



Building Opportunities and a Number with a History

By Kevin Ostoyich

Reprinted from the *Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation website*, www.spungenfoundation.org.

Danny Spungen still bears wounds from the past. "I was called a puppet," he says. Spungen – who is a trustee of the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation – explains that it has not always been easy to be a defender of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum (SJRM). He says that when he would be criticized for promoting the Museum, he would point out that there are approximately 1.4 billion people in China, and the SJRM was doing at least something to inform at least some of these people about a little-known but still significant history. Was the Museum perfect? No. Did it have potential? Yes.

Spungen's engagement with the Museum since 2011 has been guided by the potential he has seen and continues to see in it. On March 3, 2024, he organized an event at the newly expanded Museum. He believes the time has come for people involved in Holocaust studies to become more aware of this Museum and its continued potential. The following article – based on interviews with Spungen conducted on March 17, 2024 and May 17, 2024 – chronicles Spungen's engagement with the Museum since 2011 and conveys his assessment of the newly-expanded Museum and his suggestions for how the Museum can seize new opportunities.

First Encounters

Danny Spungen had been doing business in Shanghai since the 1990s. The first time he heard about the Shanghai Jews was in the spring of 2005 when he took his family to Shanghai to visit his family's ball bearing factory office. At the time, he and his family got a guided tour of the Shanghai ghetto. Then, after he purchased a large Holocaust postal collection in June 2007, he started to reflect on the history of the Shanghai Jewish refugees more seriously. On December 6, 2010, he visited the SJRM for the first time. On March 14, 2011, Spungen had his first meeting with Chen Jian, the director of the SJRM. Spungen says this meeting was "my first introduction to the Museum in a working fashion. In terms of how I can participate in the story of the Shanghai ghetto." From that point on, he got more and more involved. In 2013, he organized an event in which the Shanghai Jewish Refugees commemorative coin, minted at the Shanghai Mint, was unveiled. He invited Chen Jian to his home in Lincolnshire, Illinois on October 2, 2013. At the time, Chen Jian was in the area because there was a SJRM traveling exhibition in Chicago. Spungen characterizes his feelings toward the SJRM from 2011 to 2013 as follows:

I wouldn't say I was "critical," I was very supportive of the Museum, but I believed they were going down [...] the wrong path. At the time, [the] theme of the Museum was "How China saved the Jews," "How China saved these refugees." And [...] they had little clips of people like [the former Shanghai Jewish refugee] Jerry Moses saying, "I love China! I love China!" While we were trying to instill

(continued on page 3)

Genetic Confirmation: The Jews of Kaifeng Descend from Mizrahi Jews

by Kevin Alan Brook

Richard Gusso launched a genetic testing project for the Jews of Kaifeng, China in 2008 at Family Tree DNA, starting with a sample size of 12 descendants of Kaifeng Jews he and his son met in Kaifeng. The tests examined their Y-chromosomal DNA (Y-DNA), which is inherited from fathers to sons, and mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is inherited from mothers to their children. At the time, only a limited number of Y-DNA genetic markers (12 STRs) were tested. Five additional testers joined the project in 2012-2013. The Avotaynu DNA Project, founded in 2015 and administered by Adam Brown, recently provided funds to upgrade several of the men to the "Big Y" test.

Over the years, Gusso and Brown dropped hints as to the results. Writing to Facebook's "Tracing the Tribe" group in 2019, Gusso said, "What we can say is that their Y-DNA was NOT Chinese. It was unclear at the time what it was, but a couple of years after the tests, with the DNA database growing, it became clear that it was most likely Persian. This supports their oral history that their ancestors were Jewish traders from Persia who came to China on the Silk Road." Brown presented several informative and tantalizing lectures on Y-DNA discoveries made possible by the Avotaynu DNA Project. In his JewishGen video presentation "The Genetic Origins of the Jewish People" on December 2, 2020, Brown briefly mentioned that his team has studied a few Kaifeng Jews and determined where their Jewish ancestors had come from. The map on the screen at that moment showed an arrow leading from the asterisked city of Bukhara to Kaifeng. During Wim Penninx's YouTube presentation "Y-DNA and the Jews" on March 5, 2023, Brown said, "Yes, they [Kaifeng Jews] have [done Y-DNA testing]. We think they [have] come on the Silk Road." He also said that "there's no question that they are of Jewish origin."

