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- 1) The study of the ancient Jewish community of Kaifeng and assisting its descendents as appropriate.
- 2) The study of Jewish life in Shanghai, Harbin, Tianjin and elsewhere in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- 3) The support of Jewish studies programs in China.
- 4) The study of cultural intersections between Chinese and Jews, for example adoptions, literature, diasporas, etc.
- 5) The study of Sino-Israeli relations.
- 6) To cooperate with other groups whose interests lie in Sinitic and Judaic matters.

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Points East

THE SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE 中國猶太研究院 מכון סיני יהודי

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JEWISH MOMS, CHINESE DAUGHTERS

by Merri Rosenberg
excerpted from *Lilith*, Spring 2006

Today, "you're shocked when you see an Asian child with an Asian parent," observes Miriam Hipsh about her former neighborhood on New York's Upper West Side. Hipsh is a 59-year-old writer and the founder of a dating web site for the 50-plus set; she adopted her daughter, WuQing, 11 years ago.

Hipsh's experience...reflect the convergence of two trends: older Jewish women, some of whom have spent decades building up careers, who recognize that they want to experience motherhood, and China's "one child only" social policy, which resulted in the large-scale abandonment of baby girls in orphanages. The resulting phenomenon—of single Jewish women adopting Chinese daughters—has begun to transform the Jewish community. In pre-schools, day schools and after-school religious programs around the country, Asian girls are absorbing Jewish traditions through songs, history lessons and prayers, and learning the davening skills that will enable them to take their place on the bima. And at the same time, their conscientious Jewish mothers, eager to have their daughters embrace both their Jewish and Asian heritage, have enrolled them in Chinese language classes, or Chinese dance, art and music programs, to develop their girls' diverse identities.

Consider WuQing Hipsh, now 12, who is a product of Manhattan's Stephen Wise synagogue nursery school and pre-K program, as well as a veteran of the Hebrew school at B'nai Jeshurun. (Like most of the Chinese daughters adopted by Jews, WuQing was formally converted to Judaism as a baby.) Since 2003, Hipsh and WuQing have lived in East Hampton, New York, where WuQing (whose Hebrew name, Devorah Sarah, is in memory of Hipsh's late mother, Dorothy), studies Chinese in her middle school and attends Hebrew school locally. She is preparing for her bat mitzvah next year.

"We're at Adas Yisroel, a very small congregation in Sag Harbor that feels like a community," says Hipsh. "They welcome her. She's much loved by the synagogue. It feels wonderful."

However statistically small this phenomenon of Jewish single mothers with adopted Chinese daughters may be in the greater demographic picture, it has transformed the Jewish communal landscape in ways that weren't even imagined when these founding mothers first ventured to China little more than a decade ago...

(continued on page 6)

KEEPING THE FAITH

by Kathy Seal
excerpted from *Forward*, May 18, 2011

San Francisco — After her husband stepped on the glass, and she survived the chair dance at their wedding without falling off, Emily Brecher changed into a traditional red Chinese dress. "Then my husband and I knelt down before my parents and my Jewish in-laws at the tea ceremony," Brecher recalled. "The dim sum hors d'oeuvres were a huge hit."

It's an increasingly familiar story: Asian-Jewish weddings creating families that celebrate Rosh Hashanah and the Lunar New Year and bring up their children on kugel and kimchi.

But now there's a surprising twist to the story: A new study suggests that, overwhelmingly, Asian-Jewish couples are raising their children Jewish. That's what sociologists Noah Leavitt and Helen Kim found when they spent two years interviewing 37 Asian-Jewish couples in New York City, Philadelphia and California.

There are important caveats to their study. First and foremost, it is suggestive rather than conclusive. The small sample size was designed to allow each couple to be interviewed in great depth, making this a qualitative rather than a quantitative study. But nearly every couple interviewed displayed at least half of eight religious or cultural criteria the couple assembled as their index for measuring the depth and nature of a Jewish upbringing.

The researchers' criteria included circumcision for boys; weekly family celebrations of the Sabbath, including such activities as baking, house decorating and having a formal Sabbath family meal; membership at a synagogue or participation in synagogue-based activities, and Hebrew school attendance.

Of the 37 couples the researchers studied, all "are raising children with some element of Judaism as a framework for their childhood," Leavitt wrote in an e-mail to the *Forward*. "None were raising their children in any religion other than Judaism." Only "one or two" are bringing up their children with Judaism and another religion, he wrote.

That compares with the 2001 National Jewish Population Survey's findings that around one-third of the children in households where only one of the two spouses is Jewish are being raised Jewish and/or with a Jewish identity.

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SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	179
China	21
Israel	15
Canada	14
England	7
Australia	4
Germany	2
Japan	2
South Africa	2
Indonesia	1
Switzerland	1
Taiwan	1

TOTAL: _____
 249

FROM THE EDITOR

Summer has arrived here in the northern hemisphere, everywhere that is except here in Seattle, where the weather hovers at a balmy 18°C/65°F and remains cloudy. That however is your good fortune because, instead of lolling around, I have been indoors and focused on getting *Points East* out in a timely manner.

This issue kicks off with two fascinating—and possibly controversial—articles on interfaith/interethnic families with a Jewish/Asian twist. Together they raise a challenge to the perennial question of who, or rather what, is a Jew.

We began as a family (Abraham and Sarah's; Isaac and Rebecca's), grew into a tribal association (the Children of Israel/Jacob); developed into a nation or two (Judah and Israel, later Judaea); morphed into a nation, partially in exile; evolved into an ethnically diverse nation-in-exile living in the Diaspora; changed by some into a religious group (and able to be citizens of the countries in which they lived); changed back by some into a national group (now with profound ethnic and cultural differences) yearning to return to Zion; and then, for some, willing our way into a modern nation-state (Israel). That's quite a saga, so it's no wonder many Jews—and a good many other folk—are so confused about the nature of Jewish identity.

Today, we are challenged by a changing world to re-examine what it means to be a Jew. Are adopted Asian children really Jews? Are the Kaifeng descendants, who have followed patrilinear Jewish lineage for centuries? Are European-descended Jews "more Jewish" than those hailing from Africa or Asia? What will "Jewish" look like after several generations of ethnic mixing in Israel? And what, in the end, does it matter if our Jewish tent is open wider or remains semi-closed? I have lots of questions and no answers.

Anson Laytner

Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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Letters to the Editor and articles for *Points East* may be sent to:

Preferred Form:
e-mail: Laytner@msn.com

or to: Rabbi Anson Laytner
 1823 East Prospect St.
 Seattle, WA 98112-3307

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Rabbi Anson Laytner
1823 East Prospect St.
Seattle WA 98112-3307

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"We are a tiny, miniscule community, but what keeps us together is a special bond. We are one family, we meet, we talk, we share with each other," says Shulamith, Malekar's daughter, minutes after her father offers a blessing for the daughter of a 94-year-old woman he knows from Kolkata.

