



Points East

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

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China's 1939 Plan to Settle Persecuted European Jews

By Aharon Shai

Excerpted from *Haaretz*, Aug 05, 2017. <http://www.haaretz.com/world-news/asia-and-australia/1.805093>

In 1939, China prepared a plan to settle persecuted European Jews in the southwestern Yunnan province, close to the Burmese border, according to documents recently found in Chinese state archives. For unknown reasons, the plan was never implemented.

Additional information about Jewish communities in China is slowly emerging as scholars engage with the country and its history. This growing knowledge includes information about the ancient community in Kaifeng in Henan province, and the Sephardi-Baghdadi community that settled in Shanghai in the wake of British imperial expansion in the mid-19th century.

Considerable information is also accumulating about the Jews who fled from czarist Russia due to the pogroms and revolutionary waves, and settled in Harbin and other centers like Shanghai and Tianjin, or the uprooted European Jews who came to Shanghai at the end of the 1930s and were concentrated in a "ghetto" in the Hongkou district.

However, documents I've recently come across from the Chinese state archives reveal an almost unknown government plan to settle refugee Jews in Yunnan, for humanitarian reasons. It's important to note that when the initiative was drafted, in 1939, the Chinese government itself was in the midst of a humiliating withdrawal inland from the Japanese forces charging west after the fall of the provisional capital of Hankou.

After Germany's union with Austria, in 1938, and the exit of those countries' Jews in response to harsh, brutal persecution that ensued, the Chinese government in the hinterland capital of Chongqing, in Sichuan province, decided to adopt a suggestion raised by Sun Fo (also known as Sun Ke), the son of the Republic of China's founder and first president Sun Yat-sen. Sun Fo, who served at the time as chairman of the state's legislative authority, proposed to settle Jewish refugees in a remote area close to the border with Burma (Myanmar). The documented discussions reflect the Chinese establishment's sympathy for the Jews and its readiness to help them in their time of need, but also broader, more pragmatic considerations...

The document claimed that the U.S. and British governments had not given the Jews sufficient help. In contrast, the Chinese city Shanghai had granted them vital shelter. But now, with that city inundated with refugees, there was a need to reduce the stream of asylum seekers, as well as distribute those taken in around various places in China.

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Israeli State Panel Proposes Special Status for People with Jewish Roots

By Judy Maltz

Excerpted from *Haaretz*, Aug 28, 2017. <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.809215>

A government-appointed committee recommends that Israel create a new status for individuals around the world who have Jewish roots or belong to "emerging Jewish communities," but are not eligible to immigrate to Israel or spend any length of time there.

The new status would allow these individuals to stay in Israel longer than the three months allowed by tourist visas, so they could explore their Jewish heritage and learn about the country, *Haaretz* has learned.

This is the key recommendation of the committee appointed by the Diaspora Affairs Ministry to formulate guidelines on how Israel should relate to individuals with a connection to the Jewish people or Judaism, but who do not qualify as Jewish under Israeli law or halakha (Jewish religious law). Millions of people worldwide could potentially benefit from this new status.

The report, whose recommendations were made available to *Haaretz* in advance of its expected publication in the coming weeks, stops short of recommending changes in the Law of Return, which determines who is eligible to immigrate to Israel. However, if adopted by the government, it could certainly open the way to such amendments.

The Law of Return provides citizenship only to individuals who have at least one Jewish grandparent or a Jewish spouse, or who have converted to Judaism. Someone with one Jewish great-grandparent, therefore, is not eligible to move to Israel and can only visit the country as a tourist with a limited stay of three months.

If they aren't fully recognized as Jews, the committee recommends that such individuals should at least benefit from some sort of "in-between" status, which could be conferred through a new visa designation...

The committee found that tens of thousands of individuals in Poland have Jewish roots, even though they don't qualify for immigration under Israel's Law of Return. Many are descendants of Jews who were forced to hide their identity during the Holocaust. A similar situation exists, though to a lesser extent, in Hungary.

The category of individuals with Jewish roots also includes

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Meron Medzini, Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews During the Holocaust Era

SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	141
Canada	24
China	20
Israel	16
England	7
Australia	3
Japan	2
Germany	2
Switzerland	2
Indonesia	1
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
Total:	220

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue, the last for 2017, contains so much good material. I have a cornucopia of articles to share with you: from coverage of China's World War II plan to rescue Jews to a proposal in Israel to recognize "Jew-ish" groups to another of Jordan Paper's thoughtful analyses of what we (Western Jews) did wrong in Kaifeng to a report of a visit by a Canadian couple to Kaifeng.

Instead of highlighting any of these, I'd like to contrast two articles on the Shanghai Jewish experience—"The World's First Kung-fu Holocaust Flick" and "From Kristallnacht and Back"—and do so while summoning the spirit of Dr. Lotte Marcus (though she is still very much alive). Lotte would, no doubt, be leading the assault on the maker of the kung-fu Holocaust film, Exodus to Shanghai, not just as "Holocaust-lite" but as an exploitation of the Holocaust experience and a cheapening of Ho Fengshan's heroic memory. Does the world really need this sort of schlock?

Contrast this with Dr. Kevin Ostoyich's article tracing the real Jewish journey of Harry J. Abraham, a real survivor of the Holocaust who escaped Germany to live in Shanghai and later America. His genuine life story would make a fine movie, as would so many of the experiences of former Shanghailanders. Is it really necessary to come up with absurd and offensive stories like Exodus to Shanghai?

So why did I even include an article about the film in this issue? Because I believe in sharing the good, the bad and the ugly with you. Because I believe in sharing as much information as I receive, even if I disagree with some of it, even if it is sometimes inaccurate. (Although I'm not above pointing this out.)

Lastly, a word about the situation in Kaifeng: SNAFU. Situation normal, all fouled up. The Jewish community is still being repressed although individual families can practice Judaism in their homes. Jewish tours are still prohibited though, as the Wang-Lucas Report shows, individual visits are possible. Dr. Paper outlines the steps needed to rectify the problem. My prayer for 5778 is that the Sino-Judaic Institute and other Jewish organizations will act on them.

Anson Laytner

Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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In the Field

• Danny Spungen

The Spungen Foundation lent an important artifact – Sugihara Visa #2095-- to officials of Chiune Sugihara's hometown for a celebration honoring him July-August, 2017 in Yaotsu, Japan. This was a joint project between UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and the Chiune Sugihara Memorial Museum.

Danny Spungen was visiting Nanjing University on Monday Sept. 11. He arranged for a Rwanda Genocide survivor to speak to Prof. Xu Xin's class. The speaker left Africa 23 years ago after the 1994 Rwanda /Burundi Genocide, speaks Chinese and lives with his wife and two children in Wuxi – a "rare" family in China, and it was his first time speaking to a class about the horrors of his past!

Spungen also reported that progress is being made on "Jewish Refugees in Wartime Shanghai - PBS Documentary Inquiry" which is scheduled to be aired in January 2018. Four of the six proposed episodes are already filmed.

• Kevin Ostoyich

This issue features an article by Professor Kevin Ostoyich, who is researching the Shanghai Jews thanks to a grant by the Sino-Judaic Institute. Dr. Bev Friend has a playbill from Valparaiso University entitled "Knocking on the Doors of History: The Shanghai Jews," and the script of that play. The production – the brainstorm of Ostoyich – was researched, written and performed by his students of "Historical Theater: The Shanghai Jews" as part of his new, innovative course on the subject.

Harvard PhD Ostoyich is associate professor and chair of the Department of History at Valparaiso. He has directed study abroad courses in Hangzhou, China and Reutlingen Germany, taught classes in "Hitler and the Third Reich," and "European Encounters with China," written the book "German Society of Pennsylvania: A Guide to its Book and Manuscript Collections," and numerous articles.

Why Foreign Jews Are Responsible for the Problems of the Kaifeng Jews

By Jordan Paper

I have written a number of articles published in Points East trying to inform the readers on Chinese government attitudes and policies regarding religion, the meaning of minority designation in China, and confusion over the Chinese Jews not being accepted as Jews by non-Chinese Jews. We have a contradictory situation in that some Jews criticize the Chinese government for not giving the Chinese Jews special status because they are Jewish and simultaneously other Jews deny that the Chinese Jews are Jewish. The last article of mine dealing with the first two issues is "Ignoring Longstanding Chinese Policy on Religion and Its Consequences" (31/3, Nov. 2016), and on the third issue, "Matrilineality and Female Conversion with Regard to the Chinese Jews" (32/1, March 2017). In this brief article, I will further enrage some of the readers by laying out what I think is the basis of the attitudes of at least some non-Chinese Jews that has led to the Chinese government crackdown on the Kaifeng Jews and the activities of foreign Jews in Kaifeng and could lead to further serious difficulties.

I have long found that there is an underlying hatred of Chinese among many North Americans, including Jews. Why this is so for American Christians is well understood, but why this should be the case for American and Canadian Jews is to me inexplicable. If anyone reading this understands the reason, I hope they will pass it on to me.

The American reason is simple. American Christians have never forgiven the Chinese for not becoming Americanized Christians. The American rhetoric during the civil war in China was of godless Communists against God-fearing Nationalists (Chiang Kai-shek and his wife were Methodists). The same rhetoric was used with regard to Korea, and America has never gotten over being fought to a draw by the Chinese. America entered Vietnam to prop up a Catholic president in a Buddhist country. Losing that war was traumatic, and the Chinese were blamed for the loss, even though Vietnam and China fought a minor war afterwards. Perhaps the Christian attitude has imbued American Jews with this same hatred, but why this should effect Canadian Jews remains for me an enigma, since Canada

has had a much different relationship with Communist China than the U.S.

