



Points East

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

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SIGNAL on Sino-Israeli Relations

By Dale Aluf

Compiled from *SIGNAL Perspectives* <http://en.sino-israel.org/publications/signal-perspectives/19> September and 12 July 2019

Israel and China are peculiar partners. In almost every way, they display contrasts as opposed to commonalities – across cultures, history, size, political systems, economic structures, and ideology. In the face of their differences, they have succeeded in cultivating flourishing economic relations, and today, China is Israel's second-largest trading partner country. China's relations with Israel are emblematic of the impact of the PRC's vast international outreach over the past decade.

With sustained rapid economic growth and a dramatic increase in international investment, China has become a key trading partner and significant foreign investor for Israel. There has been growing concern in China for stability in the Middle East, predominantly due to its investments in the region and the success of its Belt and Road Initiative. China has also taken an active interest in collaboration on innovation and technology with Israel – which inspired the establishment of a Comprehensive Innovation Partnership between the two nations in March of 2017.

The China of today is a long way from the 'Sick Man of East Asia,' as it was called in the early 20th century when it first established diplomatic relations with Israel. The modern world is now, for the first time, presented with a powerful China – a China that is also, for the first time, looking outward to the world from its position of strength.

Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative now encompasses roughly two-thirds of the global population, with over 60 partner countries having signed onto the project. It aims to connect the world to China through a series of mega-infrastructure projects commanding multi-trillion-dollar investment. Today's China has massive influence over global markets, supply chains, global governance, and geopolitics.

China's increasing assertiveness on the world stage has become a fact of our time – but the best way to deal with it is less obvious. While Beijing promotes its Belt and Road Initiative as a means to bring nations closer together through win-win cooperation, some observers have come to view it as a form of economic colonialism. These pundits argue that BRI investments create "debt traps" that

Help Make History: Contribute to the Denise Yeh Bressler Kaifeng Scholarship Fund

As a memorial to board member Denise Bressler, who had long been active in helping to educate the Kaifeng Jewish community, the Sino Judaic Institute has created a scholarship in her memory.

This autumn, SJI has recruited a Kaifeng Jewish descendant to study intensive Jewish studies and English as a second language abroad before returning home as an informal teacher at family home gatherings. Money is needed for travel, room and board, study materials, and tuition. We need to raise US \$10,000.

Your contribution for this historic undertaking will have an impact, whether you donate \$5, \$50, \$500 or \$5,000. Every little bit helps towards our initial goal of \$10,000. We launch this program in the autumn of 2019, so the need is urgent.

Please contribute by sending a check, made out to the Sino-Judaic Institute with a note for its purpose, to Prof. Steve Hochstadt, 1252 West College Avenue, Jacksonville, IL 62650. Donations can be made online via PayPal at www.sino-judaic.org.

Thank you!

In Memoriam Sidney Rittenberg

14 August 1921 – 23 August 2019

Compiled from articles by Jonathan Margolis, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/28/sidney-rittenberg-obituary>, 28 Aug 2019; Robert D. McFadden, New York Times, 26 August 2019; and other sources.

Sidney Rittenberg, an American Jew who stayed in China for 35 years after World War II as an adviser and political prisoner of the Communist Revolution, and later made millions as a counselor of Western capitalists exploiting booming Chinese markets, died on Saturday in Scottsdale, Ariz. He was 98.

One of the few non-Chinese people to become a senior member of the Chinese Communist party, he was known in China, and still revered, as Li Dunbai (which sounds like Rittenberg to Chinese ears).

An intimate of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and almost every other veteran revolutionary, Rittenberg gained prominence at the Broadcast Administration in Beijing, one of the most important agencies of government, and for a few months in 1967 was the director of Radio Peking... Rittenberg also translated Mao's Complete Works and the Little Red Book into English and became a leading rabble-rouser in the Cultural Revolution

The convulsions of a China constantly reinventing itself led to Rittenberg twice falling foul of the leadership. Of his 35 years in China, he served a total of 16 imprisoned in solitary confinement, accused of being an American spy. Disillusioned with communism, he returned to the US in 1980 with his wife, Wang Yulin, whom he married in 1956, and their four children.

In the United States after his release, he founded Rittenberg Associates, a consulting company that helped businesses from

Colgate Palmolive to Warner Music to Intel, Microsoft and PricewaterhouseCoopers to establish themselves in China. He used his extensive knowledge and contacts in China to build his own capitalist empire, advising corporate leaders, including Bill Gates of Microsoft and the computer magnate Michael S. Dell, on how to cash in on China's vast growing economy. Still welcome in China, he took entrepreneurs on guided tours, introducing them to the country's movers and shakers...

The son of Muriel (née Sluth) and Sidney Rittenberg, Sidney Rittenberg was born in Charleston, S.C., on Aug. 14, 1921 into a prominent Jewish family. His father, Sidney Sr, was president of the Charleston City Council and his grandfather had been a prom-

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SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	142
Canada	7
China	15
Israel	11
England	6
Australia	3
Japan	2
Germany	2
Greece	1
Singapore	1
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
Total:	192

FROM THE EDITOR

In a midrash, when Avraham is arguing with God to spare S'dom and Amorah, he asks if God would hold both ends of a rope—that God would have strict justice and a world—but, Avraham says, God can't have both. God has to choose. (Spoiler: God chooses to have a world and relinquishes strict justice.)

In a similar way, I want to champion religious freedom in China and good relations with China but I am being compelled by American politics to choose between the two. Do I remain silent about the situation of the Jews in China because I don't support President Trump's anti-China policies or do I speak up for religious freedom and appear to support President Trump on China?

As the Children of Israel might have declared when Moshe asked them to choose between life and death, the blessing and the curse: "This is a choice?!"

For those of us who support good relations with China and who advocate for Jewish religious freedom in China, it is very challenging to parse this problem and it leaves one's position open to misinterpretation and misuse by others.

This issue of Points East again features several articles by Israelis analyzing Sino-Israeli relations in all their complexity. It also highlights the passing of yet another giant in Sino-Jewish relations: Sidney Rittenberg. Twice he rode to fame: first when he rose to a position of significance prior to and during the Cultural Revolution, and then again after Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy when he became a leading trade broker and interpreter of the "New China." I met Sidney and his wife several times because they lived in the greater Seattle area. He was a charming fellow whose jovial retelling of his adventures masked the horrors he had endured.

Lastly, let me wish all our Jewish readers a happy 5780: Shana tova u'mituka!

Anson Laytner

Points East

Anson Laytner, Editor

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Indonesian Jews Study in Israel

By Attila Somfalvi

Excerpted from *Ynetnews.com*, 29 July 2019

Despite the dangers and despite the fact that is not easy being Jewish in Indonesia - the largest Muslim country in the world - two members of the Torat Chaim community in the north of the country dared to visit Israel to study Judaism at the Machanayim Yeshiva operated by the Ohr Torah Stone Modern Orthodox movement.

Tikva and Daniel, who arrived in Israel earlier this month, intend to return to Jayapura, Indonesia to teach others in their community about Judaism.

"It's hard to be a Jew in Indonesia," said Tikva. "As Jews, we hide our identity. It's dangerous to admit that we're Jewish, because it's illegal - it's a Muslim state."

For example, it is illegal to maintain a Jewish lifestyle in Indonesia. "You cannot get married, it's difficult," she said...

The Jews of Indonesia are descendants of Jews who emigrated from Peru some 400 years ago, after Catholic missionaries forced them to convert. The same Jews arrived in Peru after the expulsion from Spain and Portugal, but there too they were made to convert and fled.

"It's true that as of today they live as Jews and not as forced converts," Rabbi Birnbaum, the head of Ohr Torah Stone emissary programs, told Ynet.

"They have a synagogue, Torat Chaim, they keep Shabbat and the high holidays and they have a deep Jewish identity. I met Daniel and Tikva on a visit to the community in Indonesia, and I felt that they could be the leaders of the community."