After the 2008 Mumbai attacks, in which six Jews were kidnapped and killed by militants who had stormed a Jewish outreach center, the government posted ten paramilitary soldiers outside the tiny Delhi synagogue, a precaution repeated following the killing of Osama bin Laden this month. The targeted attack was an isolated incident in a country that has seen bloody conflicts between Hindus, which account for over 80 percent of the population, Muslims and Sikhs since independence from Britain in 1947...

India's 1951 census listed 35,000 Jews, mostly living in or around the commercial hub of Mumbai, where 4,000 live today, and where the city's biggest fishing docks bear the name of the Sassoon family, the country's most famous Jewish residents.

Malekar, a qualified attorney and former deputy secretary of the National Human Rights Commission, participates in national memorial services for independence movement leader Mahatma Gandhi and the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He was invited to deliver Jewish prayers at the burial services of former Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi, and was part of an interfaith prayer service during the funeral of popular guru Sathya Sai Baba last month.

"Israel is in my heart, but India is in my blood," says Malekar, who recounts a legend of a shipwreck in the 4th century that landed seven families on the shores of Mumbai. "We have survived here this long," says Elizabeth, a regular at the New Delhi synagogue. "Somebody will always be here."

Elad Weingrod Writes for Israeli and Chinese Kids

excerpted from *Jewish Times Asia*, July/August 2010

Elad Weingrod lives in Tel Aviv and, before publishing his first children's book

Betach Yesh Yeled, he was a journalist for 10 years. "I started writing for kids because I always used to write more than journalism, I wrote stories and songs. A few years ago I found a notebook that I wrote in when I was in the army," said Weingrod... "I wanted to keep writing this stuff for kids, not just children's songs but songs about childhood."

Weingrod brought his songs to Agam Publishing House, which specialises in children's books, and they signed him to a two-book publishing deal. His first book *Betach Yesh Yeled* is based on one of his songs, "which is about this Israeli boy who imagines his twin or his soulmate in China. It was fascinating to me to think of someone that had the same thoughts and ideas and understanding about the world and I thought they get up with me in the morning and go to school, but across the sea. I think that after I published it I understood that the message was for children and adults alike; we can look differently and speak differently but the basics are the same."

Weingrod and the publisher decided to have the story, which was originally written in Hebrew, translated into Chinese, so the book would have both the Hebrew and the Chinese. Weingrod found Professor Zhang Ping, the head of the Chinese studies department at Tel Aviv University, who agreed to translate the book. Weingrod never thought Chinese people could be interested in the book, but realised that having both languages made the impact of the book stronger.

Weingrod met Tamar Kalner Buki through the publisher, and she illustrated the book. "I think she did an excellent job," he said. The book was released last September and since then it has received many great reviews from critics.

Weingrod got a call from Yaara Sharon, the Cultural and Academic Affairs Attaché for the Israeli Embassy in Beijing. "I didn't know her, but she told me someone had given her the book and she was very enthusiastic about it. She asked me to come to China, promote the book there, go to schools and show the Chinese a book that says that we are very much alike."

During the end of June and beginning of July, Weingrod visited schools and kindergartens in Beijing and Shanghai.

He read the book in Hebrew and members of the Beijing Embassy read in Chinese. Weingrod brought the children drawings from a second grade class in Israel. "The kids were very excited to get them. These kids are getting an understanding (through the book) that here is a tiny country that has children just like them. The children are amazing, cute, curious and they want to know and learn. They ask brilliant questions that border on being philosophical."

For Sharon, who accompanied Weingrod, the experience was amazing. "At the Embassy we are engaged in many projects that introduce Israeli culture to Chinese audiences, and this idea was one of many cultural ventures that we initiate in order to build bridges between peoples. I have to say though that this audience was special to me — clearly the youngest audience we have ever interacted with."

A Chinese goes to a Jewish store to buy black bras size 38.

The Jew, known for his skills as a businessman, says that black bras are rare and that he is finding it's very difficult to buy them from his suppliers. Therefore he has to charge \$50.00 for them.

The Chinese buys 25 pairs.

He returns a few days later and this time orders fifty. The Jew tells him that they have become even harder to get and charges him \$60.00 each.

The Chinese returns a month later and buys the Jew's remaining stock of 50, and this time for \$75.00 each.

The Jew is somewhat puzzled by the large demand for black bras and asks the Chinese, "Please tell me what do you do with all these black bras?"

The Chinese answers: "I cut them in half and sell the halves as kippot (skull caps) to the Jews for \$200.00 each".

The fascination with Judaism does not end there. Media outlets regularly run newspapers columns on “Jewish education”, weekly radio features, and television documentaries, all of them showing Jews in a glowing light.

But although average Koreans can boast that their bookshelves hold at least one or two copies of the Talmud, to think of Korea as a hotbed of latent Judaism would be wrong. The motivation is less to do with religion and more to do with aspiration. Korean parents value schooling above all else. Parents send their children to after-school crammers until midnight and will spend their last penny on tutors and extra lessons. And, shy of good role models on the quest to securing academic success for their offspring, mothers almost unerringly turn to the Jews for inspiration...

Nonetheless, for a small number of Koreans, this love of Jewishness does translate into religious observance, even though, with no synagogues and no access to kosher food, they encounter almost insurmountable problems in leading a Jewish life.

One wannabe Jew, 38-year-old Park Yohan, has handed in his notice at an investment bank to take the plunge into Judaism. He says he will go to New York, where he knows nobody, has no job prospects, just to follow his dream of Orthodox conversion...

Jewish observance in Seoul is almost entirely centred on Friday night services in the back of a Christian chapel on a US Army base. Every week, the tiny congregation of ex-pats and locals flip pews containing hymns books and New Testaments to face a pokey little ark for prayers. At the end of the night, everything gets put back in place for Friday night Mass. If there was not a small Ner Tamid [eternal light] above the ark, you really would mistake it for a cupboard.

Most of the regular and long-serving members of the congregation are non-Jewish Koreans - civil servants, doctors

and a politician from the ruling party, who is currently squeezing in his attendance between bouts of campaigning for local elections. They have no wish to convert but they take their interest in Judaism seriously. Most boast impressive collections of Judaica and read Hebrew fluently.

Among their number is a living legend of Korean Jewry, Abraham Cha. One of the few Koreans who have actually converted, he is a regular fixture at the US Army base services.

An old man now, he still cuts a memorable figure. He has a wild beard, payot, tzitzit protruding proudly, and maintains an unrivalled personal library of Jewish books from around the world, which he has painstakingly collected.

Cha says he had to give up everything to become an observant Jew in Korea.

“My family doesn’t speak to me anymore, I had to divorce my wife. I even had to stop working because they wouldn’t give me the day off on Shabbat or on Jewish holidays. My bosses couldn’t conceive what it meant to be Jewish.”

Although precisely what it involves to be a Jew eludes most Koreans, anti-Jewish feeling is almost unthinkable in this part of the world.

Says Seoul resident Naomi Zaslow, “If you refuse a plate of pork ribs here, people will be dumbfounded. If you tell them it’s because you’re Jewish, they’ll unfailingly look impressed and say: ‘Oh, you must be very clever’.”