Now why am I going into what may seem to be irrelevancies to the issue of the Chinese Jews? As one reads through the various inputs in Points East on the larger issue, there is a constant theme that the Chinese Jews should not be recognized as Han (Chinese) but instead as Jews; they cannot be both. North American Jews are obviously not bothered by being considered American or Canadian, then why are they bothered by, indeed abhor, the Chinese Jews being considered Chinese. Is it because of a hatred of Chinese?

The Chinese have called themselves "Han" for over two thousand years, although in the southeastern part, the term "Tang" was used instead. "Han" refers to the Han Empire, the first major Chinese empire that lasted for four centuries (206 BCE – CE 220). The Chinese proudly identified themselves by this name and continue to do so to the present, as did Romans at the time of the Roman Empire (and there were Jews who were Roman citizens). The term has nothing to do with religion, anymore that the term American or Canadian does. Today Chinese Buddhists and Christians call themselves Han, as do unofficially most Chinese Muslims (I am not referring to Uighur or actual Hui Muslims). In the southeastern part, which came under Chinese sway during the second major Chinese empire, the Tang (618-905), the term Tang was often used instead of Han, but with the same proud meaning.

Before proceeding, I need to introduce another aspect of Chinese history. The treaty subsequent to the 2nd Opium War in the mid-19th century, in the French language version only, gave extraterritoriality not only to foreign Christian missionaries but to Chinese who converted to Christianity. This meant that any Chinese who nominally became Christian was no longer Chinese (Han) and thus not subject to Chinese laws but to the laws of foreign countries. The missionaries emptied the jails, even of violent criminals. A Chinese Christian could take his neighbor's property or wife with no consequences. Thus, by the terms of one version of the treaty, which foreign governments then insisted upon, once a Chinese converted to Christianity, they were no longer Han. And is this not exactly what some foreign Jews today appear to be asking the Chinese government to accept?

Christian missionaries and converts

were protected by foreign armies, and American gunboats patrolled thousands of miles up the Yangzi to protect them. (See, for example, the movie *The Sand Pebbles*, the novel on which it is based written by an American seaman who served on the river gunboats.) Hence, it is hardly surprising that the Chinese developed an immense hatred of Christian missionaries and converts and the foreign military which allowed them to run rampant over non-Christian Chinese. Thus, during the so-called Boxer Movement at the end of the 19th century, many thousands of foreign Christian missionaries and Chinese converts were slaughtered.

The present head of the Chinese state, Xi Jinping, has dedicated himself to bringing back Chinese pride in themselves and in Chinese culture, especially with regard to relations with foreign states; hence, the billions being spent on reconstituting the Silk Road (by train) and the Maritime Silk Road (by creating defense networks). Thus, when foreigners in effect ask the government and encourage Chinese Jews to deny – meaning, renounce – being Han, which is anathema, this creates a negative orientation towards the Chinese Jews in Kaifeng. This, combined with sending Jewish missionaries to China to encourage them to give their allegiance to a foreign entity and learn a foreign culture, of course has brought down the wrath of the government.

From a pragmatic perspective, if the Chinese Jews are not Chinese, that is, Han, then what are they? If Chinese Jews are just Jews and not Chinese are they subject to Chinese laws? If they are called Israelites, are they subject to Israeli laws instead? And how would the Chinese people feel if the Chinese Jews or the Chinese government put themselves forward as not-Chinese? Would there be anti-Jewish riots? Imagine the situation in the U.S., especially in the present political climate, if American Jews insisted that they are not American, and for that reason had special privileges. Not a point one wants to dwell on. It is not pretty. After all, it was not that long ago that the Ku Klux Klan lynched Jews. But a few years ago, a former KKK leader shot to death three persons he thought were Jews simply because they were Jews. (They weren't.) He argued in his defense, in effect, that Americans had a God-given right to exterminate Jews.

To reverse the situation, I think, using the term of communist education, that those foreign Jews who seek to help the Chinese Jews recover their own form

of Judaism need to engage in self-examination. Why are they against Chinese Jews being designated Han and calling themselves Han? Is it because they hate the idea of Jews being Chinese? And why is that? Is it because of racism towards Chinese? Muslims who are mistakenly designated “Hui” (I wrote about that in earlier articles) proudly call themselves in conversation “Han”. They did so when I came across fellow Chinese Muslim graduate students a half-century ago, and they did so in conversations in China a couple of years ago.

If non-Chinese foreign Jews cannot wrap their minds around Jews being Chinese, they should stay away from the Kaifeng Jews and cease having anything to do with these issues, or the situation will never improve. These persons should ask themselves whether they are actually trying to help the Chinese Jews or if they unconsciously wish to destroy them? The government has already cracked down on the Chinese Jews in Kaifeng because of the actions of foreign Jews, perceived as illegal and seditious. Are those supposedly trying to help the Chinese Jews wanting to see the other shoe dropped, due to their harping on having the Chinese Jews declared non-Han and thus non-Chinese?

In my article “Ignoring Longstanding Chinese Policy on Religion and Its Consequences” (Points East 31/3, Nov. 2016), I briefly laid out a five-point procedure for the re-establishment of Chinese Judaism for the Kaifeng Jews, and I want to reiterate them here:

My first point is that Western Jews, so to speak, must bite the bullet and come to terms with the Jewishness of the Chinese Jews. Either they are Jewish or they are not. If as it is now said, they are not Jewish and must be converted to be Jewish, then, of course, the Chinese government is not going to take seriously their Judaism. As we know the lock of the Haredi on recognition of Jews in Israel is not going to go away, so the Israeli government is not going to accept unconverted Kaifeng Jews as Jews, but there are Diaspora Jewish and Israeli organizations that should embrace the Chinese Jews’ “Jewishness” nonetheless.

The second point made was that “The insistence by foreign Jews that one cannot be both Chinese (Han) and Jewish must cease, for that is a denial of the reality of Chinese Judaism.” No one denies that Christian Chinese and Bud-

dhist Chinese are Chinese, then why deny that the Chinese Jews are Chinese? In this regard, I suggest no longer using the Chinese equivalent of Israelite in referring to the Chinese Jews, because that inadvertently moves the situation into the area of foreign relations and confuses the current situation. The Chinese government would have no wish to strain relations with Israel for no benefit (and vice versa).

The third point is that criticism of the Chinese government for, in effect, being logical with regard to the above must end, because it will appear to the Chinese that this criticism is but a continuation of American propaganda against China that has been non-stop for over six decades. Under Xi Jinping, China is reasserting pride in its culture and history. Obviously, to be perceived as continuing American (false) propaganda will not help the situation. Incredible damage has already been done; only the creation of a positive relationship with the various relevant aspects of government can begin to ameliorate the situation.

The fourth point is that the Chinese Jews must themselves re-establish their own Judaism, assuming they are so inclined. There must be sufficient numbers willing to work very hard for a long period of time to bring back their Judaism. They must send people, both men and women, abroad to study Mizrahi practices and bring them back, because traditional Mizrahi women’s practices are highly compatible with Chinese women’s normative religious practices in the home. At least one must be trained as a Mizrahi rabbi. They must study what is known of the practices of the Kaifeng Jews that are specifically Chinese and revitalize them. In summary, they must recreate the synthesis that existed before but, of course, in a contemporary mode.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to doubt that this renewed synthesis can be achieved. Viable syntheses have to come from within not without, and once the thread is broken, I fear it’s broken, because there is no continuity.

The fifth point is that the Kaifeng Jews, working with recognized Chinese scholars, must establish an internal authority to authenticate their religious practices and certify that they are in accord with the constitution regarding religion (support “social harmony” and be congruent with “socialist principles”). This should not involve any foreign authentication, although foreign recognition would be very important. This is the first required

step before proceeding to the two relevant governmental authorities for official recognition as a religion.

In conclusion: There is no reason why Chinese Judaism cannot be resurgent in China, assuming there is a real desire among the descendants for this to happen. This revived Chinese Judaism is possible because the general knowledge of their particular practices has not been lost, and Mizrahi Judaism remains viable. I am certain the Chinese government would have no problem with this, if they can be made to understand it. Given recent events, this will be far from easy...At the moment, any further involvement by foreign Jews will only make a bad situation worse for the Kaifeng community. Patience is crucial.

Jordan Paper is Professor Emeritus, York University (Toronto) and Fellow, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria (BC). He may be reached at jpaper@yorku.ca.

From Kristallnacht and Back: Searching for Meaning in the History of the Shanghai Jews

By Kevin Ostoyich

Reprinted from The American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, John Hopkins University, <http://www.aicgs.org/issue/from-kristallnacht-and-back/>

When the Jews sought refuge from the Nazi regime, they were most often met with hatred and indifference. Most of the world closed its doors on the Jews, and, for that reason, Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist regime were able to perpetrate the worst horror in human history: The Holocaust. Fortunately, approximately 18,000 to 20,000 Jewish refugees were able to find haven in Shanghai, due to the fact that an entry visa was not needed to land there. Most of the refugees had been stripped of most, if not all, of their belongings. A number of them had spent time in concentration camps. Once in Shanghai the Jewish refugees began their lives anew, creating their own community, with newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, operettas, vaudeville, theater, sports teams, cafés, and clubs. Just when the refugees were getting back on their feet, however, the occupying Japanese forced all “stateless persons” who had entered the city after January 1, 1937 (i.e., the Jewish refugees from Europe) to move into a “Designated Area” (often referred to as the “Shanghai Ghetto”) in Hongkew, the poorest section of the city. Within the Designated Area the Jews found themselves subjected to extremely poor sanitary conditions, a significantly decreased

food supply, and constant humiliation at the hands of the Japanese authorities. After the conclusion of the Second World War, the Jews left Shanghai. On May 27, 2017, Harry J. Abraham, the founder and president of ProQuip, Inc. of Macedonia, Ohio, sat down in his home in Moreland Hills, Ohio, and reflected on his refugee experience in Shanghai. For Harry the meaning of the ordeal that he and other refugees endured is to be found in shards of glass...