Although the family knew that they were Jews, Daniel says they only began to study Judaism seven years ago.

"We began to observe Shabbat and study Torah until the Indonesian woman who was our teacher organized the community and introduced us to Rabbi Tovia Singer, from whom we learned."

Rabbi Singer, who later became the rabbi of the country's Jewish community and recently who immigrated to Israel, was invited to Indonesia by the Etz Chaim (Tree of Life) organization.

There the rabbi met Jews who had been Messianic Jews for many years, but after three days of study and Q&A sessions, the community voted to stop believing in Jesus and to go back to being Jews.

Despite the danger, Tikva and Daniel decided to study Judaism in Israel and then return to Indonesia.

"I think this is a great responsibility for me. With the help of God, I will work on it and become a leader," he said, and ex-

pressed the hope that one day he will live in Israel.

According to Rabbi Birnbaum, there are some 100 Jews from all over the world living in Jakarta, and there are other smaller communities throughout Indonesia.

Approximately 400 Jews (or Judaizers - Christians who believe it is necessary to live a Jewish way of life) lead an entirely religious lifestyle in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world.

Hundreds of other people claiming to be Jewish are also living in various communities throughout Indonesia.

"Surprisingly, Judaism is beginning to reawaken and find renewal in Indonesia," Rabbi Birnbaum said.

Safe Harbor: Shanghai—Surprising Stories of Jewish Refugees in World War II

Free Exhibition - Monday, October 28, 2019 - Friday, May 1, 2020 Chinese American Museum DC - 1218 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

Documentary screening, "Above the Drowning Sea" - Mon. Oct. 28, 2019, 6:30pm.

University of California Washington Center - 1608 Rhode Island Ave. NW, 20036. \$10.

1-Day Conference and Lunch - Thursday, October 31, 2019, 9:30am - 3:30pm Capital Hilton, 1001 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036. \$25. Includes Lunch.

Open to the public. Registration required.

For registration and more information go to: <https://www.chineseamericanmuseum.org/safeharbor>

On Thursday, October 31, 2019, a one-day conference will feature brief lectures and presentations from historical and cultural experts and personal accounts of Jewish refugees and Shanghaianders. The event is open to the public. Lunch is included. Registration is required. \$25 per registrant.

Confirmed Speakers:

Liliane Willens - Author, Stateless in Shanghai, Liliane Willens was born of Russian parentage in the former extraterritorial French Concession of Shanghai, China, where she attended a French lycée. Her parents, she and her siblings - all stateless - experienced World War II under the Japanese military occupation, the bombing by American planes and the return of the Chinese government. Because of difficulties to obtain an immigration visa to the United States, Liliane lived two years under the newly established People's Republic of China. When Liliane immigrated to the United States, she studied at Boston University where she received her undergraduate degree, an M.A. and Ph.D. in French Language and Literature. She taught

these subjects at Boston College and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Later moving to Washington, DC, she worked for the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps.

Betty Grebenschikoff - When Betty's peaceful childhood in Berlin, Germany, was shattered by Nazi violence against Jews, the family was forced to flee to Shanghai in 1939. They were just one step ahead of the Gestapo. Shanghai was the only open port at that time that admitted European Jews without visas or passports. It became a place of refuge for about 20,000 refugees. Grebenschikoff grew up in Shanghai where the family tried to make a living under difficult circumstances. She lectures extensively to museums, organizations, schools and colleges. Her memoir *Once My Name Was Sara* has been translated into Chinese and that edition is also for sale at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.

Kimberly Cheng - is a PhD candidate in the Joint PhD Program in Hebrew and Judaic Studies and History at New York University. From 2018-2019, Cheng was the Breslauer, Rutman, and Anderson Research Fellow at the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research and a member of the 2018-2019 Leo Baeck Fellowship Programme. Starting in January 2020, she will hold the J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. She is also a research volunteer for the Chinese American Museum, DC.

Gary P. Zola - Gary Zola is the Executive Director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives and the Edward M. Ackerman Family Distinguished Professor of the American Jewish Experience & Reform Jewish History at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati.

George Tompkin - Born in Harbin and eventually migrated to Shanghai, George Tompkin is a former European Shanghai-lander now living in New Jersey. He grew up in the French Concession where he lived there until the age of 13. He attended the Shanghai Jewish School until his family left in 1947 for San Francisco.

Bettie Peiwen (Ho) Carlson - The granddaughter of Dr. Ho Feng-Shan, considered by some to be the "Chinese Schindler," speaks of her grandfather's legacy. As the Chinese Consul General in Vienna, he saved more than 3,000 Jews by issuing them exit visas. While his actions went mostly unnoticed and unrecognized during his lifetime, he has been recognized posthumously by many groups including Yad Vashem, Israel, and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

Signal, *continued from page 1*

require some developing countries to give China controlling shares in national assets. From their perspective, “win-win” often-times means that China wins twice.

China’s expanding global footprint has also been a source of increased friction with the United States. In some cases, America sees China’s military advancements and its establishment of naval bases in the Indo-pacific and elsewhere as an aggressive step to project power. Closer to home, Americans view the “Made in China 2025” policy as a state-backed plan to dominate the advanced technology sector and replace America’s longstanding leadership in innovation. These perceptions are now firmly embedded in America’s political discourse.

Meanwhile, America’s pivot towards Asia and its naval presence in proximity to China’s coastline are viewed by China as a challenge to its sovereignty, and part of an American strategy designed to contain its rise and maintain American hegemony. The deterioration of mutual trust between China and America has led to a dramatic shift in the nature of their relationship. Many nations, including Israel, now find themselves caught in the crossfire – struggling to find a balance between national security and economic progress.

Israel’s close bond with the U.S. is one of several factors that exert pressure on Sino-Israel relations, limiting the depth and scope of their relationship. Such pressures have existed since before the establishment of official diplomatic ties in 1992, and many continue to influence the scope of relations up to the present day. The nature of the diplomatic relations between a country of considerable size, population, and economy with a small country like Israel, China’s alignment with the Arab/Muslim world, China’s friendship with Iran, and the vast cultural as well as ideological divide, all bear influence on the relationship.

To further complicate matters, Chinese policy does not fit into a static framework. It is dynamic and evolving, invoking ideas as diverse as Sun Tzu and Marxism-Leninism but also adapting in response to international law and global value chains.

External perceptions of China’s foreign policy are often knotted with contradictions and polarized into extremes. Some analysts treat China as a “mystical, ineffable Oriental reality which is claimed to be inaccessible to Western or Eastern minds,” struggling to cram Chinese foreign policy into a framework tenuously based on ancient Chinese cultural constructs like “titanxia.” Others ignore Chinese cultural and ideological differences altogether, warning of a “hegemonic sphere of trade, communication, transportation, and security links” furthering China’s “neocolonial de-

signs” based on the realpolitik framework.

In the words of Adam Smith, both camps “give up the evidence of their senses to preserve the coherence of the ideas of their imagination.” Consequently, as former Singaporean Ambassador-at-Large Bilahari Kausikan acknowledges, the frameworks applied to analyze Chinese foreign policy are “at best always only partially and contingently true.”

With the growing interchange between the two countries and Israel’s greater reliance upon China for trade and investment, a more thoughtful approach to foreign relations with China has become ever more crucial.

If Israel wishes to continue benefiting from its relations with the East Asian giant, its policy and strategy must be responsive to the dynamics that affect the nature of the relationship. Achieving this, however, requires that Israeli policymakers cultivate a deeper understanding of the rich history and culture which informs China’s unique approach to international affairs while also being attuned to the external pressures that bear influence on the relationship

.....

The question of how to deal with an increasingly assertive, powerful China has left many in the international arena baffled – including Israel...

Public response to the Haifa port issue has revealed that Israeli society’s views towards China are polarized.