Delhi’s Last Ten Jewish Families Guard an Ancient Heritage

by Henry Foy
excerpted from *Reuters Life!*, May 23, 2011

NEW DELHI - In the capital of one of the world’s most religiously-diverse countries, a Rabbi who has never been ordained bends ancient customs, ensuring

New Delhi’s ten Jewish families a place to worship.

Unlike most synagogues, there is no separation of men and women as Jewish-born worshippers, converts and followers of other faiths chant Psalms in perfect Hebrew, with doors thrown open to all. The service leader never asks attendees what religion they follow, and envisions his daughter becoming India’s first female rabbi.

“Being a small community, we cannot be so rigid, so orthodox,” says Ezekiel Isaac Malekar, honorary secretary of the synagogue whose unpaid job of thirty years has overlooked religious convention to keep this tiny group together. “Our openness, our liberal approach is what allows us to survive. For reading the Torah, you must require ten men, a minyan. But I made radical changes, because why should we discriminate between women and men? I count the women.”

In the small Judah Hyam Synagogue, tucked between one of the city’s most popular markets and most expensive hotels, the tight community, as inconspicuous as the small black plaque outside, gathers every Friday to bring in Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath.

The synagogue and its adjoining cemetery, gifted to Delhi’s Jews by the Indian government in 1956, is one of over 30 in India, where Jews first arrived 2,000 years ago but account for barely 5,000 people in a population exceeding 1.2 billion.

Lieutenant General J.F.R. Jacob, a former governor of Punjab and Goa and the synagogue’s President, leads the service alongside a Canadian tourist for a dozen worshippers who have travelled up to 30 kilometers (19 miles) across the city. Some of the small crowd have been coming to the small, brightly-lit synagogue for decades, and say the weekly services are crucial in binding together the city’s Jewish families.

During the High Holidays, the synagogue’s sparse but dedicated crowd is substantially bolstered by Israeli diplomats and other Jewish expatriates, while up to 10,000 international travelers visit during India’s busy winter tourist period.

IN THE FIELD

♦ A Shanghai Love Story

Faith Goldman reports that “Schindler’s List” producer Branko Lustig is producing a movie about Jewish refugees in Shanghai during the Second World War. With an investment of 30 to 45 million U. S. Dollars, “The Melanie Violin”, a joint work of China and America, will be filmed by the end of this year. The movie, which is an adaptation of a novel written by Chinese American writer He Ning, tells stories about a Jewish violinist who fled to Shanghai and fell in love with a Shanghainese woman.

♦ Nanjing U Symposium

SJI Advisory Board member Gustavo D. Perednik will be participating in Nanjing University’s International Symposium on Monotheism and Postmodernism, June 14-17.

TO THE EDITOR

Dear Rabbi Laytner,

I am a Canadian Jew who will be visiting China this summer.

I am looking for information about my father’s family – The Zimmerman family, who emigrated from Vladivostok in Russia to Harbin, Qingdao and Shanghai at the beginning of the 1900s. Apparently they were involved with imports and exports.

I am looking for any records about my family, particularly Arther Zimmerman, and his parents – Isaac and Sarah who lived in Harbin and Shanghai. Do you know where I could find information or records about them?

I would even be interested in hiring someone, perhaps a student, to do some research about my family.

Many thanks,
Aviva Zimmerman
Calgary, Canada
avivazimmerman@gmail.com

Dear Rabbi Laytner,

I have started looking into the life of Reuvim Traub, possibly my maternal grandmother’s half brother, who lived in Harbin from before WW1 until at least 1923.

I know this because I have a letter he sent in 1923 to his father who lived in Cape Town, South Africa, typed in Russian, which we had translated recently. Having been estranged from his father, it gives a detailed account of his unhappy life in Harbin following the war and the Russian Revolution. He speaks of his jewellery and watch shop at 21 China St and his current address was 30 Polevaya St.

I tracked your organisation through the internet and was wondering if this letter would be of value to you (I can send you a scanned copy) and also whether I could find out more about him and Harbin during the beginning of the 20th century... I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Phyllis Sakinofsky
3/5-7 Moira Crescent, Coogee, NSW
2034 AUSTRALIA
+612 9664 7612 (home) or +61406
164 034 (cell)
phyllsak@bigpond.com

Dear Rabbi Laytner,

Part of my family came to Shanghai in the 1800s (I believe) via Siberia from Poland. They lived in Bubbling Wells Road (now West Nanjing Road) and appear in the 1939 telephone directory (plus an advert for their import services).

I wonder if you ever come across anything about Baumzweiger or Baumzvieger and/or can you suggest where I might seek further information?

Regards,

Dr. Stephen Ankier (London- UK)
sia@medreslaw.com

Dear Rabbi Laytner,

When reading about Morris A Cohen, I came across your website.

Morris Cohen was my late husband’s great uncle on his maternal side. He told me a bit about him, but I am interested to get to know more about this remote family member. I ordered Daniel Levy’s book about Two Gun Cohen and I’m looking forward to read it.

Since I live in England for a while I would like to visit his grave in Manchester but I can’t find it anywhere on any website. When I read the Wiki-page about Morris Cohen I saw a reverence to an article by Rena Krasno about the tombstone. Is it possible to send that article to me please?

Kindest regards

Hennie Wallace-Ebbers
h.a.wallace@hotmail.com

Dear Rabbi Laytner,

I am looking for an Uncle from Russia who moved to Harbin, China between 1895 – 1905. His name was Israel Weiss or Israel Veitz. He married a Chinese woman.

Any help would be appreciated. Who would I contact to help me?

Thank you in advance.

Robert B. Wallace
Scottsdale, Arizona 85260
480-998-8861
az.sun@mindspring.com

A Vision of China Israel Academic Interchange

by Carice Witte
reprinted from *Asian Jewish Life*, May 2011

In early 2010, I met Zhang Yangjia, a graduate student in economics from Nanjing University who was preparing a presentation for a class on the development of the Israeli economy since the state’s beginnings in 1948. She wanted to learn how this small, distant country, born of seemingly nothing, had quickly developed to have first-rate welfare, healthcare, education, and financial institutions. She wanted to place the statistics and numbers in their proper context to understand this apparent miracle. She was thirsty for knowledge, but even

with the university library and internet research tools at her disposal, her ability to research was limited due to sparse availability of books, publications and articles in Chinese. My personal inquiries over the years have revealed that indeed, into 2010, there remains a dearth of reliable Chinese language source material on Israel and the Jewish people.

Yangjia is part of a growing trend of young Chinese academics and business people professionals who desire to learn more about the Middle East in general and Israel in particular. As China becomes a more active player in Middle East affairs, starting with energy negotiations and expanding to regional stability and other diplomatic issues, Chinese academics and scholars have recognized the prerogative of enhancing their knowledge of Israel. The recent publication in Chinese of Dan Senor and Saul Singer's best-selling book *Startup Nation* then sparked the curiosity of China's entrepreneurial-minded community. Would-be innovators seem eager to learn how a country lacking natural resources and hampered by a 63-year-long ongoing conflict with many of its neighbors could achieve such high levels of success.

