hakohanim* (Numbers 6:24-26). Though the words in the inscriptions were Confucian in nature, the struc-

ture and the intent coincided with the biblical Hebrew version. Another interesting aspect of this inscription was the composer's descriptions of some of the practices of the Jews that corresponded to similar practices in China. He often quoted from Chinese literature to show that the Jews practiced something that was not too different from the Chinese. Inadvertently, he created the first comparative study of Judaism and China.

Long on rites and prayers and short on history, the inscriptions seemed to be of little historical significance. None of them elaborated on the past or on how and when the Jews settled in China. The little they did say about their past was hard to corroborate and their origin was shrouded in mystery. Even more puzzling was the fact that they mentioned an audience with a Song emperor (960-1279) without further explanation. This sentence became critical in recreating the history of the community, and unfortunately, a mistranslation diverted the attention of scholars who then built on the incorrect translation.

Once I corrected the translation, the text displayed evidence of the roots of the community that could be traced to antiquity and their history could be corroborated by both biblical and Chinese sources. After captivity and exile, a group of Levites and *kohanim* [priests] left Babylon and wandered eastwards [2] first heading toward India where they stayed for several generations. Later, after several more generations, the descendants continued their journey northwards where they came across a place that answered a biblical description (Psalms 104:8-10). Being devout believers, they saw a biblical prophecy come true. They settled there and lived in isolation for several more generations until they were accidentally discovered by a Chinese military expedition in 108 BCE [3]. They would have stayed anonymous had not General Li Guangli left us a sentence describing their appearance as strange. That description was deemed insignificant in the massive amount of Chinese annals and very few scholars paid any attention to it. But from a biblical point of view that description depicted the (distinguished) headdress of observant Jews who lived by the precepts of the Torah. When the Chinese army withdrew from the Western Regions [4], they encouraged the more domesticated tribes to come and live under the protection of the Chinese administration. For China this was a policy of pacification,