From Kristallnacht

The shards of window glass fell upon the sleeping infant. A brick had been thrown through a window of the Abrahams' home on the night of November 8-9, 1938. That night and that glass still cut deeply in the mind of the now 79-year-old Harry J. Abraham. Kristallnacht (“Night of Broken Glass”) marked a turning point in the persecution of the Jews; it also marked a turning point for the Abraham family. On that night, Harry's father, a cattle trader, was not with the family in Frickhofen, but away on business in his hometown of Altkirchen. He was forcibly taken to the Market Square and then sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. In retaliation for the shooting of a German official by a Jewish youth in Paris, the Nazis had unleashed this orgy of hatred and destruction. Throughout Germany synagogues were burned and Jews beaten. The toll was staggering, with scores of synagogues destroyed, over 7,000 businesses trashed, approximately 30,000 Jews arrested, and upward to 100 killed. (Those wishing to learn more about the atrocities committed on that night and in the days that followed should visit the interactive website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, the regime intensified its efforts to strip Jews of their belongings and kick them out of the country. Those like Harry's father and uncle, who found themselves in a concentration camp, were told they would be released only if they presented proof of passage out of Germany. At this point an unlikely destination presented itself to the Abraham family. Harry's maternal grandfather, who had served in the German Navy during the First World War, heard that Jews were fleeing to Shanghai and informed Harry's mother about this option. She immediately purchased tickets for Harry's father and uncle. Having secured proof of passage, the two men were released from Buchenwald. They boarded a train from Frankfurt to Genoa and took a steamship from the Italian port to Shanghai. Harry's “very determined” mother then purchased tickets for herself, Harry, and her parents. Having no interest in journeying halfway across the globe and thinking everything would blow over, her parents refused to go. Thus, in April 1939, mother and infant son journeyed from Ge-

noa to Shanghai aboard the Italian steamer Conte Biancamano. When mother and son joined father and uncle in Shanghai, they were by no means alone. Following Kristallnacht thousands of Jews fled to Shanghai—not for the sake of adventure, but out of sheer necessity. Shanghai was the last haven of hope as the world closed its doors on the Jews.

The Abraham family entered a city with deplorable housing, rampant disease, and abysmal sanitation. Most of the refugees arrived after most, if not all, their belongings had been “aryanized” (either confiscated outright or forcibly sold at a fraction of the value) and what little had been left, spent on their journey to Shanghai. Many possessed little more than the clothes on their backs. The refugees were greeted at the docks and transported on trucks to homes or barracks which provided meals sponsored by Jewish charitable organizations and lodgings bereft of privacy. Given how young Harry was when he and his mother arrived in Shanghai, he does not remember much of the first years there. His memories are of the time well after the Japanese asserted full control of the city in December 1941, subsequent to the attack on Pearl Harbor and after the occupying Japanese forces decreed in February 1943 that all “stateless persons,” who had arrived after January 1, 1937, had to live in a Designated Area in the depressed Hongkew district of the city. Ever since the proclamation of this decree, the Jews referred to the Designated Area as a ghetto; Harry refers to it simply as “the camp.” The Designated Area was technically neither a ghetto nor a concentration camp; it was not walled off and it was not exclusively inhabited by Jews. Chinese actually far outnumbered Jews in the Designated Area. Nevertheless, the Jews had been stripped of their freedom, and conditions were deplorable. The refugees had to obtain passes from Japanese officials in order to leave the Designated Area for any purpose. As the war progressed, conditions deteriorated considerably, with disease and hunger running rampant.

In Shanghai, Harry's family lived in an apartment building with many other families. His father continued to work as a trader. Being quite resourceful, he developed a business that consisted of buying the tin cans refugees received in care packages and then selling them to the Chinese, who used them for gutters and stove pipes. The business flourished, and Harry's father accumulated burlap sacks full of cash. The only problem was the war inflation made cash basically worthless. Meanwhile, Harry's mother used the Singer sewing machine her grandmother had given her and which she had brought on the journey from Frickhofen to make clothes. Harry jokes that one time his

mother must have forgotten he was a boy when she made his pajamas because she had sewn the buttons on the wrong side!

Harry attended a school in Shanghai that was supported by the Jewish community. The school had a couple hundred students and went until the early afternoon. Afterward, Harry would attend Hebrew school under the direction of the Mir Yeshiva. The members of the Mir Yeshiva escaped from Lithuania to Shanghai via Siberia and Kobe, Japan. Because of Shanghai, the Mir Yeshiva was “the only eastern European yeshiva to survive the Holocaust intact.”¹ Harry remembers his schooling to have been quite rigorous and conducted exclusively in English. Thus, while parents spoke German, the refugee children often spoke English. Sometimes the Jewish children would play with Chinese children, but overall, the interaction between Jews and Chinese was minimal. Interactions with Japanese were limited mostly to officials making clear to the refugees “in no uncertain terms [...] what the rules were.” Like most other refugees, Harry never learned to speak Chinese. The aim was to learn English.

Toward the end of the war, the Americans bombed Shanghai. Harry remembers well Japanese enforcing strict blackout procedures and his family taking shelter during air raids. One day in particular—July 17, 1945—would etch itself into the memories of the Shanghai Jews. On that day, American bombers accidentally struck the Designated Area. It was horrific. Just a few weeks later the Americans bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Harry distinctly remembers news of the atomic bomb finding its way into the Designated Area. His parents talked about it, and in school children were told that “something had happened that was very, very terrific and very costly in human lives in Japan.” The Japanese surrendered and the refugees celebrated. The streets were jammed with yelling and cheering refugees, and at school the next day the end of the war was the topic of discussion. Harry remembers everything instantly feeling “open.” People started buying ice cream. Whether it was real ice cream—perhaps “it was ice milk or something or other”—did not matter; “it was good.”

The refugees started to plan where to go next. As was common, Harry’s family never viewed Shanghai as a permanent home. Their goal always had been to go to some English-speaking country, perhaps Australia, South Africa, or the United States. Given that Harry’s father had two brothers in the States—one of them serving in the U.S. Army during the war—the United States was the top choice. The lore of the United States only grew when American G.I.s arrived immediately after the war. Harry and his schoolmates put on a play and sang for the G.I.s, and in

return the G.I.s taught the children how to play Monopoly.

Harry’s family traveled on a troop carrier, the USS General M.C. Meigs, from Shanghai to San Francisco via Yokohama and Honolulu. From San Francisco, they traveled on to Pittsburgh, where his mother found a job. Shortly thereafter, during a Thanksgiving visit to family in Cleveland, Harry’s father went to the “Gates of Hope” Synagogue, which had been established by German-Jewish refugees during the early 1940s. There he encountered one of the owners of Campus Sports World, who offered him a job in Cleveland; thus, the family moved from Pittsburgh to Cleveland.

Back to Kristallnacht

Although Harry’s English was initially not on the level of other children his age, he soon encountered friendly people who helped him. His family lived in a community that was roughly half white and half black. Harry quickly became integrated in the black community, primarily making friends through baseball. As had been the case in Shanghai, Harry continued to attend Hebrew class after school. Although not totally observant himself, Harry’s father felt it important that Harry continue to observe Judaism. As Harry looks back now, he is particularly struck by how little the issue of what had happened to the Jews—even the gas chambers—was discussed. Few people seemed interested in this history. Harry, however, had questions. He would ask his father, “Why did you stay in Germany?” Not wanting to talk too much about such matters, his father simply said that in 1933 people just did not see what was going to happen. He explained that in the beginning the people—even Jews—supported Hitler because they thought he would be good for the country. Harry could not figure out why his father and others had not been able to see through Hitler from the very start. His thoughts ultimately led to a fundamental question: What in human nature would allow something like Kristallnacht to happen? Put another way: What makes people indifferent to injustice? To Harry this question should guide any investigation of the Holocaust. It pains him that such questions often go unasked when the Holocaust is commemorated. Instead studies tend to focus exclusively on experience. This focus on historical experience can often stifle questions and obscure history’s underlining meaning. The narrative should never lose sight of the action or inaction that allowed the experience to transpire in the first place. Although Harry makes a clear distinction between the history of the Shanghai Jews and the Holocaust and believes anyone who equates the two is simply “wrong,”

he does believe the commemorations of both histories fall prey to the same pitfall. To Harry, the Shanghai experience itself was not that historically significant; after all, it was just a small group who stayed in Shanghai for a relatively short period of time, he says. This changes, though, if one were to “talk about it and present it in the context of Kristallnacht or something that forced that situation. That, that [...] is important.” The fact that the Jews were able to live in Shanghai is also significant. He believes that both the Chinese and the Japanese deserve respect. He knows there were instances of unpleasant dealings between the Jews and the Chinese and Japanese in Shanghai, but in the end, “They allowed us to survive. [...] They could have shut the door, and we wouldn’t be talking today.”