Since 1985 the number of Chinese institutions invested in teaching Jewish studies has steadily grown. Today in China there are nine centers dedicated to Jewish studies, hosting classes on Hebrew language, Talmudic studies and Rabbinic literature. Of these, only one, the Center of Jewish Studies Shanghai, touches on matters pertaining to the state of Israel. Today there are about 150 Chinese students studying in Israeli universities, a number which is projected to grow significantly over the next few years.

Despite the strong increase in student and academic demand to understand this small nation with 7.5million Jewish, Muslim and Christian citizens, basic resources to develop a comprehensive understanding of Israel are unavailable in Chinese. A plethora of books on the Jewish people, Jewish civilization and the secrets of Jewish money-making tactics appear on bookshelves in China. However, the number of materials published on the modern state of Israel can be counted on one hand. This also holds true for online sources. Although news items regularly appear in Chinese media on the Arab-Israeli conflict, analysis of Israel's historical underpinnings and a broader view of Israeli society are scarce.

While trade and business development between China and Israel continue to forge ahead, there is poor understanding of each other's culture, history and even political systems. Such imbalances could hamper the long term strength of ties between the two nations. For the people of China and the people of Israel, both of whom place heavy and significant emphasis on education and informed viewpoints, this situation should be promptly remedied.

Fortunately, conditions are now ripe to fill this vacuum. There is demand for knowledge, on both sides, a mutual appreciation by Jews and Chinese for each other's past, current and potential contributions. Even within China's politburo circles, there is awareness that Israel Epstein, Sidney Rittenberg, and Sidney Shapiro - all Communist Party supporters in the early days of the PRC - were Jewish. There is a clear unmet need and a key opportunity to influence a future of positive interactions. A number of organizations are beginning to address this gap including Sino-Israel Global Network and Academic Leadership (SIGNAL).

SIGNAL is an independent non-profit organization created to enhance the strategic, diplomatic, cultural and economic relationship between China and Israel through academic cooperation. Through its strong emphasis on long term China-Israel academic programming, SIGNAL is establishing a foundation for enduring, multi-level partnership between China and Israel that will ensure long-term cooperation between the two nations. This should lead to a strong appreciation by the Chinese of the multifaceted nature of Israel and its people.

Based in Israel, SIGNAL operates its programming in both countries. In Israel, Chinese students are taken on day trips to get to know the land, the people, the customs and history as well and invited to attend semi-annual seminars at various Israeli universities. Such programming aims to provide background knowledge on the country where they are studying and offer an arena for students from China to share their experiences, gain new perspective and build a support system amongst themselves.

In China, SIGNAL coordinated the first contact between the municipality of Chongqing and Israel's Embassy in Beijing. A few months after this initial introduction, Israel's Ambassador, Amos

Nadai, presided over Chongqing's first-ever Israel Business Forum there and officiated over the start of SIGNAL's Israel Studies Program at Sichuan International Studies University (SISU). The Ambassador called the program "a significant contribution to greater mutual understanding between our nations."

SIGNAL's main programming within China is its Israel Studies Programs for Chinese universities. Working in collaboration, SIGNAL and universities across China are developing the first comprehensive programs for undergraduate and graduate study in China on Israel as a modern nation-state. Just as Israeli universities have programs in China Studies, the SISU Israel Studies Program is to be the first of its kind in China, a parallel effort to teach Israel Studies in China. Thanks to the initiative of Dr. Fu Xiaowei and her Jewish Studies Center, the forward thinking administration of SISU and the good work of the new China-Israel academic organization, SIGNAL SISU is laying the groundwork to launch the country's first Israel Studies Program. Embassies of both nations have expressed this as a historic milestone in the development of Sino-Israel academic relations.

Reaching beyond location-based programs, SIGNAL will soon launch its Virtual Resource Center, an academic website providing comprehensive information on Israel and its people in Chinese. The site will include articles on Israeli history, culture and society. It will provide answers posed by users about this unique nation. The Virtual Resource Center (VRC) will include information on Israel's universities and how to apply to the vast range of degrees that are taught in English. In addition to essays, articles and other academic materials, the VRC will have a Video Channel providing Chinese language narrative to the many sites of great historical and cultural significance in Israel.

Israeli academia has been ahead of the curve in its commitment to Chinese studies. Hebrew University in Jerusalem opened its first Chinese class in 1958, more than three decades before official relations began between the two countries were established. Today, Israeli universities have waiting lists of Israeli students from around the country wishing to enroll in Chinese classes. There are workshops and seminars held on an almost weekly basis on issues related to

The Story of Ruth Meets Beijing Opera

by Raphael Mostel
excerpted from the *Forward*, January 21, 2011

Beijing opera is not like anything else...Involving singing, declamation, gesture, dance, acrobatics and brilliant form. Since its beginnings, in the late 18th century (which makes it almost two centuries younger than Western opera), it has developed a vast repertoire that now, thanks to the New York Chinese Opera Society, includes the biblical tale of Ruth.

NYCOS, founded four years ago, is dedicated to giving American performers a chance to develop their artistry and to promoting Beijing opera to the public at large. To that end, as part of their run of three fully produced Beijing operas in as many days at the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University in downtown New York last December, NYCOS gave its "premiere performance" of "The Story of Ruth," a Beijing opera that it created based on the Book of Ruth, co-sponsored by the university's Confucius Institute.

...NYCOS founder and Executive Director Chi Chu explained how he came to write the script with Xiaoru Zhang. He admitted, with more than a twinkle in his eye, "I'm afraid this is all my doing. I thought the Book of Ruth would be an excellent vehicle to attract wider audiences and help them develop a love for Chinese opera — Hispanic, Christian, Jewish audiences.... And the story is also so close to Confucian values, like filial piety, loyalty and hard work."

...One of the most distinctive features of Chinese opera (Beijing is only one of several kinds of Chinese opera) is the use of a panoply of opera gongs to punctuate the drama with a rhythmic urgency that echoes the text. The variety of high-pitched gongs mimic the various combinations of tonal patterns of the language — rising, falling, rising and then falling,

vice versa and so on — further heightening the sense of the language.

Percussion instruments are more dominant here than in Western opera, although the percussion is not used in a rhythmically complex way — as in, say, African music — but rather in a more generic way to establish mood and tempo, whether steady or increasing or decreasing in speed. There are also wind instruments, like various bamboo flutes and oboe-like double reeds, but the 15-piece ensemble in this production is comprised mostly of string instruments, all conducted by Liang Wu, the energetic *jing hu*, or two-string fiddle, player, who composed the score with Chenglin Huang.

Unlike Western opera, composing for Beijing opera is more a matter of choosing and assembling existing melodies, tropes, rhythms and set pieces and adapting them to the new text and story. The sadness of Naomi as she renames herself Mara ("bitter") is accompanied by a haunting lament on solo *erhu*, the most popular and soulful two-string fiddle of the Chinese *huqin* family of bowed-string instruments. The lament, adapted from a traditional melody — often heard as a set piece for similarly sad scenes in other operas — was magnificently played by Huang.