Some are rather enthusiastic, particularly the business-oriented sector who see China as a valuable source of investment for Israel. Yet they fail to see the potential risks that engaging so blindly can lead to.

The other camp, seem to frame China as if they are some Juggernaut intent on taking over the world. This pole tends to view every transaction with the utmost suspicion, believing each to be part of some broader sinister plan.

These views are indicative of a society that lacks a basic understanding of China. As Dr. Ori Sela puts it, ignorance is the “coal that runs the engine.”

Understanding any culture is important but this is especially true when the culture is so different that accurately assessing intent from language and behavior can be an almost insurmountable goal. But understanding China is important. Especially if Israel wishes to continue the benefits it enjoys from the relationship whilst at the same time mitigating the potential risks associated with dealing with Beijing.

Approaching China as an all-or-nothing proposition, however, is an unforced error.

Even the Philippines and Japan, both of which face tremendous strategic risks from China, do not take a hardline stance rejecting all Chinese involvement to preserve their sovereignty while throwing themselves at the mercy of the US security umbrella.

Instead, they recognize that in spite of territorial disputes, they can benefit from shared investment and resource exploitation agreements while boundary delimitations are mulled and negotiated over a longer time-frame. They understand that China is a global force that cannot be ignored or ostracized without unacceptably high economic cost, and that engagement with China must walk a middle road between security and profit to meet national objectives.

Why do these countries not dedicate themselves to all-out competition with China or total cooperation with China?

Because they recognize the distinction between China’s core interests and the secondary objectives that are intended to secure them. These secondary objectives, like preservation of the North Korean regime and island construction in the South China Sea, are more flexible in a way that issues like Taiwanese reunification are not.

Consequently, the Philippines and Japan have found ways to negotiate middle ground solutions that help China secure its interests in a less damaging way than direct confrontation.

For instance, the Philippines and China signed a memorandum of understanding on joint oil and gas development. This helps China’s core interest of diversifying energy sources and is less destabilizing to the region than if China were to establish another unilateral oil rig – as it did in 2014, which precipitated a crisis with Vietnam. Additionally, the Philippines will likely secure 40% or more of the profits from joint oil exploration, as opposed to receiving 0% if China had moved unilaterally.

The prerequisite for mutually beneficial agreements requires cultivating a better understanding of China’s core and peripheral interests. Unless Israel can learn to distinguish between the two with regard to China, it will be unable to develop a more sophisticated approach than the “China as a bank to be embraced” and “China as a hegemon that must be resisted” camps currently advocate.

However, the ability to achieve this is contingent on Israel’s ability to close the knowledge gap and learn more about its second largest trading partner.

Dale Aluf is the director of research and strategy at SIGNAL, Sino-Israel Global Network & Academic Leadership – a member of China’s Silk Road Think Tank Association SRTA.

Rittenberg, *continued from page 1*

inent South Carolina legislator. His mother was the daughter of a Russian immigrant. After graduating from the Porter Military Academy in Charleston in 1937, he turned down a scholarship to Princeton to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he majored in philosophy and graduated in 1941. He joined the American Communist Party in 1940, drawn by its platform of free speech, racial equality and roots in the labor movement. Without giving up his Communist ideals, he acceded to a party request and resigned in 1942 when he was drafted by the Army in World War II.

Recognizing his talent for languages – he had learned French and Latin in prep school and excelled in German at Chapel Hill – the Army sent him to its language school at Stanford University. He was fluent in Chinese by 1945, when he arrived in Kunming, China, as a linguist for the Judge Advocate General just as World War II ended.

He still was committed to Marxist-Leninist ideals, and the corruption and inequalities of life in China under the Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists shocked him. Honorably discharged, he made contact with the Communists in Shanghai and was soon trekking for 45 days across China to join Mao's guerrilla army at Yan'an.

He played gin rummy and argued dogma with Mao, talked for days about the United States and philosophy with Zhou, danced with Mao's wife Jiang Qing, and got to know Mao's inner circle, including Liu Shaoqi, the third-ranking leader. Mao had always been fascinated by the US and, while camped out at Yan'an, would spend hours sequestered with Rittenberg going through old copies of American magazines and asking questions about the US. They all watched Laurel and Hardy movies together, for which Rittenberg did simultaneous translations.

Mr. Rittenberg joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1946. He became an English-language translator of news dispatches for the party's propaganda arm and an interpreter of Chinese for communiqués and contacts with international leaders. He traveled with Mao and the Red Army and witnessed events of the civil war that led to the Communist victory in 1949, and to the formation of Mao's Beijing government, the People's Republic of China. After the Communists won power, he was asked to stay on as, in his words, "an engineer to build a bridge from the Chinese people to the American people".

His first spell in prison, of six years from 1949, of which the first was spent in total sensory deprivation, driving Rittenberg to the edge of insanity, came about after Joseph Stalin wrote to Mao warning him that the American was a spy.

His captors never quite seemed to believe the charge, but Mao supported his continued incarceration to test him. "They did say once, 'If you're a real revolutionary, you should be

able to stand this test,'" Rittenberg said, "and that was all I needed." He was offered the chance to go back to the US, but decided to stay. "I was just getting into ever deeper study of his writings and deciding he was a genius," Rittenberg said.

Mr. Rittenberg was an avid propagandist during Mao's Great Leap Forward, a campaign from 1958 to 1961 to transform China from an agrarian economy to a collectivized, industrialized society. The campaign, which banned private farming and enforced edicts with indoctrination and forced labor, was a disaster, causing widespread famine and tens of millions of deaths...

He was even more directly involved in the early stages of Mao's Cultural Revolution, a decade-long purge of "bourgeois" intellectuals, party officials and others suspected of anti-Maoist thought...At that time he would address rapturous crowds of up to 100,000. His speeches and news conferences were published in the Red Guard newspapers. Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and the leader of what would come to be known as the Gang of Four, once commented acridly that, at 45, Rittenberg was a little old to be a Red Guard, but he pressed on regardless, until Jiang Qing, thought to have been jealous of this popular foreigner, had him thrown into jail for a 10-year term.

One famous picture from the era shows Mao autographing Mr. Rittenberg's copy of his "Little Red Book" of sayings. Another shows Mr. Rittenberg on a speaker's platform, holding the book up and exhorting crowds in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to defend Mao's thoughts. Soon after the pictures were taken, Mr. Rittenberg was himself denounced by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, ostensibly for attending a secret meeting to plot the government's overthrow. In 1968, he was imprisoned, again without a hearing, this time for a decade in solitary confinement in a dark cell 7 paces long and 3½ paces wide. His wife was sent to a labor camp, his children to live with relatives.

During Mr. Rittenberg's second imprisonment, the Cultural Revolution left the country in chaos, Mao's health began to fail and the so-called Gang of Four – Mao's wife and three other leaders – assumed greater power. China's Communist Party became what Mr. Rittenberg called a "shadow" of its old self. "The spirit was gone, the party became a mere machine for exercising power over the government and the people," Mr. Rittenberg told *The Financial Times* in 2012. "Official corruption and careerism, rare before the Cultural Revolution, now become prevalent and systemic."

Released in 1977 after Mao died and Jiang Qing arrested, Mr. Rittenberg emerged from prison disillusioned with Communism. He returned to the United States in 1979 for a three-month visit that he portrayed as a "vacation," to see relatives, to lecture and, apparently, to quietly discuss his repatriation with the Carter administration. He returned to China, his status undiminished, and was named to an

important academic post.

But he quickly left China again for what he said would be a five-month visit to America. His wife went with him, and it turned out to be a permanent move, with the children joining them later and assuming American names and citizenship. He had kept his own American citizenship, and he soon settled into a new life in Bellevue, Washington. His return was widely publicized. He went on television and radio talk shows, lectured and was featured in newspapers and magazines.