Why did the Jews have to flee halfway across the world in order to survive? This question and its relationship to Kristallnacht continues to plague Harry’s thoughts. Why did people not stand up when concentration camps were set up in German towns and friends were being sent to them? Harry posed this question to his father’s former friends when he traveled to Altenkirchen years ago to see how graves of family members were being tended. After having been interviewed by a German newspaper reporter in the presence of his father’s former friends, Harry asked some questions of his own:

I started to ask [the] question; they started to cry. They were crying. They said, “We didn’t know anything about this.” Because, you know what I asked them? I said, “How could you let my father go to Buchenwald? How? You were there. What did you do about it? At that time?” [...] One guy said, “[Your father] was my best friend. I knew him as a Jew, but he was my best friend.” [I responded,] “How then could you let him go?” And these were people in the town that knew my father [who] were allowing this to happen. A simple question. They had no answer for me. “We didn’t know. We didn’t understand.” They started to cry.

Belated tears are meager answers. Harry reminds us that we need to continue to ask the question “why” with respect to the Shanghai Jews, the Holocaust, and Kristallnacht. When one goes back to Kristallnacht, one is confronted with the capacity of man to remain indifferent to the persecution of others. The history of the Shanghai Jews should always return to this point. Commemorations of experience should always lead back to the question “why?” Why, for example, did the Abraham family have to journey so far to survive? In Germany, there should have been more of a response to a cow trader being rounded up with others in

a market square; there should have been more of a response to life-long friends being sent to concentration camps for no other reason than their being Jewish; there should have been more of a response to glass falling on a slumbering infant; there should have been, but there was not. Although the glass of Kristallnacht has long since been swept away, questions regarding humanity's capacity for indifference continue to cut deeply.

[1] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Mir Yeshiva." Holocaust Encyclopedia.

www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007090. Accessed on August 1, 2017. For more information on the Mir Yeshiva in Shanghai, see David Kranzler, Japanese, Nazis & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945 (Hoboken, NJ, 1988), 431-435.

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The World's First Kung-Fu Holocaust Exploitation Flick! Oy Gevalt!

By Amir Bogen

Excerpted from Tablet, July 11, 2017. www.tabletmag.com.

Exodus to Shanghai is a film that claims to tell the story of Ho Feng-Shan, Chinese consul for Vienna, a rescuer of Jews in prewar Austria. While indeed based on true events, it may be the first Holocaust film that heavily features martial-arts-action scenes. The cast includes German actors, as well as Romanians, some Asians, and two young blond models. It was completed in Israel and sponsored by the Fashion TV channel. Sounds delusional? Not in the eyes of the filmmakers.

The production of Exodus to Shanghai was initiated by the founder and sole owner of Fashion TV, Michel Adam, a 67-year-old Jewish businessman. Born in Warsaw as Michel Adam Lisowski, his life took him from his homeland Poland to Vienna,

where his family relocated in the 1950s. From there, he went to Princeton University as a math student. He then moved to Thailand, where he started his textile business. In the mid-1990s, he moved to Paris, where he opened some nightlife spots and founded Fashion TV, which is basically an endless catwalk running 24/7 on television, with some trendy parties here and there...

The idea to make the movie was sparked in Adam's mind in June 2014 while having a Shabbat dinner in Shanghai with the local rabbi, who told his honorable guest about the "Chinese Schindler" who helped Viennese Jews escape Nazi-occupied Austria in the late 1930s by secretly stamping thousands of immigration visas. "As I live in Vienna I went after the story, and I found out that the office of Dr. Ho was 100 meters away from the Fashion TV Office," Adam told me in an interview...

The film, directed by Anthony Hickox, is set in 1938 Vienna, which is ruled by local Hitler sympathizer Hermann Deutsch (played by German actor Markus Von Linggen), the movie's villain, a local goon turned Nazi commissar. Deutsch always felt underprivileged near the rich and well-educated Morgenstern family, and he coveted their art collection and beautiful daughter Fannia (played by Israeli model Yaara Benbenishty). Now, with a swastika on his arm and in his heart, he can use his executive power in order to exploit, blackmail, and torment his Jewish neighbors.

While her parents find it hard to leave it all behind, Fannia, her sister Rivka (Israeli model and singer Jahni Raz), and brother Moshe (Srulik Pniel) decide to run away. But where to? This is where Dr. Ho comes into the picture—he grants them visas to China, while his nephew Bruce makes sure they will make it through the violent attack of Hermann and his gang. Bruce, as you can imagine, is a Bruce Lee-like character (played by Vietnamese-French model Alexandre Nguyen) who kicks Nazi asses.

Between one fight and another, he also takes the time to exchange kisses and some fists with Fannia, who soon becomes a well-trained lethal kung fu fighter herself. She will have her share of Jewish vengeance—think Kill Bill meets Inglourious Basterds.

As in Inglourious Basterds, Exodus to Shanghai also feeds off the theme of Jewish vengeance. Whether it's Fannia with her fists or her aristocratic parents with

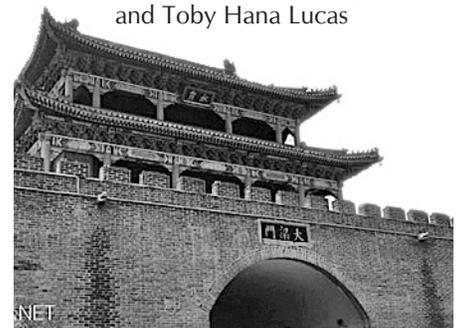
their machine guns, the sight of Nazi troops being massacred by Jews gives the movie a nice share of the Jewsploitation market—not really a kosher one, but enjoyable for some.

"We saw during the screening a lot of people who enjoyed seeing the Nazis beaten. At the end, the main star Yaara, a violinist, shoots a key Gestapo guy and provided proof that she can protect herself," Adam said. "We wanted to show a stronger side of the Jews and show that they fought back against the Nazis. That the Nazis were power-loving, drug-hungry evil men and that the people who believed in justice fought back."

But with all due respect to his Jewish heritage and pride, Adam is a seasoned businessman who knows that the real audience and market for this movie—if any—is based in China. In today's film economy, Western producers, even the big Hollywood ones, are looking east to find some financial relief for their flopping movies. While Adam won't admit that, it is pretty clear that this is the main reasoning behind inserting wild martial-arts scenes into a Holocaust movie. "Before the production of Exodus to Shanghai, Dr. Ho was fairly unknown among those that did the right thing," Adam said. "We were able to present his story and show how kind and heroic he was to those in need. We believe that this topic should never be forgotten, and thank the Chinese people," he added...

Kaifeng Jews Today

By Zheng Richard Wang
and Toby Hana Lucas



(Western Gate of Kaifeng)

Kaifeng, August, 2017: We are walking in a narrow alleyway in a hot and dusty city in central China. Cicadas buzzing our ears off. No shade in sight.

It is Tuesday, or Wednesday, I can't remember anymore. I cannot think straight in this heat. Then I hear my wife Toby calling, breaking me away from this mental haze. "Come here and look at this." A large fig tree extends its life-saving limbs toward the sky, offering precious escape from the sun.

Beneath the shade, I begin to take note of my surroundings. The alley way takes a ninety degree turn toward the south, thus the name of the alley changes from "North Teaching the Holy Text Alley" to "South Teaching the Holy Text Alley". From our research over the last few months, these are the neighborhoods of the Kaifeng Jews, who migrated here more than eight hundred years ago.

Not much of the old times remain in China — a muscular giant who is falling head over heels to catch up to the rest of the world. Kaifeng has even less to show for its sprouting history of thousands of years. The city sits on the southern banks of the notorious Yellow River. Flood rushes in once every ten years to cleanse the metropolis of houses, people and memories.

Memories are all that is left of the seventeen clans of Jewish cotton merchants who braved the Himalayas and sea routes to arrive at the gates of Middle Kingdom during Song dynasty. Presently, I trace down the tree's limbs with my eyes and see that it is growing at the base of an iron gate. The gate looks like the last time it operated an Emperor might have been on the throne in China. On the left side of the gate is a curious sight: a shovel is stuck in a pile of rubbles. Who left a shovel here? Those that wanted others to dig I am sure.



(Gate in disuse, location of front gate of the synagogue when it existed)

Continuing on the alleyway southward we meet only a few people. Remembering the advice from our taxi driver I choose only to speak to old folks. "Do you know of any Jews that lived here?" I ask an old man sitting on a tricycle. A brash wave is all I get in return before he

rides off on his vehicle loaded with recycled metal. "Not a local resident." I think to myself.

Suddenly my world becomes quiet, too quiet. Where is my wife? I trace back and find her inside a courtyard, taking photos on her phone. She takes a deep breath and puts her phone back in her pocket. We exchange a smile that says: what a nice neighbourhood. In my mind I superimpose history with the present. Jewish families lived here, died here, celebrated Passovers here, ate their baked eggs here, hid their pieces of matza here. The Chinese neighbors must have thought them strange: eat no pork, pluck the sinews, wear funny hats, worship a scroll.

Being Chinese myself and having married a Jewish wife, I can understand the neighbors' feelings quite well. I find the Jewish customs strange and sometimes outlandish, but by no means detestable or deserving hatred. I take part in the celebrations with more than enough enthusiasm, curiosity and fervour. For over eight hundred years the Chinese accepted Jewish communities to live among them. Blue-capped Muslims, they used to call them. "You worship your gods we worship ours. Let there only be good wine between us brothers."

According to our research we should be near the site of an ancient synagogue, the oldest and most colorful place of Judaic worship in all of China. The building is described in Pearl S. Buck's novel *Peony* as well as mentioned countless times in diaries of early missionaries. Some even recorded its magnificence in paintings and drawings. However, at this particular moment, all we see around us is derelict plastered walls, barred windows and locked gates.