Traditional Beijing opera generally eschews sets by using minimal props, like boxes that can be turned, as needed, into an altar, a throne or a chair. For "Ruth," NYCOS broke with tradition to include several square kiosk-like objects that, when turned, revealed a different image, to connote surroundings of fields, home or town as needed. As minimal as traditional stage props are, the costumes are often maximally elaborate, with great emphasis on many brilliant colors and patterns. For "Ruth," designers Yonwu Cui and Charlene Tong attempted to create Middle Eastern-like costumes, coordinated mostly in restrained off-white (with a rainbow range of colors on the hems), but some of the prominent characters were dressed in the brilliant hues

associated with Chinese operas...

Just as Naomi's attitude won over Ruth as a convert, so NYCOS's openness and excellence may win converts to this different, unusual art form.

To watch an excerpt of this opera, go to the Aug.18, 2010 Story of Ruth at School of Visual Arts on www.youtube.com.

Seoul Brothers: South Koreans and the Talmud

by Tim Alper
excerpted from *The Jewish Chronicle Online*, TheJC.com, May 12, 2011

The South Korean ambassador to Israel, Ma Young-sam, raised eyebrows recently when he told reporters the Talmud was mandatory reading for Korean schoolchildren.

South Korea is a country with a deep Buddhist history, but one which has embraced with vigour the Christianity brought to its shores by missionaries in the late 1800s. Official statistics say some 30 per cent of South Koreans are church-going. In such a country, Jews are few and far between.

Yet, pop down to the local corner shop and along with a pot of instant rice or dried noodles, you can buy a copy of Stories from the Talmud. It is not rare, either, to come across book-vending machines stocked with classic works of Babylonian Judaism.

The Talmud is a bestseller in South Korea - even the government insists it is good for you, and has included it on the curriculum for primary school children.

Lee Chang-ro heads a literature research team at the Ministry for Education. He says: "The reasons why Korean children are taught Talmud are pretty obvious. Koreans and Jews both have a long history of oppression and surviving adversity with nothing but their own ingenuity to thank. There are no natural resources to speak of in Korea, so, like the Jews, all we can develop is our minds."

International Symposium on Monotheism and Postmodernism at Nanjing University

SJI International Board member Gustavo Perednik reports from Nanjing:

During June 14-17, Nanjing University, one of the most prestigious in China and the pioneer in Jewish Studies, held an *International Symposium on Monotheism and Postmodernism*. More than thirty academics took part in the event, including guest speakers from Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan and the USA. The event was organized by *The Diane and Guilford Glazer Institute for Jewish Studies*, founded and directed by Prof. Xu Xin, with Prof. Lihong Song as Deputy Director. Prof. Zhenhua Meng, associate professor at the Institute, was the main organizer of the event. Prof. Xu Xin's lecture on "Universal Monotheism" opened the symposium, which was sponsored by the *Exilarch's Foundation*. During the second day two parallel sessions were held, one in English and one in Chinese. In the latter, the graduate students of the Department of Philosophy presented papers on diverse Jewish topics. The seminar concluded with a tour of the main Jewish sites in China.



In Memoriam: Kurt Weinbach

Born in Vienna while there was shelling in the streets, Kurt's welcome into the world was perhaps foreshadowing for the years ahead. Kurt witnessed the rise of Nazi power, and even saw Hitler with his own eyes on two occasions. And in spite of everything Kurt saw, he never grew bitter. For a Jew living in that part of the world at that time, Kurt's life would take an unusual turn when he was saved by a German general.

Kurt's father had promised to alert the family when it was time to leave. He kept his word, advising them to get out of Austria in early 1941 or risk losing their lives.

Getting out was easier said than done. Few countries were taking Jews at the time, but Kurt's older brother, Bert, had made it safely to Tientsin, a city near Beijing.

Bert and Gen. Stumpfl (the aforementioned German general) arranged for the family to travel on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and Kurt boarded the last train that would take Jews away in safety.

In Tientsin he attended a British Government-sponsored English-speaking Jewish school. Life would force Kurt to learn language after language; all told, Kurt was able to speak 12 different languages.

The family arrived in Tientsin during the Japanese occupation, but soon the U.S. Marines arrived, 40,000 strong, and because Kurt could speak both English and Chinese, the American commander enlisted his help in billeting the troops. Kurt would go to a building owner and say, in Chinese: 'In the name of Harry Truman and the United States government, I am confiscating your building.'

In 1949, Kurt's family arrived in Israel. Shortly after, his father died on his way to the hospital after suffering a heart attack. Kurt had been supporting his extended family since he was just 18 or 19 years old. He served in the Israeli army for six years, and he fought in the 1956 Sinai campaign.

In 1957, his mother, by then widowed, wanted to reunite the family in the United States; Bert had already settled in Rochester, New York. The family arrived in 1958 and Kurt eventually landed a job as a purchasing agent for Rochester Telephone.

Kurt met his wife, Sheila, in 1959 at the International Folk Dance Festival at the YWCA and were married in 1960. They shared 50 glorious years as husband and wife before his recent death.

China and Sino-Israel relations, topics ranging from trade policy to re-assessments of Confucian texts. In line with recent global trends, the Ministry of Education in Israel aims to incorporate China into its educational curriculum; it is considering the national incorporation of Chinese language instruction into primary and middle schools. Already a pilot program has a few hundred children in grammar school and junior high learning Chinese.

Sino-Israel relations are entering a new era of deeper ties and interconnectedness in the political and economic arenas. However, such formalized institutional structures can only succeed in the long-term if they are understood to support the interests of the greater public. This is an opportune moment to reach beyond superficial perceptions of one another's political process and regional conflicts, and to gain truer understanding of each other's existence by envisioning creative areas of cooperation between the two states through academic interchange.

The past five years have ushered in a strong wave of growing business relations between Israel and China. Now, as Israel turns 63, the coming five years have the potential to bring the dawn of strong intellectual, academic and scholarly relations. Strengthening ties between Israel and China will help not only scholars, business people, and government officials, but will extend to broader regional peace and stability.

This article was contributed by Carice Witte, the Founder/Executive Director of SIGNAL, along with Aurora Carlson, SIGNAL's Head of Strategic Research.

Contact Information:

Carice Witte, Founder/Executive Director, SIGNAL, Moshav Haniel, Israel 42865. carice@sino-israel.org. Mobile: +972-52-488-6711. Office: +972-9898-8275

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The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center at Heilongjiang University in Harbin

by Prof. Dan Ben-Canaan

An Overview

The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center, was founded in 2002 at the Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies, with an aim to conduct historical research on Harbin and its communities, broaden students' intellectual knowledge and academic experience by engaging in research activities, to deepen the cultural, educational, social, and economic exchange between China, Israel, and Jewish People around the world, to research and study the experience of the Jewish communities in China, to assist the Chinese people in learning, understanding and creating a true and realistic image of the Jewish People, as well as to provide a better basis for understanding of the cultural differences.