His welcome by American officials raised suspicions that he had been a C.I.A. agent all along, but he scoffed at the idea, and no proof was ever offered. Even in old age Rittenberg would be asked by retired FBI and CIA chiefs whom he had been reporting to in Washington while under his "deep cover" in China. When he insisted he was not a spy, Rittenberg related, the former spooks would typically tap their noses and say: "You're still very good."

"I think China has to face the fact that Mao was one of the worst people in human history," was Rittenberg's assessment of Mao in old age. "He was a genius, but his genius got completely out of control, so he was a great historic leader and a great historic criminal. He gave himself the right to conduct social experiments that involved upturning the lives of hundreds of millions of people, when he didn't know what the outcome might be. And that created famines in which tens of millions died, and a revolution in which nobody knows how many died."

Rittenberg explained that his idealism and the belief that he was taking part in the development of a new and better world blinded him to the atrocious persecution and murder of even close friends of his. "It's a kind of corruption, exactly the kind of corruption that ruins the whole thing," he said. "I believed I was part of history. That's what you get with ideology and power. You learn to harden your heart in the name of the wonderful new world you're building. Once you do that, you do all kinds of things. I did."

Rittenberg, in later years at least, had an impish sense of humor, loved jokes – especially Jewish jokes – and was called upon as a commentator on Chinese affairs by both western and Chinese media. In 1993 his memoir, *The Man Who Stayed Behind*, written with Amanda Bennett, a former correspondent in China for *The Wall Street Journal*, was published, and in 2012 he was the subject of the documentary *The Revolutionary*, by Irv Drasnin, Don Sellers and Lucy Ostrander. He taught into his 90s at several US universities.

"I had been right to help those who were working for a new China," he said in the memoir. "I had been dead wrong, however, in accepting the party as the embodiment of truth and in giving to the party uncritical and unquestioning loyalty."

He is survived by his wife Yulin and their children, Xiaoqin (Jenny), Xiaodong (Toni), Xiaoxiang (Sunny) and Xiaoming (Sidney Jr.), and four grandchildren.

Israel and Korea

By Gilad Cohen

Blogs of *The Times of Israel*, 15 July 2019

President Reuven Rivlin's visit this week to South Korea, the first since President Peres visited in 2010, underscores the significant upgrade in relations between the two countries. Israel and Korea, which established diplomatic relations in 1962, have much in common: both are democracies, both peoples have a history going back thousands of years, and both suffered difficulties in the modern era until achieving independence in 1948. The two states also have geopolitical similarities: both are allies of the United States (Korea and the US have had a defense agreement since 1967 and 28,000 American troops are deployed currently on Korean soil), and both face military threats that necessitate large investments in the security field.

President Rivlin's visit, at the head of an Israeli business delegation, will contribute to the promotion of Israeli exports as well as trade between the two countries, which has been rising steadily in recent years and amounted in 2018 to more than 2.5 billion US dollars.

Israel and Korea are in the final stages of signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), an agreement of great importance to both Israeli consumers and exporters. As a result of signing the FTA, taxes on Korean products in Israel – such as Korean vehicles, LED screens, refrigerators and mobile phones that can be found in almost every household in Israel – will be reduced considerably. In Korea too, customs duties on imported Israeli products will be reduced, which will contribute to Israeli exports as well.

The economy of the Republic of Korea, with a population of around 50 million people, is ranked 11th in the world. It is the world's largest shipbuilder, the world's third largest electronic products manufacturer and the world's second-largest semiconductor manufacturer.

During his visit to Korea, the president plans to see various sectors of the Korean economy: science, technology, agriculture and health. The delegation of Israeli executives who will accompany the president is comprised of companies in the fields of information and communications technology, digital health and "smart mobility" in the automotive industry. Israel can contribute to Korea through its innovation, high-tech and its unique knowledge, but can also learn

from Korea's excellence, precision and sophistication as one of the world's great economic and technological powers.

Last year marked a 20 percent increase in Korean tourism to Israel, and we hope to see more and more Korean tourists here. The direct flights between Seoul and Tel Aviv of Korean Air (three weekly flights) and the fact that there is no need for visas helped greatly to increase the volume of tourism, business and investment.

By the way, Korean Air was the first Asian company to start direct flights to Israel in 1995, and Samsung is the first company in Asia to open an R&D center in Israel.

In the security field, the two countries maintain good cooperation, and the Israeli security industries operate extensively in Korea. We welcome this cooperation and aspire to strengthen it further.

In the past year, we have witnessed the efforts of South Korea, the United States and the international community to reduce tensions in the peninsula, and Israel is following these historical processes with hope that it will lead to the full and verifiable dismantling of the WMD manufactured by North Korea.

The president's visit is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the diplomatic, security, economic, technological and scientific cooperation with a great and true friend of Israel in the Asian region, South Korea.

Gilad Cohen is Deputy Director General for Asia and the Pacific at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Observations on China's Middle East Policy

By Ehud Yaari

Excerpted from *PolicyWatch* 3139, The Washington Institute for Near East, 17 June 2019

[Ehud Yaari is a Lafer International Fellow with The Washington Institute and a veteran commentator for Israeli television. He recently visited China as a guest of the Sino-Israel Global Network & Academic Leadership (SIGNAL).]

The Middle East is low on the list of China's global priorities, and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Yet "low priority" is a relative term when it comes to a global player with pockets as deep as Beijing's. True, the government's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) largely skips

the heartlands of what China calls "West Asia," focusing instead on establishing commercial land and sea routes to Europe via Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Suez Canal. Even so, Chinese corporations—with full backing from Beijing—are investing tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure projects, acquisitions, and other initiatives in most countries of the Middle East.

The main issue for China these days is the trade war with the United States. Underneath the party line of "hitting back" at American pressure lies a growing concern that escalating tariffs will seriously damage the global economy, which could in turn harm China's GDP and domestic stability. Officials in Beijing are also closely monitoring attempts by other Asian powers to contain China's rapid rise, especially as Washington and other players cultivate the Indo-Pacific system of cooperation first proposed by Japan.

Against this backdrop, China measures its influence and presence in the Middle East mainly in terms of securing energy supplies, trade ties, and business benefits. Beijing is comfortable with its current policy of avoiding political involvement in the region's myriad disputes...China likewise steers clear of taking sides in the Iran-Saudi Arabia showdown or intra-Arab disputes such as the Qatar embargo, preferring to deal with the Arab League as its main address for dialogue.

This includes consistently supporting the League's positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of China's voting habits at the UN is to back all anti-Israel resolutions. Beijing is fully aware that Gulf governments are quietly pursuing cooperation with the Israeli government on several fronts, but as long as their formal public stance remains frosty, China will keep voting accordingly.

Recent deliberations with senior Chinese officials yield a number of other noteworthy conclusions:

China will continue to import Iranian oil.

In doing so, it will try to bypass the Trump administration's sanctions without directly challenging or dismissing them. Yet even as it strives to cultivate cordial relations with the Islamic Republic, Beijing does not plan to rescue the regime from its financial distress or supply it with significant arms, although some Chinese officials seem very concerned about the possibility of a new deal between Washington and Iran. For its part, Tehran has no qualms about accept-

ing India's help to develop Chabahar port as a competitor to the Chinese-built Gwadar port in Pakistan, one of the main links in the BRI.

China is not yet ready to consider major investment in Syria. Beijing is interested in the opportunities presented there but is in no hurry to explore them, despite repeated pleas from Russia to help with postwar reconstruction. China has established Syrian intelligence exchanges with Moscow and various Central Asian governments, but their main purpose is to monitor East Turkestan jihadists fighting there and detect any Uyghur Muslim militants attempting to return home to Xinjiang.

China is concerned about the Middle East Security Alliance. This ambitious U.S.-backed regional initiative has failed to take off thus far, and Egypt has already dropped out. Nevertheless, Chinese officials still fear the prospect of U.S. allies establishing joint, long-term military control over sea lanes stretching from the Suez Canal and Red Sea to the Indian Ocean—a key route in the strategic vision underlying the BRI...