(North Teaching the Holy Text Alley)

As we near the end of the alleyway I feel defeated. We travelled all this way just to walk the streets? The promised tour guides didn't return our emails. The private museum is nowhere to be found. When we went to the city museum three quarter of the building was off-limits. The young volunteer there told us there has been more

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than a few foreigners seeking information on Kaifeng Jews but all she can say is "Sorry, but you understand that I cannot give you any more information."

Beyond the alleyway, the busy afternoon street traffic beckons us to join in. If we hurry we can grab a taxi before the rush hour and be in our air-conditioned hotel rooms shortly after. A cool shower? Some sweet watermelon? I find my steps quicken as I am about to exit South Teaching the Holy Text Alley.

As is often the case, fate has other plans.

An old lady catches the corner of my eye. She sits feebly in a dark doorway. Her eyes fixed on a space and time immemorial. I don't know if I should snap her photo; offer her some water; give her a smile or sit beside her and find out what she sees. So I throw out my question: "Do you know of any Jews living in this neighbourhood?"

She lets the question sink in, then she raises her right arm pointing toward the alley we just came out of. She speaks in such a heavy Henan accent that even I cannot understand a word of it.

What the old lady says is still a mystery to this day, but all her arm waving and high-pitched dialect through her toothless lips does not go unnoticed. Soon a mid-aged neighbour comes to her aid.

"Jewish people? Yes I know them. But they are not here anymore." the man says.

"Where did they live?"

"Years ago, they lived on this street. But since the old man died, the family moved away."

"You know the old man?"

"Yes, but that was years ago. Decades maybe."

"What was their house number? We would like to go and visit."

The mid-aged man started counting in his head, as if to rewind the years on an invisible time-machine.

"House number twenty-one, but there is nothing there now. Just a dirty old courtyard. Nothing to see."

After thanking the man and old lady, we run back into South Teaching the Holy Text Alley. An address! We got an address! It may be just another dirty old locked yard but it is something. We follow the curvy alley and count the doors.

Incredibly, we are right back to the courtyard where my wife took a picture and breathed in deeply. "Something spoke to

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me then," she recalls. Walking deeper into the yard we now see small stars of David. My heartbeat quickens.

I stop at a window and my jaws drop. Taped to the inside is a business card. On it is the name of the person I have been trying to get in touch with for months. After all this time and effort, I finally see her name written on a piece of paper behind a pane of glass. My days of chasing ghosts are over. Jews in China is not just a fairy-tale!

We bang on the door. No answer. We tap the window. No sound. I dial the number on the business card. A ring can be heard from inside the house followed by some shuffling around. I give the phone to my wife and ask her to speak to it. Before long a female voice answers: "Wei? Nihao."

Esther, the tour guide who never answered my emails, opens the door to her ancestral home and private museum. She looks at us as if she has been expecting us for weeks. "Come in, it's hot out there."

Esther is a Chinese Jew. In China Jewish bloodlines were passed down by the father. Whether this was an adaptation to the Chinese culture at large or an alternate interpretation of the Torah remains to be debated. In any case, Esther's grandfather can trace his patriarchal lineage all the way to the Ming Dynasty as a Chinese Jew. The grandfather had five daughters and no sons. Luckily they heard about the Western Jews who trace bloodlines by the mother. This arguably makes Esther a Jew both in the Western and in the Chinese sense.

Her ancestral home museum is small and dark. One floor fan and two stools in front of it indicate where the guests should sit. I ignore my urge to rest and walk around the small room. Many of her photos I have seen on the internet. The amazing thing is she can point at a person in the photo and say that is the grandfather of her grandfather.

Esther claims that the room we are in was part of the synagogue. If we had a shovel and dug down three meters we would find the remnants of the south store room of the Israel's One True God Temple from the Ming Dynasty. If we pried open the walls of this room we would also discover a stone monument documented the rebuilding of the synagogue during the Qing dynasty. What is also mind-boggling is that the front gate of the old synagogue is at the exact point where my wife and I stopped and rested under a fig tree's welcoming shade.

We spent the next two hours travelling

through the unforgiving tides of history dominating the Chinese Jews. The Jews here, unlike elsewhere on earth, rarely suffered at the hands of other men. The Chinese were and are still mostly ignorant of Judaism. They were not bothered nor threatened by the Jews, who were brilliant merchants and financiers.

The sorrows of the Chinese Jews were mainly the sorrows of China herself: natural disasters, wars, invasions, cultural revolutions, anti-religious movements, famine etc. They withstood the test of time like the willow trees that cling onto the dry beds of the yellow river. Year after year their rabbi prayed in the direction of Jerusalem asking to be cleansed by a river of knowledge from their homeland. A river of faith to rejuvenate the community under their one true God. A river of desire to lead Jewish sons to Hebrew schools instead of Confucius libraries.

In the late eighteenth century there were many documented outcries for help by the Kaifeng Jewish community. Catholic priests, Jesuit missionaries, Muslims and even Jewish refugees in Shanghai tried their best to keep the lonely lantern of Judaism burning in Kaifeng, but God's will was stronger. In 1845 the river came. The Chinese Jewish synagogue was destroyed for the very last time. Esther tells us the legend that their last rabbi went to India to look for other rabbis to carry on his work, but he died on the way.

Toward the end of our session I was thoroughly depressed. An entire colourful people with unique culture and beliefs was submerged and washed away. I decide to tell Esther my intention of making a documentary film about the subject. When she hears this, her olive-shaped eyes brighten behind her glasses. It almost looks like a sparkle of hope has escaping from this reserved lady.

She stands up and gives us a rare smile: "Tomorrow, come to my new home with your camera, I will show you our Torah and the model of our Synagogue."

"She had not done wrong, for nothing was lost. 'Nothing is lost,' she repeated. 'He lives again and again, among our people,' she mused. 'Where there is a bolder brow, a brighter eye, there is one like him; where a voice sings most clearly, there is one; where a line is drawn most cleverly to make a picture clear, a carving strong, there is one; where a statesman stands most honorable, a judge most just, there is one; where a scholar is most learned, there is one; where a woman is both beautiful and wise, there is one. Their blood is lively in whatever frame it flows, and

when the frame is gone, its very dust enriches the still kindly soil. Their spirit is born anew in every generation. They are no more and yet they live forever." Excerpt from Peony by Pearl S. Buck.

Esther's ancestral home is leaking and damp. So she moved her most treasured items to her own apartment. This is the rendezvous point for us on day two.

This day could not come soon enough for us. Excited about the prospect, we grab our cameras and wave down a taxi. By the time we get to Esther's apartment building we are thirty minutes early. When morning comes to China, breakfast is never more than a few steps away. We get two fried rice cakes and share a bottle of yogurt. With our backs loaded with tripods and cameras we gulp down the food. To keep us entertained, a Chinese man does some extremely dangerous (by western standards) repair work on the high voltage power lines near us. I would never want to be his insurance agent.

Esther lives on the top floor of an apartment building. As was previously arranged, I give her a ring on the cell phone, she lets it ring three times, I hang up and we go up. Her apartment is slightly bigger than the ancestral house. A large flag of Israel dominates the front lobby. I wonder if she truly loves the country or is she doing this to please most of her visitors.

At our host's insistence we keep our shoes on. Esther introduces us to her modest living space.

The front lobby is a long hallway that connects all the other rooms. It is full of shoes and books. A table that is too big for the space holds Esther's lunch box and a sign that indicates this is a private museum. The books are in a bookcase to the right. They are in English and Chinese. These are her research materials on the history of Chinese Jews. Some of the books look old and yellow. On the lobby wall is a plaque in Chinese and Hebrew. This is a replica of the now lost family ancestry plaque that used to hang above the Zhao's family shrine. "It is the first item we rebuilt using donations." Esther tells me.

The central room is the exhibition room. With an air conditioner and a floor fan, this is the most comfortable space in her home. It is only much later that I realized the genius of the room. The large bay window faces west, the direction of Jerusalem. It also overlooks the old Jewish quarters. North and South Teaching the Holy Text Alleys are clearly in view. The original site of the synagogue is now occupied by a hospital. Its red roofs and white walls are most prominent. Esther

hangs a scroll of the plan of the synagogue on the window so she can superimpose the old on the new.

Other than these two rooms there is only the kitchen, the bedroom and the toilet on this floor. In the kitchen she shows me a bag full of spices given to her by Israeli visitors. She asks my wife and I how to use them. The best we can say is use them on chicken or fish. In her bare-walled bedroom she shows off her Judaic ceremonial dresses she wore when she visited Israel back in 2005. She gives us her rare laughter again as she recalls how the people on the streets of Israel cheered at the sight of a Chinese woman wearing Jewish clothing. I did not ask her if she visited the West Bank.

Upstairs in the attic is Esther's most treasured possessions. One can say they are one of the most treasured articles in the Kaifeng Jewry today. Here is the scale model of the two main buildings of the Old Synagogue and the Torah case. Esther's father, a Chinese, married her mother, a Chinese Jew. During the Cultural Revolution he did many professions to make ends meet. One of those professions is carpentry. So years later when Esther expressed the need for a Torah case to be rebuilt, he answered. The result is a beautifully handcrafted case housing a set of middle-school exercise books. The books are full of hand-written stories from the Old Testament. There is an actual Torah scroll (a gift from a foreign visitor) tucked in the corner of the case, but nobody can read it, so it is only there symbolically.

(Torah Box made by Esther's father)



At the heart of the Chinese Jewish story is this meticulously crafted case made more so for filial piety, for tradition, for bloodline, for family love than for a nameless and shapeless God who has lost his hold on his people. Inside is a meager but good attempt to hold on to their origin stories. Do these words hold any meaning today? Maybe. Will they hold any meaning for the next generations of Chinese Jews? No one knows. Like the people who rebuilt their synagogue again and again on this forsaken floodplain, the action of preservation holds more significance than the fruit of

their labour.