Today, The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center is one of the leading research establishments in China. Its extensive archives hold original documents, photos, and personal relics donated by families and collected from sources around the world. Since its inauguration in 2002 the Sino-Israel Research and Study Center has established direct research relations with scholars from around the world, as well as contact with families whose roots are in Harbin. Its extensive archives of historical documents and photographs are one of the largest in China.

The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center aims at conducting extensive research on the history of Harbin as an "international-border-port" city, studies of the Jewish communities in Harbin and China, their social, cultural, and economic conditions, their members' personal daily lives experiences, and the circumstances that led Jews to settle in China, comparative studies of Chinese and Israeli-Jewish contemporary literature, as well as research on the effects of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. The Center aims at publishing books, papers, articles, reports, multi-media, exhibitions and documentary films on all aspects of the Jewish communities' functions, their interactions with others, their communal decision-making processes, relationships with the authorities, influences both from within and out, as well as the unveilings of any new data and information.

The Center holds collection of books written in Hebrew, English, Russian and other languages, by Israeli and Jewish authors, of which many have been translated to Chinese. The Center collects historical materials such as photos, tapes, films, personal files including documents, letters, personal relics and remnants, mementos, official documents, newspapers and books related to persons who lived in Harbin and in other parts of China.

A Unique Program for first and second-year students

The School of Western Studies at Heilongjiang University has initiated an unparalleled and unique program that introduces first and second-year students to research. It is an on-going learning and research program that recruits new students at the beginning of each academic

year. Currently there are over 40 students from various disciplines at the School who are engaged in research activities at the Center, among them research assistants and teachers who assist the students in their activities.

Major Current On-going Research Themes

The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center has assembled an interdisciplinary group of scholars representing several departments and disciplines at Heilongjiang University who are working on long-term co-research projects:

- The Chinese Perception of the Jewish People
- Daily Life and Urban Spaces in Northeast Asian Border Towns, 1900 to 1950
- Time and Space in the History of Harbin
- Time and Space in the History of Northeast China
- The Manchuria Experience - a complex history of competing powers and diverging colonial and imperialistic interests
- Occupying 'the Other': Japan's invasion of Manchukuo, the occupation of Harbin, and the Unit 731 experimental camp
- Comparative analysis of War and Peace themes as reflected in major contemporary Israeli and Chinese literary works
- The History of Architecture in Harbin
- Everyday city life in various public spaces - The cross-border phenomena shaped by individuals, groups, and institutions and by their respective performative actions; economy, culture, religion, entertainment, politics, and social organizations
- The Jewish contribution to the city's architecture. Comparative analysis - European, Israeli and Chinese Architecture
- The Jewish Cultural, social and Economic Contribution to Harbin and China
- Chinese Nationalism and its Application to Harbin
- A Study of Harbin as an Intersection of Cultural and Ethnical Communities in Conflict 1932-1945
- Ethnic Ghettos and Transcultural Processes in a Globalize City – An assembly of group of international scholars from different academic fields to open new research perspectives on transcultural processes in the city of Harbin

Affiliations, Cooperation and Exchange Programs

- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem - Israel - In January 2003, the Center established cooperative relationship with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem cre-

ating a special program for the exchange of Doctoral candidates who will come and work on their research in Harbin.

- The University of Heidelberg - Germany – The Zentrum für Europäische Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften at the University of Heidelberg in Germany has invited the Center in 2007 to create cooperation and exchange programs between the two universities, as well as join a long term international research project on the historical and cultural dimension and development of the city of Harbin between 1889 and 1949. It is an interdisciplinary, multi-country and multi-university long-range project that involves scholars and academic/research institutions from China, Japan, Russia and the West. The first joint international conference was held at Heidelberg University in Germany in April 2008. The second international conference and a summer school was held at Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies in June 2009. The third international conference was held in Heidelberg University in November 2010.
- The Bar-Ilan University - Israel – A cooperation and exchange program with Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies was signed in November 2009 in Israel. The Center is now working on setting up an extensive Hebraic Institute within the School of Western Studies in cooperation with the Bar-Ilan University in Israel and is an editorial partner to its new academic journal Mizrekh. A joint conference was held in Heilongjiang University in September 2008. The unique meeting, first of its kind in China, jointly organized by Bar-Ilan University in Israel and the Sino-Israel Research and Study Center at Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies in Harbin under the title "The 1st China-Israel Jewish Sciences Conference - The Jews of China – Past and Present. Their Uniqueness and Connection to World Jewry and Israel" brought to the city over 60 Israeli scholars, representing various universities and colleges in Israel. The second international conference will be held in Thailand in January 2011.

Collaborating universities:

University of Toronto, Canada
University of Osaka, Japan
University of Tel-Aviv, Israel
Harvard University, USA

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ing Methodology, Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies
President: Prof. Yin Tiechao, Dean, Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies

Associate Director: Prof. Lin Weijie, Deputy Dean, Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies

Contributions

The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center owes its growing activities and collection of documents to the generosity and support of many people around the world who provide much appreciated and necessary funds for its operations. The funds invested in the Sino-Israel Research and Study Center create ongoing study projects, preserve the legacy of the Jewish people in Harbin and China, as well as bringing about a deepening relations between the Jewish people, Israel, and China.

An organization titled "The American Friends of the Sino-Israel Research and Study Center at Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies" was established in September 2007 for the purpose of fund-raising activities in the USA. The "American Friends" organization, headed by Paul E. Kerson Esq. of New York, has started its undertaking and is in constant communication with the Center.

Tax-exempt donations (in exchangeable funds) can be made in checks, bank transfers or money-orders to: The Sino-Israel Research and Study Center at Heilongjiang University, School of Western Studies, Harbin, P.R. China

Contact Information

Prof. Dan Ben-Canaan
Tel: 86-13845184401
E-mail: canaan@inter.net.il / bencanaan@gmail.com
Address: 136 Huanghe Lu, Building B, Apartment 801, Harbin, 150090, PR China

Jewish Moms, Chinese Daughters

(continued from page 1)

Rabbi [and] Cantor Angela Warnick Buchdahl, of Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, New York, is the daughter of a Korean mother and an Ashkenazi Jewish father. She was raised in a Jewish household and believes that "It's different now than when I was a child growing up. It's not as unusual to see children of different races being Jewish."

nese, Filipino, Japanese, and Southeast and South Asian. A few of the couples had married so long ago that their marriages broke state anti-miscegenation laws, declared unconstitutional in 1967. Others were still in graduate school. The study comprised both straight and same-sex partners. Most, but not all, of the couples had children.

The researchers didn't study why most couples were raising their children Jewish. They hypothesize, however, that the Jewish community provides a "wrap-around" for family life in many cities, making it easy to promote Jewish identity anywhere, from preschools, summer camps and community centers to social service agencies, museums and political organizations.

That's not the case with most Asian communities, and this is due in part to dispersion of many Asian Americans into the suburbs...on the other hand, an Asian-American man noted that his family could pick the Oakland version of the Jewish community — or the Berkeley or El Cerrito version.

The researchers were surprised to find little parental opposition to the marriages. "I was expecting a lot more, 'You can't marry her, because she's not Jewish or not Korean,'" said Kim, who attributes the lack of resistance to the modern social trend of increasing intermarriage.