Haplogroups are names given to particular genetic lineages. They are identified by their mutations that occur randomly and then get passed down through the generations. All of the project's haplogroup results remained a secret until the early 2020s when its results pages on Family Tree DNA's website became viewable by the general public.

Shí, meaning "stone", was one of the Chinese clan surnames that Kaifeng's Jews were allowed to adopt in the 15th century. The Kaifeng Jewish lineage with the surname Shí has been identified to belong to the Y-DNA haplogroup R-FT14557 because the fourth tested member of this family had high-resolution "Big Y" SNP testing performed on his sample. R-FT14557 is shared with a Bukharian Jew from Uzbekistan on public phylogenetic trees. As of April 2024, Family Tree DNA estimates that the most recent common male ancestor of the Kaifeng Jew and the Bukharian Jew lived in approximately the year 700 CE, but with a 95% confidence interval enabling a theoretical range from 74 BCE to 1237

(continued on page 5)

Notice to Subscribers. Particularly Overseas Subscribers. Please Consider Receiving Points East Digitally

It is very expensive for us to mail out Points East, particularly to those of you outside the United States. Please consider receiving the electronic version of Points East and letting us put your dues to a better use. Just send an email to Laytner@msn.com and you'll be switched over. Thanks!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Featured Articles:

Building Opportunities and a Number with a History	1
Genetic Confirmation: The Jews of Kaifeng Descend from Mizrahi Jews	1
From the Editor	2
Letter to the Editor	2
In the Field	3
Book Nook	11

Articles:

Renovation to Restore Ohel Moishe Synagogue to 1907 Glory	5
The English Sassoon Family's Chinese History	6
The Jewish Museum's Sanitized History of an Opium Dynasty	6
The Oratorio Émigré Premiers	7
More on Émigré	8
Why Japan Exaggerates the Sugihara Story	8
Max Fishman's Adventure in Manchuria Mostly	9
Josh Stampfer's Story	12
In Memoriam, Flori Isaac Cohen ..	14

SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	122
China	16
Israel	8
England	5
Australia	2
Japan	2
Taiwan	2
Canada	1
Germany	1
Mexico	1
Total:	160

FROM THE EDITOR

From the Editor

With all the tzuris (tzurot/troubles) going on in the world, this issue of Points East escapes into the realm of culture as we highlight music, film, museum exhibitions, and books relating to the Jewish experience in China. Just as with Points East, it always amazes me that more material just keeps appearing in a never-ending stream.

Also featured in our summer issue is an article on the genetics of the Kaifeng Jews; a memoir by one of SJI's founders, Rabbi Joshua Stampfer; and an interview with the father of another one of our founders, Norm Fishman, who escaped from Russia in the early 20th century, resided for a time in Harbin, and ended up in America, where he became a chicken farmer in California. And lastly, yet another article on Chiune Sugihara, this one, by Jordyn Haime, taking a critical look at his legacy.

Anson Laytner

Letter to the Editor

A Correction to Last Month's Correction

Don Shapiro from Taiwan wrote to note that our correction of last month cited his cousin, Dan Shapiro, as the author rather than himself, i.e., Don. O, what a mistake one letter can make.

Points East

Anson Laytner, Editor

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

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

Preferred Form:

e-mail: laytner@msn.com

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

Points East is published three times a year, in March, July and November. Deadlines for submitting material to be included in these issues are January 15th, May 15th and September 15th.