Jews in China swim in a vast river that is yellow. People did not paint swastika on their doors; people did not burn down their synagogues; people did not force them to wear yellow stars; people did not send them on trains to be killed. The Chinese simply pulled out a stool and added another pair of chopsticks to their table. There may not be much to eat but at least it is hot and you are among friends. Indeed, on this trip in China, when we accidentally thought a funeral party was a curbside restaurant they waved us in and wanted us to sit down with them anyway.

That, my dear friends, is what it means to be Chinese, to be Jewish, to be human. "We are all brothers from different oceans." as Confucius teaches us, "If they have come from afar to see us, then we must be glad and welcoming."

Esther believes God chose her to be the last of the last keeper of her people's story. She and her husband decided not to have children. "This way the government cannot shut us up using our family as collateral." She also plans to buy back all the old properties of the Zhao family and become a "Nail Resident" in her neighbourhood. "The municipal government plans to demolish old town and put up high rises. And I plan to own a lot of houses in old town and stay till the very end." she tells me, "We, the Zhao family, have stayed on this piece of land for eight hundred years continuously, and I am not about to give it up." With her decision on family planning, I wonder how long her struggles against the current could last.

In the 1980s a western organization conducted DNA tests on the Kaifeng Jews. The results were surprising. It shows that the Kaifeng Jews were purer in bloodline than many of the Russian and German Jews in Europe. "We are the chosen people, not because we are better, but because God decided to teach others using our stories," says Esther. Indeed, haven't we learned much through the rise and fall of the Jewish culture? Haven't we learned much about ourselves through our treatment of the Jewish people?

A month passes by, and I am sitting in my basement in Canada reviewing the footage and photographs of those two fateful days. I come across our group photo. There, in her apartment, Esther is sandwiched between us. My wife, a Jew; myself, a Chinese; and Esther a Chinese Jew. It dawns on me that I may ALSO be part of God's plan. That I, a Chinaman, has some role to play in the

stories of Chinese Jews. Like Esther's Chinese father who built the model of the synagogue; like all the Chinese that loved and were beloved by the Jews and formed families with them; like the Chinese scholar who forbade the selling of Chinese Jewish monuments to foreigners; like the millions of Chinese who laughed, cried, lived and died alongside the Jews; it is I who is swept off my feet by the arduous and miraculous Jewish journey in China.



(Toby Hana Lucas, Esther Guo Yan & Zheng Richard Wang in Esther's apartment/museum)

Nowadays, when I close my eyes, a defiant and resolute Esther stands in front of me. She is willing to throw away everything in her life to be God's chosen messenger and storyteller. She believes that her people's story does not deserve to die in obscurity and drown in the river of time. She knows there is something we could all learn from the extraordinary stories of her ancestors.



Esther in ceremonial dress)

On the timeless banks of the unforgiving Yellow River stands a skinny lady who looks mostly Chinese but knows in her heart that she is a Jew and will remain one till the end. Who are we to question? Who are we to judge? All I hope for is that when the next flood ravages the land, a branch of the fig tree can be left alone. So that it will provide a piece of comforting shade for the next story digger who comes along.

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China's Plan

(continued from page 1)

Under what was undoubtedly an audacious plan, China would both take in numerous asylum-seeking Jews from Europe, and resettle Jewish communities already living in Shanghai in other places.

In addition to the humanitarian consideration, Chinese officials list four major reasons for the initiative. One was assisting small ethnic groups in the spirit of China's national policy. Another was the hope that assisting the Jews would evoke the British public's sympathy toward China, mainly because, as is commonly known, many British financiers and bankers who worked in East Asia were Jews. China also expected that helping the Jews would increase the American public's sympathy to China's distress. Finally, the absorption of Jews, who had considerable economic means and talents, would be a welcome contribution to China, the planners said.

They decided to designate an area close to the southwestern border, appoint an official committee to run the project, enlist Jewish leaders from China and abroad to support the initiative and register Jewish professionals to advance certain fields in China.

At the end of April 1939, at the instruction of Chinese prime minister and finance minister Kong Xiang-xi, a round of discussions was held with representatives of the interior, foreign, defense, finance and transportation ministries. The ministries' comments were sent to the cabinet, which approved the move in principle.

The plan stipulated that the policy toward Jews of foreign nationality would depend on their citizenship and the agreements signed with their home states in the past. They were not part of the initiative. However, Jews without nationality would receive special passports from China's embassies and consulates in Europe. A Jew applying for entry to China will declare that he would respect China's laws and act accordingly, refrain from any political or ideological activity and not object to the "Three Principles of the People" – nationalism, democracy and livelihood – set by the father of the nation, Sun Yat-sen. Violating these conditions would lead to the settler's deportation. Those who wish to be naturalized would have to fulfill the official criteria required of any foreigner asking for Chi-

nese citizenship.

Naturalized individuals would have rights equal to any citizen, with no racial or religious discrimination. Since building a nation required various experts, scientists, engineers, doctors, technicians, and the like, people with desired skills would be given preference. The required skills would be registered in China's embassies and after obtaining the authorities' approval, and employment contracts would be signed with them. Those arriving without contracts would be registered in China's provinces and municipalities, which will advance their employment as much as possible. The assumption was that those with the necessary skills would finance their trip to China themselves.

The Interior Ministry suggested Tengyue Town, also known as Tengchong, in the sparsely populated, fertile area adjacent to the Burmese border for their settlement. The assumption was that Jewish refugees in Shanghai would also be able to get there by sea, via Burma, which was under British rule from the end of the 19th century, or via Thailand, from which they would proceed to Yunnan province. Other Jewish refugees from Europe would arrive via Suez, the Indian Ocean and Bengal Bay, proceed to Burma and enter Yunnan. The plans say it would be convenient and even easier for European Jews to reach the allocated destination than travel to distant Shanghai. It was proposed that the government would guarantee and assist building adequate housing for the newcomers.

Some of the ministries' comments and suggestions reflected the prevalent Chinese prejudices about the Jews at the time. The foreign ministry raised the fear that the Jews would in time ask for autonomy or self-determination. Due to the proximity to international trade areas, such a demand could be supported by other states, such as Britain and France. Also, since the Jews are usually mentioned in the same breath as Communism, it was said, China's enemies could be expected to make the claim that China itself had a Communist orientation.

The documents show that the first secretary in Germany's embassy in China expressed his government's concern over the initiative and demanded China take into consideration the Jews' supposed hostility toward Germany. In general, the ministry recommended settling the Jews

in small, dispersed places, not close to international trade zones or routes.

The defense ministry believed Jews should not be granted residence status, which could lead to a demand for full sovereignty. If a Jewish settlement is necessary, the allocated area must be subject to Chinese law, unlike the situation in Shanghai, and not be near the border, it stipulated.

The finance ministry said that Jews with farming or foresting skills should be settled in areas near internal transportation routes or places earmarked for agricultural development. At the same time, it stipulated that the refugees should not be permitted to own land.

The transportation ministry suggested consulting the Jews of Shanghai about settling the European Jews, in order to prepare adequate infrastructure. It is not clear from the documents why the plan was scrapped. They do, however, call for further clarifications. Ultimately they say that with all the good will and approval in principle, further clarifications were necessary. That effectively killed the initiative, and an opportunity to save many from their grim fate in Europe was missed.

Apparently Chiang Kai-Shek, with whom Sun Fo had consulted, was apprehensive at that critical time in the battle against the Japanese, about supporting a plan that would harm China's relations with Germany.

Indeed, in those days close relations with Germany appeared vital to China. Japan's threatening stance against the plan and concern about creating another point of friction with it in west China presumably also played a part in Chiang Kai-Shek's decision.

Ultimately, the plan to settle Jews in China wasn't carried out, and an opportunity to save many from their grim fate in Europe was missed...

More on the Yunnan Plan

[Many thanks to Dr. Bev Friend and Dr. Ben-Canaan for sharing the following additional material, which is excerpted from Wang Jian, *Escape and Rescue, The Jewish People in the Second War*, Shanghai, Shanghai: Jiaotong University Press, pages 221-223. Prof. Gao Bei's

book, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, also addresses this subject: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/shanghai-sanctuary-9780199840908?cc=us&lang=en&Ed.>

During this terrible period, when nearly every country in the world was closing its door to Jewish refugees, the Chinese government made a remarkable proposal – the creation of two residential areas for them in the southwest province of Yunnan, one close to Burma and other close to Vietnam. This was the brainchild of Sun Ke, eldest son of Sun Yat-sen).

In 1939, he was chairman of the National Legislature and a member of the ruling National Defence Committee. On February 17 that year, he proposed that the government designate two areas in Yunnan to receive the Jews being driven out of Europe. This would relieve the pressure of arrivals that Shanghai was finding it hard to bear, he said; it was also in line with his father's support for oppressed minorities and help strengthen China's relations with the U.S. and U.K. These were the countries with the world's strongest Jewish communities and which China needed most in his life-and-death struggle with Japan. As we mentioned in his Chapter Three, Sun's father had in 1920 declared his support for the Jews and a homeland in Palestine. Sun Ke embraced his father's opinion; in the spring of 1928, he visited the small, vibrant Jewish community in Palestine. The visit only strengthened his support for Zionism.