China will continue handling Israel with caution. The United States casts a long shadow over Chinese relations with Israel. Washington has made clear on numerous occasions that it would like Jerusalem to keep its cooperation with Beijing lukewarm, and to restrict Chinese involvement in sensitive sectors of Israel's flourishing high-tech and cyber industries. Beijing is also well aware that no arms transactions can be contemplated, and it generally acknowledges that Israel has to take American reservations very earnestly—though officials are quick to point out that some of Washington's Arab allies have demonstrated greater flexibility with China.

Ultimately, Beijing shows no intention of revising its traditional diplomacy toward Israel or its unfavorable voting pattern in international forums. The Chinese are keenly interested in innovative Israeli technologies, but they do not believe that developing economic ties requires them to change their foreign policy. The Chinese government does not facilitate the entry of Israeli exports to China; mutual trade reached \$14 billion last year, but most of the Israeli sales were made by Intel plants. Chinese companies have acquired some major Israeli firms (mainly in the chemical and dairy sectors) and won tenders to manage new sections of Haifa and Ashdod ports, but Israeli regulators have prevented their entry into the cyber and insurance sectors (the latter is significant because China has

sought access to data about Israeli security personnel via pension programs). Finally, Chinese officials seem uninterested in developing a trade route through the Gulf of Aqaba to the port of Eilat with a railroad to the Mediterranean Sea, arguing that Egypt opposes any alternative commercial transport system to the Suez Canal.

Chinese investments in Egypt are growing rapidly. This includes infrastructure for the new capital city that the president has decided to establish outside Cairo. Beijing believes that Egypt's stability must be assured in order to achieve progress on the BRI, since the Suez Canal forms an essential link for container ships headed to Europe.

China does not want to get involved in the Palestinian Authority. Chinese officials made clear that they will not undertake any economic projects in the PA, and that their participation in financial aid efforts will be limited. More specifically, Beijing will not allow Chinese companies to operate across the Green Line, nor inside the Gaza Strip so long as Hamas is in control there.

Chinese analytical interest in the region is growing. Despite the relatively limited attention that Beijing devotes to "West Asia," the government will continue funding new think tanks and institutes to research the region. Similarly, Chinese universities have shown a marked increase in the number of students learning Arabic (though less so with Persian and Turkish).

In sum, China will keep treading cautiously in the Middle East, maintaining a low diplomatic profile and eschewing a military footprint while aggressively pursuing business opportunities—especially in infrastructure enterprises related to Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" and the energy sector. The region may not attract serious Chinese political and military involvement until after major BRI projects mature in Pakistan and Central Asia.

Why Singapore's Army Sang Israeli Songs

By Leah Falk

Jewiverse by the JTA, 21 August 2019

Who's got Singapore's back? For a tiny nation surrounded by Muslim countries, the answer is obviously "another tiny nation surrounded by Muslim countries," i.e. Israel. But it turns out Israel doesn't just have Singapore's back—it's also got its arms, military technology, and calisthenics routines. Why's that? We'll have to turn back to 1965, when the Israel Defense Forces got a call to come create Singapore's army.

If this surprises you, it's because both countries kept it a secret from the moment Israel first got involved until 2000, when Singapore's first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew broke the seal in his book *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story - 1965-2000*, the story of the country's emergence.

Shortly after Singapore declared independence in 1965, the newly created sovereign city-state waited for military assistance from Egypt and India, but got no reply. It was then that Israel's ambassador to Thailand and Mossad officer Hezi Carmel agreed to help. Singapore's large Malay Muslim population meant that Israel's involvement remained a sensitive and thus secret matter.

Singapore's army, which is now considered one of the strongest in Southeast Asia, adopted a number of IDF practices, including its models of conscription and reserve service (and, for a minute, its marching songs). You know how it goes: ex-British possessions got to help each other out.

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BOOK NOOK

China and Israel: Chinese, Jews; Beijing, Jerusalem

(1890-2018) by Aron Shai. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019. xii + 260 pp.

Reviewed by Jonathan Goldstein

Originally published in *China Quarterly* (London) no. 238 (June 2019), pp. 564-67

Boston's Academic Studies Press, a relative newcomer to the field of Asian Studies, can be congratulated for publishing its fourth volume on this subject. Tel Aviv University East Asian Studies Professor Aron Shai's *China and Israel: Chinese, Jews; Beijing, Jerusalem (1890-2018)* follows closely on the heels of works by Israeli Asianists Meron Medzini, Shalom Wald, and Vera Schwarcz (recently emerita from Wesleyan University and now living in Jerusalem). The Press is becoming a major player in a burgeoning academic discipline in Israel and can be considered an active participant in the development of Israel's four Asian Studies programs, at Tel Aviv, Haifa, and the Hebrew Universities and at Tel Hai Academic College in the Galilee.

That recent and expanding Israeli interest in China is the focus of Shai's most recent publication, which follows his other magna opera on the subject in Chinese, English, and Hebrew. Shai summarizes his own contributions in building the Sino-Israeli relationship, notably his success in securing financial support for East Asian Studies from the late Israeli China trader Shaul N. Eisenberg (see below), his wife Lea Nabuko-Eisenberg, and their daughter Emily. Under Shai's leadership as Rector of Tel Aviv University, that school created the largest East Asian Studies program in Israel in terms of both undergraduate and graduate enrollment. With over seven hundred students, it is also the largest academic department in Tel Aviv's Faculty of Humanities. In 2007 Shai secured Chinese government funding for Tel Aviv University's Confucius Institute, an affiliate of similar Chinese academic initiatives worldwide.

Over and beyond describing his personal role in developing Sino-Israeli relations, Shai provides an overview of Chinese-Jewish relations from medieval Kaifeng to the present. In 239 pages of text and a ten-page quatro-lingual bibliography, he surveys the corresponding academic field now known as Sino-Juda-

ica. Its historiographic and bibliographic antecedents date back to 1853, when Alois and Augustin de Backer published Jesuitical accounts about Chinese Jewry. The field had developed substantially by 1937, when the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) in Vilne published Rudolf Lowenthal's bibliography about Jews in traditional China. More recent contributions include Pan Guangdan's 1983 *Zhongguo jingnei Youtairen de ruogan lishi wenti* [=Some historical questions about the Jews within Chinese territory]¹ and Academic Studies Press's forthcoming *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai*.² This cornucopia of Sino-Judaic and Sino-Israeli scholarship includes the life work of Donald Leslie and Yitzhak Shichor, the late Irene Eber and David Kranzler, and many others.

Shai condenses this vast corpus of scholarship as context for what is the strength of this volume: his profiles of Sino-Judaic personalities. These include Sun Yat-sen's English bodyguard Morris Cohen (1887-1970) and Chinese Communist Fourth Army physician Jacob Rosenfeld (1903-52), originally from Austria. Shai also offers vignettes about lesser known individuals who are arguably of equal historical significance. Drawing upon hard-to-get interviews and the Yad Tabenkin archive of the kibbutz movement, he profiles leaders of the Israel Communist Party (ICP) and their Chinese interactions. He explains how the Party kept cultural contact alive during the "frozen period" (1950-92) of Sino-Israeli non-relations. It was in the pages of the Party's Hebrew language daily and its French language supplement that Israelis were introduced to the latest Chinese literary trends, as but one example.