FINANCIAL REPORT AVAILABLE

SJI members interested in receiving a copy of the annual financial report should send a self-addressed envelope to: Prof. Steve Hochstadt, Treasurer of the Sino-Judaic Institute, 34 Colgate Rd., Unit 1, Roslindale, MA 02131 USA

Sino-Judaic Institute
c/o Rabbi Anson Laytner
1823 East Prospect St.
Seattle WA 98112-3307

SJI Officers

Anson Laytner, President
Wendy Abraham, Vice-President
Steve Hochstadt, Secretary/Treasurer
Arnold Mark Belzer, Immediate Past President

Managing Board

Joel Epstein, Beverly Friend, Jeremy Goldkorn, Loraine Heller, Dan Levitsky, Ondi Lingenfelter, Abbey Newman, Kevin Ostoyich, James Peng Yu, Charlene Polansky, Eric Rothberg, Danny Spungen, Joshua Zuo

International Advisory Board

Moshe Y. Bernstein, Jan Berris, Zvia Bowman, Mark Cohen, Avrum Ehrlich, Fu Youde, Judy Green, Len Hew, Tess Johnston, Dan Krassenstein, Den Leventhal, Michael Li, Yonatan Menashe, Maisie Meyer, Mark Michaelson, Sonja Muehlberger, Gustavo Perednik, Andrew Plaks, Pan Guang, Shi Lei, Yitzhak Shichor, Elyse Silverberg, Noam Urbach, Shalom Wald, Tibi Weisz, Xiao Xian, Xu Xin, Albert Yee, Zhang Qianhong, David Zweig.

Past Presidents

Al Dien, Leo Gabow

Bequest Request

Please consider putting the Sino-Judaic Institute in your will.

In the Field

• Last Ship East Founders on Financial Rocks

Writer/Director Eris Qian has announced that, 3 years since her team first planted the seeds for her short film *Last Ship East*, they are calling it quits—at least temporarily—while they figure out next steps. Despite the award-winning script, which won the best script award at the 2022 LA Shorts International Film Festival, they were unable to meet their financial goals in a recent fundraising campaign. Ms. Qian may be reached at: lastshipeast@gmail.com.

• Igud Yotzei Sin Appoints New Leadership Team

Following outgoing Chairman Yossi Klein's call for new (and younger) leadership, the Igud (Association of Former Residents of China) has a new Chairman, Yaki Matlin, and has hired an Executive Director, Efrat Margalit.

• Kevin Ostoyich Reports from Germany

Three Girls of Shanghai, a film by Kevin Ostoyich and Kari-Anne Innis, depicts a zoom conversation between ex-Shanghailanders Ester Shifren, Helga Silberberg, and Liliane Willens reminiscing about their former lives, with actors playing their characters. If anyone is interested in hosting a public screening and/or performance of *Three Girls of Shanghai*, please contact him at [kevin.ostoyich@valpo.edu](mailto:ostoyich@valpo.edu). The film is available on mp4. [The film is delightful. Ed.]

The exhibition "Sewing for Survival: Jewish Refugees in Shanghai 1938—1949" opened at the Textile and Industry Museum in Augsburg, Germany is set to open on June 13 and run to November 17. In conjunction with this exhibit, students from two local high schools in Augsburg will perform the play *The Singer of Shanghai* at the museum on July 18, 21, and 22.

Spungen, continued from page 1



Chen Jian and Danny Spungen at the March 3, 2024 event at the SJRM sponsored by the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation.

into them that there really was no China – Japan ruled [Shanghai] [...] [at the time], and our point was that the Jewish refugees were happy with China itself, the land, [that] the physical land existed, but they did not really necessarily believe that the Chinese "saved" the Jews.