Perhaps less surprising, the researchers also found the Asian-Jewish couples sharing remarkably similar values. As Brecher put it: "My husband and I found that the Jewish and Chinese cultures are very similar — the emphasis on family life, the importance placed on education, strong work ethics. And of course, we show our love through food."

Many couples noted that their harmonious values stemmed from similarities in Jewish and Asian culture, and some even mentioned that Confucian or Buddhist teachings paralleled those of Judaism.

"My children recognize themselves as Jewish children of the Chinese mother," Brecher said.

The alignment of Jewish and Asian values may also be one reason for the researchers' finding that the overwhelming majority of the couples they interviewed were happy.

Of course, this didn't prove that all couples in Asian-Jewish marriages are content. Couples who weren't getting along, Leavitt says, were unlikely to respond to their survey.

But those who did respond "expressed so much deep love and affection and trust and confidence and support of their children," Leavitt said, "that when we finished interviewing, Helen and I felt more loving toward each other."

Read more: <http://forward.com/articles/137923/#ixzz1NCJEa3L>

Pesach Past in Kaifeng

by Paul Weinstein
excerpted from *Daily Record, The Wooster*, April 13, 2009

Ni hao. Greetings from Kaifeng, China, where I [was] teaching at Henan University for a semester [in 2009]...On the evening of April 8 my wife and I attended a Passover seder (service) here. About 50 of the descendants gathered at a local restaurant. The crowd also included guests from as far away as Beijing and Hong Kong — and two from Wooster, Ohio, USA.

The service was led by two earnest young men. While most was in Chinese, it was strange to hear the Hebrew portions spoken with such an exotic accent. The people ate matzo and drank wine as they made their way through the liturgy.

A highlight came when a young girl recited the four questions that ask, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" With the focus on task so typical of the Chinese, she had memorized the long Hebrew portion perfectly in only two weeks.

After the service we had a typical Chinese meal. That means a bewildering array of dishes made a seemingly endless parade to the table. There was mutton and duck and beef and chicken. There was lotus root and aloe plant in yogurt sauce and everything else from pickled bean sprouts to sheep intestines. And there was the standard feature of any Chinese banquet — jolly toasts in which everyone must click their cups and glasses. "Kambel!" Drink it dry.

Finally we engaged in another inevitable part of any Chinese event: photographs. Everyone takes pictures of everyone and the weigoren (foreigners) are especially popular. We posed and smiled and said "Qieze." That's the Chinese version of "say cheese" but it's the word for eggplant.

The Chinese Jews were and are a minuscule sliver of a population of 1.3 billion. Most Chinese are unaware of their existence. Among the few who know anything about the Jewish people there is respect. The Jews have a long history and exhibit perseverance. The Chinese can identify.

The Kaifeng Jews are determined to build a future based on a proud and rich past. To China they add a little much-needed diversity. To Barbara and me they gave one never-to-be-forgotten evening.

Paul Weinstein is a history professor at the University of Akron Wayne College. He spent a semester teaching history at Henan University in Kaifeng, China.

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Still, she notes, “young Asian children look around and don’t see Jewish children who look like them. It’s still hard. And on an intellectual level, there’s the whole question of ‘what does it mean to be a Jew?’ You’re part of a religion, but you’re also part of a people, ethnicity or even race. Are we truly an open community, or are we not?”

These questions have begun to intrigue scholars, who are exploring such issues as Jewish identity outside the conventional, Ashkenazic, Euro-centric model. Patricia Lin is project coordinator for the 2003-2007 study of “Asian American Jewish Experience and Identities” at the University of California/Berkeley and herself a Jew by choice. She says, “There is a struggle within the Jewish community, not just with Asians, to realize the real diversity of the Jewish world.”

Adds Buchdahl, “There should be images of non-white children in our [Jewish] books, in the movie and video images. There’s an Ashkenazic assumption that it’s the Jewish cultural norm. The Jewish community of North America is not honest about representing the historical diversity of our community. It’s a challenge for us. We come from mixed multitudes, who were dispersed in many communities, [yet] the Jewish European community is the only one that’s taught. We’ve all been strengthened and enlivened and made more rich by all that learning.”

In their book, *In Every Tongue: The Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People*, Gary and Diane Tobin and Scott Rubin show that American Jews are in fact a multi-racial, diverse community. According to their research, 20 percent of the six million Jews in the United States are non-Caucasian: Asian-American (the adopted Chinese girls are not a statistically significant part of this population), African-American, Latino, Sephardic, Middle Eastern, and mixed-race Jews. Conversion, adoption and intermarriage have all contributed to this redefinition of who “looks” Jewish. Gary Tobin points out in a telephone interview that “the make-up of the Jewish people has always been remarkably diverse. Biblical scholars will tell us that we were a collection of tribes. Pay attention to the Torah. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob took spouses from someplace else. Moses and David married black women.”

When Lee Miller, a New York-based playwright, decided in 2000 to adopt as a single woman, she recalls “I was originally thinking of going to Russia, which was my family background.” Perturbed by the health problems of some adopted Russian babies she had read about who had fetal alcohol syndrome or other problems—and plagued by the idea that someday her child might look at her and think “My ancestors killed her ancestors”—she looked elsewhere. Miller says that she found, in contrast, that the Chinese children came from “regular families” and were available for adoption either because their parents were too poor to raise them or because of China’s only-one-child policy. Seeing a documentary about orphaned Chinese baby girls, Miller felt that “all these little girls needed help.” And so she undertook the journey to find her daughter, Emma Yael, now 10.

Miller, who had her daughter converted at B’nai Jeshurun in Manhattan, where her dip in the mikvah was witnessed by Miller’s mother and sister, says, “My Orthodox aunt could not have been happier—one more to enter the fold.”

What may seem relatively simple when bringing a baby or toddler to a “Families with Children from China” playgroup takes on other meaning when pre-adolescent girls start to explore their dual identities. Nor is this an entirely uncharted situation—the experience of an earlier generation of adopted Korean orphans suggests some ways this scenario may play out.

As Dr. Lin has observed in her study participants from across the U.S., Canada and elsewhere, Asian children who have been doted upon by a community when they are young may have quite different experiences as they grow up. “I’ve talked to women—Korean adoptees—who went up to bat mitzvah age in their synagogue, and were shunned once they were in their 20s and 30s. When they leave the community, or are not with their parents, they’re seen as Asian. They’re not being accepted as Jews in Hillel. They’ll walk in with a Caucasian non-Jew, and the non-Jew is thought to be the Jew. The Jewish community is not universally welcoming.”

Recently, some young Chinese girls in the Boston-area Jewish community have been invited to partner with Asian col-

lege students at Wellesley College, in a kind of big-sister program. “The adoptees feel this is great,” says Lin.

Lin underscores the importance of recognizing the centuries-long historical connections between Jews and China to help these families make the connections easier for their daughters. “There were Jews in China a real long time ago,” she explains. Providing a strong Jewish identity, balanced with an equally respectful nod towards their Chinese heritage, is a major priority for the mothers of these Asian-Jewish daughters.