Shai offers the first comprehensive biography of the aforementioned elusive Israeli businessman Shaul Eisenberg (1921-97) and his United Development Company, which brokered the first clandestine Israeli arms deal with China in 1979. Eisenberg was obsessively secretive and kept most of his business records in notebooks in his jacket pocket, which Shai clearly did not have access to. But Shai was as resourceful in his Eisenberg investigation as he was in ferreting out information about the ICP, at the opposite end of the Israeli political spectrum. He interviewed Eisenberg competitor Amos Yudan, former Mossad director Efraim Halevi, and Israeli Aircraft Industries CEO Gabriel Gidor, all of whom participated in establishing Sino-Israeli commercial and military ties. Shai's persistent sleuthing about Eisenberg and the ICP is matched in Sino-Israeli historiography only by Yitzhak Shichor's startling rev-

elations about Israeli nuclear cooperation with Taiwan. That interaction preceded, and indeed laid the groundwork for, Eisenberg's competitive overtures to Beijing.

Shai's overview can serve as adjunct reading in courses on Chinese and Israeli international relations and as an introductory survey for Chinese and Israelis interested in their historical interactions. Errors are few and far between in this synopsis, and some can be excused as coming from a scholar who is not a native speaker of English. An ox, rather than a cow, is customarily used to plow a field. [p.1] Those and other mechanical errors can easily be corrected in a second edition of this succinct monograph, as Shai and Academic Studies Press move forward from strength to strength in the field of Asian Studies.

¹ With respect to the distinguished Chinese sociologist Pan Guangdan (a.k.a. Quentin Pan, 1898-1967), Goldstein notes that he was a historiographic and bibliographic pioneer of Sino-Judaica. His 50,000 character text, written in 1953 and published in 1983, included a lengthy and annotated bibliography which clearly puts him in the category of a Chinese bibliographic pioneer, much in the way that the de Backers and Rudolf Lowenthal functioned in Western Sino-Judaic scholarship.

² Academic Studies Press has set December 2019 as the anticipated publication date for *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai*. Prof. Steve Hochstadt is editor of the volume.

Jonathan Goldstein is Professor of East Asian Studies (emeritus) at the University of West Georgia, U.S.A. and a Research Affiliate of Harvard University's Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies. His books include *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia* (DeGruyter, 2015), *Stephen Girard's Trade with China* (MerwinAsia, 2011), *China and Israel* (Praeger, 1999; Chinese ed. 2006; Hebrew ed. 2016), and *The Jews of China* (M.E. Sharpe, 1999 and 2000). He may be contacted at gao@westga.edu.

Controversy Over A History of the Kaifeng Israelites

Tiberiu Weisz Responds to Jordan Paper's Review:

My thoughts of Jordan Paper's review of my book *A History of the Kaifeng Israelites* (*Points East* vol. 34 #2. 2019) are best captured by a Belgian artist, Erik Pevernagie (1939-), who said: "If we don't readjust our

perception in time, the screeching hinges in our mind may break for want of oil and our viewing angle narrow unremittingly, thus inducing blurred vision, misinterpretation and incomprehension.”

“Westerners have been studying China for over 100 years, and they claim to know China; we, the Japanese have been studying China for over 1000 years and still don’t understand her”, commented a Japanese scholar at a symposium for translators. These comments were pointed like an arrow toward the same scholars that Jordan Paper speaks of so highly in his review.

Back in 1984, I was just a couple of years out of graduate school when I attended a reception of the Kaifeng exhibition in Israel, attended by many Sinologists. I also met there Michael Pollack z’l, author of *Mandarins, Jews and Missionaries*. One thing that stunned me was the pretentious attitude of the other Sinologists. It seemed to me that they tried to impress each other by injecting a word or two in Chinese in conversation. I foolishly assumed that they were fluent in Chinese, so I addressed to them in Chinese. The warm reception quickly turned into an icy atmosphere; it turned out that nobody spoke Chinese beyond a few common phrases.

Now reading Paper’s review, it reminded me of that event. Paper’s knowledge of China is rooted in Western perceptions, while mine is rooted in Chinese sources. An unbridgeable cultural clash differentiates our approach to the study of China in general, and that of the Chinese Jews in particular. He is still nostalgic about the Western Sinologists who treated China as an isolated culture marginally affected by outside influences. I, on the other hand, treated China as a cosmopolitan culture with extensive interaction with other Central Asian cultures. My major sources derived from a large collection of memorials of Chinese officials to emperors, including an audience between a Prime Minister of Jewish descent and a Song Emperor.

It is unfortunate that Paper did not do his homework before he made his allegations that: “Weisz apparently claims to be able to read literary Chinese better than all other Chinese and Western Sinologists ...” and “Weisz confuses Classical with Modern Chinese”. Just for Paper’s information, I went through formal western academic training in Chinese in college and Graduate School, augmented by intense study of literary Chinese with some of the finest tutors. In addition to the traditional Rujia (Confucianism) and Daojia (Daoism), I also specialized in Fajia (Legalism), an exper-

tise that attracted the attention of outside interests to make it worthwhile for me to leave the academia. No regrets. I read Classical/Modern Chinese with the same ease as I read Biblical, Talmudic and Modern Hebrew.

The newly translated and re-translated Chinese texts in my book were adapted to a cross-cultural setting. Among the sources, I found a wealth of information about Chinese views of foreign civilizations, religions, people, and customs. Some of the Chinese terms for foreign names have yet to be identified, and there is still ongoing research and debate of how to match them with the proper Western names. I briefly mentioned these works in the introduction to my book.

By studying these memorials, I learned that the key to understanding China rested in tracing Chinese terms to their original source in the vast Chinese literary works, that is what we call “precedents” (or “citations”) in the West, and “roots” in China. It was in stark contrast to what I have been taught in school, and what I have read in Western literature. Then, I realized how useless were Karlegan’s (1899-1978) theories, so much admired by Paper, and how Western impressions and translations distorted our perceptions of the Chinese Jews. Though travelers and missionaries recorded their encounters with the Chinese Jews, but they also reminded us about the strange language and culture that they neither understood nor knew anything about. Nonetheless, it did not deter scholars like Paper from drawing conclusions from the weight of probability, firmly believing that that was the only reality. Paper remained faithful to those narratives. I did not. What was missing was the Chinese Jews’ side of the story. A History of the Kaifeng Israelites is the first work that creates a roadmap of a tribe of Israel in China from Chinese writings.

Admittedly, language barrier made it extremely difficult to communicate with the Chinese, but, more disturbing was that neither scholars nor translators traced the “roots” of youren to its origin, instead they continued to mistranslate it. Had they done so, the mystery of the Israelites in China would have been solved a long time ago.

The shallowness of Paper’s Chinese proficiency became evident when he wrote: “youtai 猶太, the logographs chosen because their modern pronunciation approximates Yudah (Judah) – presumably a Christian missionary because the radical for the logograph you means “dog”, an insult in Chinese culture; there are many alternate logographs with the same pro-

nunciation. Moreover, the binomial expression has a second modern dictionary meaning of ‘a stingy person’.”

Such a statement would be acceptable from a novice student, not a seasoned Sinologists like Paper professes to be. He skipped over the entire section of Chinese commentaries of the word youren in the book. He had to just turn one more page, to pg. 98, and voilà, the “root” meaning of the character you is exposed to all to read. The Japanese scholar had a point.

I also wonder if Paper had ever asked D.C. Lau to explain the phrase yu youren ye (I am a you person/tribe...) in the Confucian text, in Chinese not in translation? (details pg. 3 in the book). This question haunted me for quite a while, and at one time I posed it to Chinese scholars. Several ideas were suggested but no definite answer. True to the Talmudic fashion, I challenged them by substituting the word youren with hanren (I am a han person/Chinese). Instantly, it became obvious why commentators encountered difficulty with this word, and it was met with silence. Only Paper hastily and erroneously concluded that: “he [Weisz] finds that Confucius claimed to be Jewish, and the Chinese Classics and Chinese Religion are based on the Torah! “ These are his words not mine. My elaborate explanation is found on the next page (pg. 4) in the book, completely ignored by Paper.