Spungen was concerned that the Museum used replicas in its displays but did not properly mark them as such. He also felt it troubling at the time that the Museum was using inflated figures for the total number of refugees who were in Shanghai during the Second World War (e.g., 30,000). He thought that if he forged a positive relationship with the Museum, he could try to help influence Chen Jian and the other members of the Museum administration to use the number that is widely accepted by scholars of the Shanghai refugees (i.e., 20,000).

A Test Pilot

Spungen remembers that in his early interactions with the SJRM, Chen Jian was eager to obtain artifacts for the Museum. At the time, Spungen was concerned about how the artifacts would be stored – the Museum did not have room on site to store them, rather they were kept in a municipality building. He was also concerned about who actually owned the artifacts. Regarding any items that he could supply, he wondered, "Would they be owned by the Museum or by the municipality?" Given such questions, Spungen was wary about issues of trust with respect to the functioning processes of the Museum. He says, "There was trust in Mr. Chen, who was trying to do a good job." He explains though that despite his trust in Chen Jian, personally, he was plagued by the lingering question, "Who really had control of the artifacts or how the Museum was run?"

Spungen says that in the period before 2019, he helped a few families donate materials to the Museum. Given his concern that the items be properly stored and displayed, he came up with a Donation Certificate and various terms of agreement for the items. The test case for the Donation Certificate and the terms of agreement was a donation of items pertaining to the deceased Shanghai Jewish refugee, Dr. Alfons Krämer. Spungen says that had Krämer's items not

been donated to the Museum, they most likely would have been discarded by the family at some point. Thus, he felt it was worth seeing if the SJRM could house and display the items. With Spungen's help, the donation was made on November 5, 2014.

Spungen is not sure that the Museum has adhered to all the terms of the donation agreements. He says, "Quite frankly. I'm not sure if all of these are being done." He notes, for example, the Museum's website has been rather problematic over the years. Thus, he believes that Agreement Term #2: "The digital image will be put on the SJRM website for visitors and researchers to view within 180 days" most likely has not been met. Nevertheless, Spungen believes that Chen Jian and the Museum have been acting in good faith.

So-Called "Puppet" with a Shanghai Plan

As Spungen's engagement with the SJRM increased, he started to receive criticism for being supportive of the Museum. He says he was called a "puppet" working on behalf of the Chinese government. As noted above, his response at the time was always to remind people about the need to inform the 1.4 billion Chinese about the Holocaust and the Shanghai Jews. He would say, "We have to do what we can to promote this education." Despite the criticism that was leveled at him, he thought that regardless of the SJRM's flaws, it was better to work with it rather than against it. His plan was to engage with Chen Jian to facilitate partnerships between the SJRM and established scholars in the field outside of China. He hoped such international engagement would then increase the historical accuracy of the Museum's content (specifically with the 20,000 number). He believed such co-operation would encourage the SJRM to promote understanding in China regarding three important questions: 1) What does it mean to be Jewish? 2) Why were the Jews persecuted? and 3) Why did the "Shanghai ghetto" exist?

Spungen corresponded with Chen Jian and visited the Museum to promote the idea of an international advisory board, which would be made up of prominent scholars in the field. He believes his encouragement – especially during a trip to the Museum in January 2019 – helped make the International Advisory Board of the SJRM a reality in October 2019.

Building Opportunities

Due to COVID, Spungen was unable to visit the Museum when it reopened after an extensive expansion in 2020. After the epidemic receded, Spungen thought the time had come to sponsor a major event honoring Chen Jian and the Museum's expansion. The event was held on March 3, 2024. Attendees included Xu Xin, professor of the Department of Philosophy and Religion of Nanjing University and Wang Jian, director of the Institute of International Studies of the

Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. At the event, Spungen officially donated two childhood drawings and a graded assignment from the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association school (aka the Kadoorie School) of the late Doris (née Warschawski) Fogel on behalf of the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation. Along with these items, Spungen gave the SJRM a framed copy of the article Kevin Ostoyich wrote about Fogel titled "Paper Routes: Conveying the Messages of Doris Warschawski Fogel to Future Generations."