Judi Sherman of Phoenix, a senior vice-president at Smith Barney, has been clear that her Chinese daughter is going to have a bat mitzvah. Her nine-and-a-half-year-old, Annie Gabrielle LiNa (the last part of her given name is Chinese) “is very much into learning about Judaism,” says Sherman. “She’s never questioned her identity. Out West, the religion seems to be very welcoming. Our rabbi has a sibling who adopted a Chinese daughter.”

Integrating the two traditions has so far not given rise to anything that might shake up the Jewish world. Rabbi Judy Spicehandler, a rabbi-educator at North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois, says that when her 14-year-old Chinese-Jewish daughter was younger they would decorate their succah with Chinese images, like a dragon. “I did everything—Chinese, Hebrew, English,” says Spicehandler. “I tried to merge the Chinese theme. My daughter was very comfortable with her Jewish identity.” While issues around bat mitzvah are imminent, concerns about dating are farther away—and most of the women interviewed said that they weren’t worrying about that for now.

With a bat mitzvah on the horizon, Hipsh says, “At 13, they choose. She could choose not to be Jewish, but it’s not an issue. She’s a Jewish child in a Jewish family. I don’t know what awaits her. I don’t know about her identity search; as yet, there’s not the need to deny any part of it. I’m not worried about the dating part. My grandchildren will be Jewish. I made a decision that the more identity I give her, the easier it will be for her.” To encourage an identity with her Chinese side, the family is part of a group of other single mothers, some of them Jewish,

with Chinese daughters, who frequently get together for Chinese food and other celebrations, Jewish and otherwise.

As 11-year-old WuQing sees it, "When you're adopted, you get to choose whether you're Jewish or not. At my bat-mitzvah, I'm going to say I'm choosing to be Jewish." What she enjoys about her dual heritage is that "You get to celebrate more holidays—like Chinese New Year's, normal New Year's and Jewish New Year's."...

One teenager, who did not want her names used for this article, is at a point where she wants simply to be "another white Jewish girl" and not have to deal with the dual identity she confronts in the larger world...For her traditional bat mitzvah, this girl's dvar Torah concerned the "Mishpatim" portion, which includes the passage about "not wronging a stranger" or the widows and orphans in the community. She directly addressed the larger social issue of why there are so many adoptees from China, and urged her listeners to take positive action to help these children. She said "These children are like the widows and orphans of the Torah. They are very vulnerable and they need our help. Ignoring them is just as bad as oppressing or wronging them. Some of the children are lucky, and find wonderful homes in other countries with families that adopt them and love them. But we have to help the ones who never have the chance. That is why I will be donating part of my bat mitzvah presents to help children in the orphanages, especially in the Wuhan Foundling Hospital, which is the orphanage that found me my family...Everyone can actively do something to help others, like donate money or clothing or food or time to help people who are less fortunate. If everybody did that, soon there would no longer be any strangers, the whole world would all be one mishpacha (family)."

Despite this heartfelt melding of Chinese and Jewish experience, reactions to giving these Chinese girls a Jewish identity are still not always predictable. "I got a lot of grief for sending her to a Jewish day school from the general Chinese adoption community," says Joan Story, a clinical social worker in Manhattan with a seven-year-old daughter, Alexa. ...

Single mothers aren't the only ones to struggle with these issues. Randi Rosenkrantz, 55, of Houston, Texas, and her husband, 52, made sure that both of

their adopted Chinese daughters, 10-year-old Jill and six-year-old Kate, had Jewish baby naming ceremonies as well as immersion in the mikvah. "I wanted my children to be well-grounded, and in a Caucasian family where they do not look like us, I needed and wanted to find a way. So I decided that through our religion they would hopefully feel more of a connection," she explains in an e-mail message. "They will both have a bat mitzvah."

Rosenkrantz is making an effort to ensure that her daughters are linked to their Chinese heritage as well. "We stay connected to other families who have adopted from China," she says. "We have Asian influences in our home, especially artwork. I have a book collection myself that the kids will share as they get older, that have to do with China and/or Chinese adoption. I bought books for the kids on China that were age appropriate. We celebrate Chinese New Year."

With her husband, Lisa Gibbs is raising two daughters, 10 and five, both adopted from China. Uncomfortable with the egalitarian Conservative synagogue they initially belonged to in Brooklyn, Gibbs—who attended yeshiva until eighth grade—switched her daughters to a Jewish cultural program. Gibbs reports in an e-mail, "While I am somewhat sad that [her daughter Basya] will have a less traditional Jewish upbringing, I like the program there far more in terms of Jewish ethics, and I notice that they are doing far more in the area of Jewish identity...."

Gibbs adds, "I want them to feel REALLY Jewish and REALLY Chinese, not some watered-down version." Her five-year-old, Mira, takes Chinese dance class and watches Chinese language and song tapes.

For other parents whose adopted Chinese daughters are still quite young, there is an almost touching faith that by the time their girls are older there will be no doubt about their place in the Jewish community. Debbie Halperin, living in Suffern, New York, has a three-year-old daughter from China, and an 11-year-old daughter from her first marriage. "The little one goes to synagogue for nursery school," she says. "Laci loves being Jewish. She loves Hanukkah, she knows the prayers for Shabbat. She's a Jewish girl through and through. She's part of the Jewish family. She'll have a bat mitzvah and be married under a huppah." Halperin, 42, is a founding member of a Jewish/Asian adoption group that recently celebrated

its third Hanukkah party.

Ultimately, of course, little matters other than the bonds that have formed between mother and daughter. "She's been enriched by the Jewish element, and I've been enriched by the Chinese element," notes Hipsh. "It's all good."

Merri Rosenberg is a freelance writer and editor based in Ardsley, New York. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, Jewish Week, Education Update and other national publications. She may be reached at emr45@columbia.edu.

Keeping the Faith

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The 37 couples, ranging from Reform to Orthodox in affiliation, were selected from among 300 couples that were contacted by a method known as "snowball sampling." This approach, which is useful in assembling sample groups with attributes that are hard to find through random sampling, involves asking a core group with the desired characteristics to contact others with those attributes. In turn, members of the second group are asked to contact others, and the process goes onward, through several degrees of separation. This method helps researchers reach out to an increasingly diverse group of people with the desired attributes. But it is not the same as random sampling.

Nevertheless, bearing these limitations in mind, "Over and over again we saw Jewish-Asian couples making a commitment to helping their children become Jewish," said Leavitt, visiting assistant professor of sociology and general studies at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash. "In fact, these households were stronger into Judaism and the sense of their kids' Jewishness and upbringing than most Jewish families in the U.S."

Leavitt and Kim's study will be a chapter in a forthcoming peer-reviewed book with the working title, "Keeping the Faith," from NYU Press, looking at religious practices of second generation Asian-American and Latino immigrants in the United States.

Leavitt and Kim, who are married, spent hundreds of hours talking to the couples, who had responded to lengthy questionnaires. While most of the Jews were Ashkenazi, the Asians were Korean, Chi