We can see similarities between Sun's proposal and the Fugu Plan of the Japanese. Both saw the global Jewish community as wealthy, powerful and talented – and someone to have on your side in the world war. Yunnan was, like Manchuria, a remote region rich in natural resources but sparse in population; neither China nor Japan had the capital to develop them – both looked to the overseas Jewish community to provide funds. The differences were that Sun's proposal was driven in part by humanitarianism and the migrants would enjoy

the same rights as Chinese citizens; the Fugu plan did not offer the same. For Tokyo, settling Jews in Manchukuo was a way to improve control over the new colony and develop its economy – just as Britain and France had introduced Indians, Chinese, Lebanese and other foreigners into their colonies in Africa and the Caribbean.

Despite the fact that China was in 1939 fighting a nationwide war alone against the strongest military power in Asia, Sun's proposal moved swiftly through the government. On March 7, the National Defence Committee approved the idea and ordered five government departments to draw up detailed plans. These included allowing entry to Jews and permitting them to apply for Chinese nationality. They would not be allowed to engage in politics or ideological propaganda: they would enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as a Chinese citizen and not be subject to racial or religious discrimination. "Our country is in the stage of construction and needs skilled people in many fields, such as scientists, engineers, doctors and machinists," the plan said. Accordingly, ministries should draw up a list of professions that required manpower and send them to China's embassies abroad. The embassies should ask the League of Nations and international charitable bodies to help find applicants. General Long Yun, chairman of the Yunnan province government, sent a telegram of support to the central government in Chongqing, saying that he welcomed the Jews to help cultivate the land: "Yunnan is a large area with a sparse population and fertile soil. The Jews are concentrated in Shanghai. They have rich knowledge and abundant financial resources. If they could settle in Yunnan and cultivate the empty land, it would bring benefit to everyone." The support of General Long was essential. After serving in the army of the provincial warlord of Yunnan, he had overthrown him in a coup in 1927. Soon afterwards, he became Commander of the Nationalists' 38th Army; so he held tightly both civilian and military power in Yunnan. The war was bringing economic benefits to his remote inland province; factories, universities and government departments had moved there from areas in the east conquered by the Japanese. Yunnan was the corridor by which supplies came from Burma and India to supply military bases in all parts of China. Long's army had an important role, to defend the country

from Japanese forces in Burma.

The areas designated for Jews were in Tengchong (in the west of Yunnan, close to Burma, and Mengzi in the southeast, close to Vietnam. For the well-educated, urban and middle class Jews refugees in Shanghai, Tengchong was not the first choice for settlement. The city is more than 1,600 metres above sea level and suffers from frequent earthquakes. Its economy was agricultural – tobacco, tea, grain and oil-bearing crops; it was also known for its geothermal springs and as a centre for the sale of jade and amber. Digging the land on a kibbutz in the Holy Land was one thing – but planting tobacco on the slopes of a remote Chinese mountain something else.

The Jewish community in Shanghai and around the world warmly welcomed the proposal. They held several rounds of talks with the Chinese government; it offered places for 100,000 Jews – an astonishing figure given the plight of the Jewish people in the world. The biggest obstacle to creating a new home was money – the refugees had been stripped of their assets before leaving Europe, so the capital would have to come from the Jewish community abroad. The logistical obstacles were also formidable – the Japanese military controlled many of the major ports of China and had the most powerful navy in the South China Sea. How were the Jews to leave Shanghai, reach Yunnan and build their new lives there? So the plan was never implemented. And, even if the transport lines had been open, how many European Jewish refugees wanted to settle in this remote rural corner of China? Their hope was to wait out the war and move to countries with established Jewish communities. The only 'migrants' were 10 Jews who arrived in Yunnan in 1939 to work as drivers and in the provincial salt management bureau. What is remarkable is that, during this most perilous moment of China's history, its leaders found the energy and compassion to offer such help to their brother victims of Fascism.

Wang Jian serves as the deputy chairman of the History Department at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

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Israeli State Panel

(continued from page 1)

Bnei Anusim – descendants of Jews forced to convert during the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions. In places like Colombia and Sicily, these Crypto-Jewish communities have organized themselves in recent years and are often much larger than the mainstream Jewish communities in their area, committee members found.

The category also includes groups who claim to be descended from the so-called “lost tribes,” such as the Bnei Menashe from northeastern India.

Emerging Jewish communities, also known as “Judaizing communities,” is a term used to refer to groups from remote corners of the world that have recently discovered Judaism and embrace Jewish practices – sometimes converting to Judaism, but often not. They can be found in South America, Africa and as far away as Papua New Guinea.

Under existing Israeli law, only Jews can obtain student visas to study in non-degree-conferring institutes of higher education in the country, which are mainly religious schools or yeshivas. As a result, individuals with Jewish roots or members of emerging Jewish communities cannot study Judaism in Israel outside of the university system. The new preferential status recommended by the committee would solve this problem, too.

The committee also made other key recommendations to the government, including that it formulate criteria that determine, once and for all, which communities with connections to the Jewish people are eligible for immigration.

To date, the report noted, no policy has ever been formulated and only groups that have lobbyists operating on their behalf in Israel – for example, the Ethiopian Falashmura (who were forced to convert to Christianity more than a century ago but still identify as Jews) and the Bnei Menashe – are allowed to immigrate (and undergo conversion upon arrival).

Many other groups are barred from the country, even though they have no less of a connection to the Jewish people and Judaism. That would include the Abayudaya of Uganda – who embraced Judaism at the turn of the last century and were formally converted by a Conservative rabbinical court about 15 years ago – and the Subbotniks, a Christian com-

munity that embraced Judaism in Russia more than a century ago...

Moreover, the panel called on the government to reach out to leaders of Crypto-Jewish and other organized communities abroad that consider themselves Jewish and offer them the opportunity to study and tour Israel, as a first step in nurturing ties.

The panel also recommended that the government open cultural centers abroad – modeled on the German Goethe-Institut and the British Council – where individuals with Jewish roots and members of emerging Jewish communities could learn more about Judaism and Israel.

Finally, it said Israel should not close its doors to groups that have embraced Judaism but have no proven genetic connection to the Jewish people – such as those who claim descent from the “lost tribes.” The government should consider recognizing those who have lived together as an organized Jewish community for a minimum number of years, such as 40, it added.

BOOK NOOK

Meron Medzini, *Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews During the Holocaust Era*

(Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), xii + 220 pp., \$79.00.

Reviewed by Steve Hochstadt

Imperial Japan’s relationships with and treatment of Jews under its direct control while it was allied with Nazi Germany during World War II should not be a neglected subject. Because of the Holocaust, every nation’s Jewish policies and practices become important. A broad scholarship has been created about the Jewish policy of each European nation and each Western nation outside of Europe. Much less interest has been shown in Asian responses.

In China, long-time Jewish communities tried to care for sudden streams of penniless refugees in European-dominated Shanghai and in Japanese-ruled Harbin. Japan had its own small Jewish community in Kobe, which grew in the 1920s and 1930s to about one hundred families. Military conquests encompassed those Jews in China and across East Asia. Then enthusiastic perpetrators of Holocaust in Europe arrived and urged their Japanese allies to deal with all those Jews.

How did Japanese officials and Japanese neighbors treat these Jews, every one of whom was a “foreigner”? Because a real Jewish question had not been asked in Japan until the 1930s, because Jews played no role in Japanese history or thinking, Imperial Japanese behavior provides a look into the nation’s cultural soul, which can immediately be compared to all other nations with global ambition.

In this field, questions predominate and answers are few. Meron Medzini’s *Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun* performs valuable services, perhaps laying the foundation for more sustained and serious work. Medzini covers the broad international spectrum of Japanese-Jewish encounters across East Asia, and offers judicious analysis of evolving Japanese policy punctuated by entry into global war in 1941. He proposes persuasive explanations in a clear style for both the gradual shifts and the overall principles of Japanese policy. Future studies will have to carefully consider Medzini’s work. All the more reason why the extraordinary sloppiness of this book is unfortunate.

Jews were unknown in Japan before Western powers forcibly broke through the Japanese wall against foreign influence in the 1850s. Tiny communities of Jews in Yokohama and Nagasaki inaugurated synagogues in the 1890s. The Russo-Japanese War in 1905 first brought Jews as a people to Japanese consciousness. The American Jewish banker Jacob Schiff, horrified at the deep Russian and Ukrainian anti-Semitism, supported Japan against the Tsarist Empire, arranged for large loans, helped Japanese diplomats reach American media, and convinced President Teddy Roosevelt to lead peace negotiations. He was the first Westerner to be granted the Medal of the Rising Sun, and he convinced generations of Japanese leaders of the value of Jewish friendship. Jewish refugees fleeing the Russian Revolution arrived in Japan, and Kobe became a small center for Jewish life in Japan.

As Japanese military power spread in East Asia over the next few decades, more Jewish communities came under their control: Harbin in Manchuria in 1931, Shanghai partly in 1937 and completely in 1941. About 4000 Eastern European Jewish refugees landed in Kobe, between 1939 and 1941 (p. 122), aided by the Japanese government.

Two sets of ideas about Jews tugged at Japanese civil and military leaders from the beginning of the 20th century. One was imported from Europe, the wild anti-Semitism of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, pushed by White Russians, who collaborated with the Japanese interventionist force in Siberia during the Russian civil War and then settled in East Asian cities like Harbin. The German form of racially-based an-

ti-Semitism influenced a few intellectuals and military officers in the late 1920s, but Nazi racial doctrines held limited appeal to the Japanese, placed well below Aryans on the cultural totem pole.