My response to Paper’s comments on publishing: I am proud to publish independently, I own the rights and all the licenses to my works and care less of “peer reviews” and their self-serving agendas. I consider traditional publishing in today’s marketplace the graveyard of published books. I cancelled a contract with a European publisher, and I declined an offer from another publisher for the rights to all of my works. I write for people to read, and not for books to gather dust on library shelves. I like to write in simple and clear language and I hope my works inspires readers to expand their horizon. I firmly stand by my works.

This review is an expression of Paper’s views, it is just his opinion. He appears so blindsided by his contempt for me that he forgot the basic premise of the book. He wrote “fancy words to muddle the facts” as the Chinese would say. (言重識暗 yanzhong shi an). Too bad. Times have changed. With alternatives to traditional publishing, independent scholars combine their expertise with life long practical experience to expand the scholarly world beyond the walls of academia. Paper is

entitled to his beliefs, just like members of the Flat Earth Society are entitled to believe that the earth is flat.

Paper's Counterpoint

I found Weisz's response to my critique of his work amusing, as it displays remarkable consistency with his mode of thinking. First, he responds to negative criticism by vilifying the critic; in this case, not just myself but major Western scholars. Secondly, he assumes that Western scholars are at odds with Chinese scholars; of which, it seems, he considers himself preeminent. During my half-century of active international scholarship, I personally know of no Western classical Sinologist that has not comfortably worked with Chinese scholars. Thirdly, he assumes, with his typical arrogance, that he knows what he has never studied; in this instance, myself, whose life he has, in effect, perceived upside down, as he apparently "knows" that my understanding of Chinese thought is based on Western studies: "Paper's knowledge of China is rooted in Western perceptions, while mine is rooted in Chinese sources." (And, if so, he has yet to explain why using outdated Chinese encyclopedic dictionaries rather than more recent and substantial ones to understand the nuances of Chinese logographs in their historical contexts is more scholarly, or why he is at odds with eminent Chinese scholars; e.g., D.C. Lau is Chinese not European.) Finally, he posits that peer-review inhibits scholarly freedom, which is equivalent to stating that scientific review, rather than being essential to science, is anti-scientific.

Just to put the record straight, my understanding of Chinese culture is based entirely on living in Chinese culture. Within a week of first living in Taiwan in 1965, I perceived that everything I had read on Chinese religion to that time was grossly inaccurate (articulated in my new book: *Chinese Religion and Familism: The Basis of Chinese Culture, Society and Government* [Bloomsbury Academic 2019], as well as my earlier book, *The Spirits Are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* [State University of New York Press 1995]). Because learning to read literary Chinese had rewired my brain, so to speak, I became very close friends in Taiwan with some of the last Chinese to have had the traditional education due our being intellectually and otherwise highly simpatico, deep friendships that lasted the rest of their lives; they were my mentors in many aspects of Chinese culture. I continue to remain

very good friends with senior scholars in Beijing. My understanding of Chinese culture grew with further residence in Taiwan and extended trips on the Mainland. I work well with Chinese scholars; I have had conflict with some Western scholars but never with Chinese ones, as we seem never to disagree. I have been invited over a number of years to lecture to graduate students and faculty on Chinese Religion and Chinese Judaism at Beijing Normal University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and over the decades, I have been invited to give plenum addresses at symposiums in Beijing and Taipei (see my online c.v.). As well, I am married into a Chinese family, most of who continue to reside in their "hometown" of Shenyang. Thus for nearly a half-century, I have lived and interacted with Chinese understandings on a daily basis, and my wife and I have worked together on a number of research projects.

Briefly Noted

The Jews of China: History of a Community and its Perspectives, by Caroline Rebouh. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2018. 159 pages.

Reviewed by Anson Laytner

Caroline Rebouh, who has an MA in Hebrew and Jewish Studies from Strasbourg University, France, has written a concise summary of the history of the Kaifeng Jews that, unlike most other texts, draws upon work of French Sinologists and other scholars. Echoing the views of Tiberiu Weisz, with whose books she apparently unfamiliar, she asserts that the first Jews may have arrived in China prior to 600 BCE and that successive waves of Jews arrived by sea and land subsequently. Like Weisz, she finds influences of and similarities to the Hebrew Bible (Tanach) in many classic Chinese texts. Uncritically referencing French and English sources from the 18th century, she suggests that Chinese characters and words might have their origins in Egyptian hieroglyphs, the result of a very early Egyptian invasion and colonization! However, when it comes to reviewing the actual history and culture of the Kaifeng Jewish community, Rebouh's summations and analyses are thoroughly accurate. This combination of conjecture and fact makes for an inter-

esting read, to say the least. One minor quibble: some of the names of Chinese individuals and texts remain in their French transliterations, which, for this reviewer, made identifying them somewhat of a challenge.

City of Devils: The Two Men Who Ruled the Underworld of Old Shanghai, by Paul French. New York: Picador, 2018.

Reviewed by Anson Laytner

Paul French is the author of 7 books on pre-Communist China, not including this, his newest. Five of them deal with Shanghai in its so-called glory days. *City of Devils* documents the rise and fall of "Lucky" Jack Riley, a.k.a. various names, an American prison escapee who became the slot king of Shanghai, and "Dapper" Joe Farren, born Josef Pollak in Vienna's Leopoldstadt ghetto, who had danced his way to Shanghai and rose to fame as a owner of the Shanghai Badland's largest casino. Written in a suitably lurid true-crime noir style, French paints a tawdry and seamy picture of Shanghai between the two world wars that does nothing to hide the real suffering of the people there. Featured among the cast of characters are the many Jewish owners of gambling joints, bars and other establishments, who most of the time cared for and supported one another, sometimes even when it wasn't in their own best interests to do so. A fine and easy read about some people you won't even find mentioned in other books on Jewish Shanghai.

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Adventures in New Guinea

By Ari Greenspan

Excerpted from the *Kulanu* website

[The island of New Guinea lies north of Australia. Its western half is a part of Indonesia, where Ari met the Kehilat Yehudim Torat Chaim, his first story. Its eastern half is Papua New Guinea, home of the Gogodala tribe in the second story. Ed.]

Kehilat Yehudim Torat Chaim

On the western half of the island of New Guinea, in the Indonesian town of Jayapura, live 150 people who are part of a vibrant Jewish community called Kehilat Yehudim Torat Chaim. One thing that makes this community unique is that they are a proud and open Jewish community in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. They are proud of their heritage and openly fly the Israeli flag and declare themselves as Jews.

We were met at the border of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia by members of this community and we immediately drove to Jayapura, Indonesia, the provincial capital, where the synagogue is in the house of Aharon Sharon, the community's leader. We were welcomed by passionate singing—with dancing and jumping—for close to 30 minutes. This is a community of all ages, including many young people and kids. Everyone works; most of them work in the world's largest gold mine for 2 weeks on and then two weeks off. They explained that they arranged not to work on Shabbat when they are at the mine.

Aharon shared this story about his family's history: his ancestors fled to Peru during the Inquisition. When the Inquisition followed them to Peru, the community sent some young people in a boat westward to a place their ancestors called the "Blue Mountain." After a sojourn in Japan, where Aharon's unique last name comes from, they landed in Jayapura. They kept Shabbat and Jewish customs. When Indonesia required all residents to declare membership in one of the official religions in the country, they chose to be called Christians. Yet they did not go to church. The missionaries caused them to dilute their beliefs and practice. When asked about their customs and traditions, Aharon related how they were sung a lullaby with the words, "Once you were 12 brothers, now you are none." Discussing his ancestors, he did not remember first names as they would not call an elder by

his or her first name. "However," he explained, "we have a word we used to call the elders. That word is melamdin." He did not understand the word, nor did he know it was the Hebrew word meaning teachers.

There were 3 different communities represented. The one from Timika, about 2 hours by plane, had an interesting story. They actually had a Torah that they brought with them. Around the turn of the 20th century, the missionaries took it and burnt their books. They, too, have now reemerged as Jews and have a synagogue as well. It is hard for the groups to get together as a community because the flights are expensive. One thing that bodes well for them is the interesting American-born Orthodox rabbi who lives in Jakarta. Rabbi Tuvia Singer, who is well-known as the director of a counter-missionary organization, moved to Jakarta and helps and supports the Timika community. I hope that with Kulanu's assistance one or two people will be able to travel there for a month. The community also desires to have a Sefer Torah.

Time will tell where this story goes.

An Unexpected Shabbat in Papua New Guinea

There's a riveting video on YouTube with hundreds of people wearing grass skirts and war paint in Papua New Guinea, all singing the Shema. My interest was piqued, and when I heard Kulanu was involved, I decided to visit the tribe, known as the Gogodala. The Gogodala claim descent from the ten lost tribes of Israel, and a visit by Kulanu volunteers and Professor Tudor Parfitt in 2007 cemented a relationship with a community in search of itself. Their dynamic leader, Tony Waisa, reinstated their traditional Saturday prayers and is pushing for a more Jewish approach to tradition, yet others in the tribe disagree. The emergence of Jewish identity is fascinating to observe.

The tribe is centered in the small village of Balimo, which is located in the jungle and only reachable by a small plane twice a week. We took a 12-seater, landed on a grass strip, and 1 1/2 hours later after traveling on a dinghy upriver, we made landfall to an extremely joyful welcome. Five hundred people were waiting, with long rows of men, women, and children wearing kippot and tallitot, dancing, singing Jewish songs, and blowing the shofar, and they accompanied us towards the large

open structure. It was bedecked with Stars of David and a beautiful welcome sign in front of the sign from Kulanu's first visit. There were speeches and words of Torah and songs exchanged. We gave them gifts of havdallah candles and challah covers and they adorned us in handmade blue and white scarves. We were moved by this community's true love of Israel and the God of Israel. Israeli flags were everywhere, and we could feel their strong desire to move to their ancestral origins of "Yabi Saba," or what they say was Jerusalem. They described their traditions and the difference between themselves and all of the other tribes. We talked about Jewish history and destiny, and we tried to give them hope and support.

We needed to fly back on Friday for the Sabbath but our flight from this remote location was cancelled. We had brought almost nothing with us for the one night stay and all our kosher food and Shabbat provisions were left back in the capital, Port Moresby. Also we had scheduled a large gathering of tribe members in the capital for Shabbat so we needed to return. It was explained to us that the closest plane was on the Island of Daru, "six hours downriver." Thus started an adventure worthy of a book. The six hours turned into 24 hours with stops in remote river villages, and facing potential tidal waves and the open sea with large waves—all on a small dinghy! We made landfall Friday at 12:30 only to have the afternoon flight back to Port Moresby cancelled. With no food, dirty and wet clothing, and no place to sleep, we, along with Tony, turned a disaster into one of our most meaningful Shabbats. When he understood we would not fly on Saturday, he kept repeating in amazement, "What a testament this observance of the Sabbath will be!"

However, maybe the most surprising thing was that on this isolated backwater were three small groups of Gogodala Sabbath believers. We met them on Shabbat afternoon in a house. We were amazed to see a lectern with the Star of David, the flag of Israel, and the Shema tacked up on the wall. When people in kippot and with tallitot arrived, we understood that we were supposed to spend Shabbat here.

How the emerging Gogodala will turn out is yet to be seen. Their balance of Judaism and Christianity is in flux. However, they all feel a sense of belonging to the people of Israel. But this phenomenon of return, joining, and reemergence is spreading. I am proud to say that Kulanu is at the forefront of this worldwide movement.

Sugihara's Son Sets Record Straight

By Cnaan Liphshiz

Excerpted from *The Times of Israel*, 23 May 2019

The late Chiune Sugihara, who issued thousands of life-saving visas to Jewish refugees in Lithuania in defiance of his pro-Nazi government, became popularly known only about 20 years ago, in part due to the 2000 opening of a museum about him in Japan. A year earlier, a Sugihara museum celebrating his actions had opened in Kaunas, Lithuania.

Amid the growing recognition, one of the Sugihara's four children, Nobuki, recently began traveling around the world telling audiences about his father's legacy. But Nobuki Sugihara's aim is not to glorify his father, he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. If anything, his goal seems to be to cut his father's public image down to size...One of the stories he refutes in his talks is the one about his father writing visas on the train he left on for Germany after being expelled from his post in Lithuania. Sugihara supposedly "threw the signed visas" through a train window, as the Kaunas museum states on its website...

Another myth has Chiune Sugihara giving his consular seals to refugees so they could continue making visas on their own after he was forced to leave. Also never happened, Nobuki said.

The formation of myths around any heroic character is natural, he acknowledged. "But my father would not have liked it," Nobuki Sugihara said. "He would have not approved, he was always in favor of telling things like they were, no melodrama." Some Christian writers and websites have attributed religious motives to Sugihara. One fake quote has him saying "I may have to disobey my government, but if I do not, I will be disobeying God."

Yet religion never entered the picture, according to Nobuki. "The truth is, he just took pity on these people and decided to do something," Nobuki Sugihara said. "This wasn't about ideology..."

The life of Nobuki Sugihara, Chiune's youngest son and the only one still alive, has been shaped significantly by what his father had done. In 1985, Chiune Sugihara was declared a Righteous Among the Nations by the State of Israel. In 1968, the Israeli Foreign Ministry arranged for a scholarship for Nobuki at Hebrew University...He went to Israel and eventually took a job at the Ramat

Even without the embellishments that Nobuki Sugihara insists on debunking, his father's story is legendary. Chiune Sugihara, who died in 1986, ignored orders from Tokyo while posted to Kaunas (then Kovno) in 1940 and helped Jews flee the Nazis and travel through Russia to China, Japan and beyond. He issued over 2,000 visas, which led at least twice as many people to safety. As many as 100,000 people today are the descendants of the recipients of Sugihara visas.

His official title was with the consular department in Kaunas, but really he was a Japanese intelligence operative collecting information on the Russians, his son said in Minsk, confirming an open secret about the father. When the Russians invaded Lithuania in 1940, foreign diplomats, including Sugihara, were ordered to move out.

Before leaving, Sugihara and his Dutch counterpart, Jan Zwartendijk, issued the visas, including some to the entire student body of the Mir Yeshiva...Mir was the only yeshiva to escape Eastern Europe.

Chiune Sugihara had no idea for decades that he had saved so many lives, according to his son. "He assumed a few people, maybe a few dozen, had actually used the visas

to escape," Nobuki said. "He truly did not realize the magnitude of his actions until much, much later in life."...The younger Sugihara said it gives him great pleasure to tell Jewish audiences about his father's character, which few of the people he rescued got to know. "I feel at home speaking to Jewish audiences," Nobuki said. "I feel the warmth from the people I speak to, who react to my directness." Most of all, though, he finds conversations with survivors and their descendants satisfying.

During a recent encounter in Israel, one woman recalled how Nobuki's father, sensing her distress in line for a visa, told her to go back home. The diplomat told her that "in the morning, she will have her visa and everything will be all right."

In the Field

He Once Was Lost But Now Is Found

SJI Board member Dan Levitsky reports that Shi Lei is alive and well and living in Kaifeng—after having visited Israel.

Kudos I

Rabbi Anson Laytner's newest book has just been published by Wipf and Stock. Titled *The Mystery of Suffering and the Meaning of God: Autobiographical and Theological Reflections*, it is his effort to come to grips with the tragedies in his life as well as natural and human-caused tragedies.

Kudos II

Prof. Steve Hochstadt is editor of *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai* to be published later this year by the Academic Studies Press.

Got News for "In the Field"? Send it in to Laytner@msn.com.

Mail to: *The Sino-Judaic Institute, Prof. Steve Hochstadt*

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