Medzini's central point is that the makers of Japanese policy, before and during the Pacific War, consistently refused to persecute Jews, as the Christian anti-Semites demanded. First in Manchuria in the early 1930s, then later throughout East Asia, Japanese authorities sought the friendship of White Russians and Germans without alienating Jews. Although some natural affinity existed between anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalist anti-Western elements in Japanese society, the Japanese continued to be swayed by a different set of exaggerated ideas about the power of worldwide Jews, especially American Jews, to influence opinion and control events. Unlike Christian tropes about Jews, the beliefs in Jewish power were not harnessed to insistence on Jewish evil, for which no historical basis existed in Asian religions. Medzini shows that many of the prerequisites of Christian anti-Semitism were absent in Japan: "There was nothing in Shintoism or Buddhism that was remotely anti-Jewish." (p. 24) Such ideas were as foreign to most Japanese as were Jews themselves, and Medzini stresses the absence of Jews from Japanese life as the most significant impediment to the spread of anti-Semitism.

Instead the good feelings engendered by Schiff's actions allowed most Japanese to perceive the Jews they encountered as successful businessmen (the Baghdadi community in Shanghai) or as desperate refugees in need of assistance. The possible international repercussions of persecuting Jews were carefully weighed by Japanese leaders and the Jews under their control were treated as members of their nations of origin rather than as a separate and unique category.

The approach to Jews advocated by military and civilian leaders focused on international relations. Accepting some standard beliefs about Jews' international power in the West and the Soviet Union, but without any insistence on Jewish evil, pragmatic policy-makers hoped to harness Jewish power to promote Japanese interests.

Despite considerable pressure from Nazi Germans friends and the collective Western consular authorities in Shanghai, the so-called five Ministers conference held in Tokyo in December 1938 decided against any discriminatory policy against Jews, and refused to limit the entry of Jewish refugees to Shanghai. (69-70) the so-called open door in Shanghai was held open by the Japanese through most of 1939. War against the US after 1941 did not interrupt

the Japanese search for Jewish help in influencing international affairs, including in America. In March 1942, after many Jewish communities in East Asia had fallen under direct Japanese military control, another high-level Imperial conference affirmed that Jews were not to be singled out for any discriminatory treatment, but were to be considered like other Europeans. Medzini uses the phrase "tolerated or protected minority". (p. 89)

Jewish citizens of enemy nations were interned, as the British and Americans were in Shanghai or the Dutch in Indonesia. The Russian Jewish community in Shanghai was left untouched, because the Japanese hoped to avoid war with the USSR. The only significant discriminatory actions against Jews in the Japanese military empire were the creation of a Designated Area in Shanghai in February 1943 for recent refugees from Central and Eastern Europe and the arrest of all Indonesian Jews in August 1943. In neither case was physical brutality directed at Jews nor was there interference in Jewish religious practices. In some places, such as Penang in Malaya, Japanese soldiers protected Jews from attacks by German sailors. (p. 108)

The experiences of Jewish refugees in Shanghai under Japanese occupation have been well-documented, but almost always in isolation. Medzini's much broader survey demonstrates that the Japanese government enforced a clear set of guidelines: "as a rule Japan's attitude toward the Jews was no different from its attitude toward other Europeans." (p. 114) Medzini speculates that worry about eventually losing the war and being held responsible for war crimes against civilians prevented anti-Semitic actions (p. 115), but there is no specific evidence for this.

I don't think I have ever run across an academic book with so many errors. In the text, a wide variety of names are misspelled: the Russians Vyacheslav Plehve and Sergei Eisenstein, the Hungarian Béla Kun, the Shanghai Jews Elie Kadoorie and Nissim Benjamin Ezra, the German Hermann Goering, the Betar youth movement, the Chinese city Qingdao, and the Wannsee Conference. The footnotes are a mess of typos, especially in German titles, but also in authors' names. Many references to books lack page numbers.

The sloppiness is not just typographical. Medzini's discussion of the growth of the Jewish refugee community in Shanghai, which eventually included more than half of the Jews controlled by Japan, contains a number of errors (p. 67,73). Until the final months of 1938, there were under one thousand European refugees. Japan's key decision in August 1939 to limit arriv-

als, welcomed by the British, French, and American authorities in Shanghai, is not mentioned. The February 1943 edict creating the Designated Area applied to all refugee arrivals since 1937, not 1939 (p. 79). At least 16,000 Jews lived in the so-called Hongkou ghetto, not 5000, and there was no "barbed wire wall". (p. 80)

These flaws do not appear to distort Medzini's main arguments about Japanese behavior toward Jews. His conclusions fit well with the lengthy bibliography of secondary works which he used to construct them. The next step would be to analyze the specific discussions which led to policy decisions, the particulars of Japanese policy-making. The published Japanese archival source collections mentioned in the bibliography do not appear to have been utilized thoroughly. The work of explaining why Japan chose to protect and not persecute Jews during the genocidal first half of the 20th century remains to be done.

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In Brief

[Thanks to Dr. Bev Friend for providing the following summaries. Ed.]

Aliens in a Strange Land: Jews and Modern China, a new book in Chinese

By Xu Xin, published in August 2017 by National Taiwan University Press.

Synopsis:

The history of modern Jewish diaspora in China started in the second half of the 19th century, at a time when China's door was forced open by Western Powers. During the 100 years that ensued, some 40,000 Jews, seeking business opportunities or a safe haven, arrived from various parts of the world and settled in emerging Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tianjin and Harbin. Their presence made impressive marks in the realms of commerce, real estate, services and the manufacturing industry, cultures and the arts, as well as social politics. While the entry of the first Jews into China can be traced over one thousand years back, their encounter with modern China signified the first direct known interactions between the two peoples: Chinese and Jews. The importance of this time period is evident, as the history of Jewish Diaspora in China becomes an integral part of the diaspora of world Jewry.

As the second world war drew to an end, and the state of Israel emerged, the Jewish population that settled in China during the preceding century exited the country al-

most entirely. This however, did not sever the relationship between the Jews and the Chinese. Since the 1980s, a new wave of Jews arrived on the scene to pursue work, studies or business opportunity. The Jewish diaspora in China continues.

This book aims to lend perspectives on history, international politics, society, the economy and culture, while providing an understanding of the Jews in contemporary China, its background, chronology, societal life and all its significance.

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References

Colors of Veracity: A Quest for Truth in China and Beyond

By Vera Schwarcz, University of Hawaii Press, 2014. 192pp. Paper - price: US \$25.00; cloth - price: US \$45.00. <http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-9237-9780824838737.aspx>

Book Description:

In *Colors of Veracity*, Vera Schwarcz condenses four decades of teaching and scholarship about China to raise fundamental questions about the nature of truth and history. In clear and vivid prose, she addresses

contemporary moral dilemmas with a highly personal sense of ethics and aesthetics.

Drawing on classical sources in Hebrew and Chinese (as well as several Greek and Japanese texts), Schwarcz brings deep and varied cultural references to bear on the question of truth and falsehood in human consciousness. An attentiveness to connotations and nuance is apparent throughout her work, which redefines both the Jewish understanding of *emet* (a notion of truth that encompasses authenticity) and the Chinese commitment to *zhen* (a vision of the real that comprises the innermost sincerity of the seeker's heart-mind). Works of art, from contemporary calligraphy and installations to fake Chinese characters and a Jewish menorah from Roman times, shed light on the historian's task of giving voice to the dread-filled past. Following in the footsteps of literary scholar Geoffrey Hartman, Schwarcz expands on the "Philomela Project, which calls on historians to find new ways of conveying truth, especially when political authorities are bent on enforcing amnesia of past traumatic events.

Truth matters, even if it cannot be mapped in its totality. Veracity is shown again and again to be neither black nor white. Schwarcz's accomplishment is a subtle depiction of "fractured luminosity," which inspires and sustains the moral conviction of those who pursue truth against all odds.

Her website between2walls.com lists all her previous books and recent articles.

The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng: A Millennium of Adaptation and Endurance, edited by Anson H. Laytner and Jordan Paper, Lexington Books, 2017. See enclosed flyer for discounted purchase price.

With contributions by Alex Bender; Moshe Yehuda Bernstein; Irene Eber; Mathew A. Eckstein; Kong Xianyi; Anson H. Laytner; Donald Daniel Leslie; Jordan Paper; Andrew H. Plaks; Mohammed Turki al-Sudairi; Nigel Thomas and Erik Zürcher; this

scholarly collection examines the origins, history, and contemporary nature of Chinese Judaism in the community of Kaifeng. These essays, written by a diverse, international team of contributors, explore the culture and history of this thousand-year-old Jewish community, whose synthesis of Chinese and Jewish cultures helped guarantee its survival.

Part I of this study analyzes the origin and historical development of the Kaifeng community, as well as the unique cultural synthesis it engendered. Part II explores the contemporary nature of this Chinese Jewish community, particularly examining the community's relationship to Jewish organizations outside of China, the impact of Western Jewish contact, and the tenuous nature of Jewish identity in Kaifeng.

Endorsements:

"This volume offers new insights and unparalleled perspectives regarding some of the most recent and pressing developments of the Kaifeng Jewish community, which has existed for over a millennium. In this seminal collection, the contributors unveil the Jewry of Kaifeng, from ancient times to the current crisis. Clear, persuasive, and thought-provoking, this book is a must read for anyone seeking to understand the unique role of the Kaifeng Jews in the history of Jewish diaspora. In short, this study is an invaluable contribution to the existing literature." (Xu Xin, Nanjing University, author of *The Jews of Kaifeng, China and Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng*.)

"This collection is a magnificent and accurate examination of the epic story of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, as told by the topics leading scholars. This up-to-date book is a valuable addition to this most fascinating yet little-known community. Readers will be most appreciative and indebted to the two outstanding editors of this volume." (Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, author of *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews during World War II and with Ellen Rodman, Pepper, Silk and Ivory*.)

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