Chen Jian and Danny Spungen at the March 3, 2024 event at the SJRM sponsored by the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation.

When Spungen entered the newly expanded Museum, he was overwhelmed. He recalls, "So, when I got to the Museum, I was— Words cannot accurately describe how I felt." He explains that you walk up the stairs and there is an opening film. Spungen explains that the film envelops the museum visitor on three sides and thus thrusts the visitor into something approaching a virtual reality experience. He thinks the film's narrative appropriately prepares the viewer with background information. He believes the designers of the opening experience correctly gauged the needs of its target audience (i.e., students). He remembers thinking as he looked around the room that it is the only time in recent memory where he was around so many people and did not see a single cell phone. That is quite an achievement for any establishment, museum or otherwise! Given his many years serving as a docent and visiting schools, Spungen knows that to capture the attention of young people one needs to employ some fireworks. He says the SJRM puts on quite a fireworks show for its arriving visitors.

Spungen says, "They wowed me. The graphics were superb. The sound was not. The sound system needs to be improved. Make it louder." Despite the subpar sound system, the overall effect of the Museum on Spungen was intensely positive. As he expresses his feelings, superlatives start to flow: "It's incredible. It's modern. It's better than [almost] any museum I've seen in the world. The introduction film is the best I've seen in any Holocaust museum." He says one of the highlights of the Museum now in its expanded form is that visitors view the displays within the buildings where the Jewish refugees lived. Thus, not only does one get transported back in time through the contents of the displays but also by the location of the displays.

Spungen was struck by the degree to which the Museum captured the life of the refugees, domestically and culturally. On the latter, Spungen says the Museum may even do too good of a job. He explains that with so much focus on the vibrant cultural life of the refugees, one

may lose sight of the negative aspects of refugee life in Shanghai. He cautions that one should not forget that Shanghai was rife with disease, filth, hunger. He believes the Museum should not shield viewers from this part of the history. Yes, Shanghai was welcoming to the refugees, *but not because the environment was at all inviting. Shanghai was only welcoming in the sense that – unlike other places in the world – the refugees were allowed to land and were not kicked out.*

Spungen was impressed overall by how successful Chen Jian has been in collecting items pertaining to the refugee community. He was particularly struck by a refugee library collection on display in the Museum. He also found noteworthy a wedding dress that was worn in Shanghai and has since been passed down within a refugee family.

Spungen notes that there is a section of the Museum devoted to Shanghailanders who became successful after Shanghai, especially such prominent individuals as W. Michael Blumenthal and Peter Max. Spungen would like to help the SJRM develop this strength by featuring the lives of more Shanghailanders. For example, Spungen hopes the Museum will highlight the achievements of Bert Reiner. Reiner was the head engineer in the production of Cabbage Patch Kids and presently serves as an expert with respect to child safety issues in manufactured toys and furniture. Spungen explains that the donation of the Doris Fogel materials is to be seen as but one step along a journey in which the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation and SJRM work together to highlight the lives and achievements of refugees.

Although the SJRM is doing an outstanding job documenting the history of the Shanghai Jewish refugees, Spungen has concerns that go beyond its sound system. As had been the case in the past, he is uncomfortable with the use and labeling of replicas in the displays. More conceptually, he is concerned that the SJRM may still be missing the opportunity to address the three aforementioned questions that have guided his engagement with the Museum. Spungen encourages the SJRM not to lose sight of the larger Holocaust history of which the Shanghai history is a part. In its present form, Spungen thinks the SJRM is perhaps among the ten largest Holocaust-related museums in the world. His fear is that, given the immense scale of the Museum, the history of the Shanghai Jews can start to lose its proper proportion in relation to the Holocaust. Therefore, the SJRM administration needs to be mindful that the coverage of the general history of the Holocaust is always robust. Moreover, Spungen believes the Museum needs to provide more basic information about what it means to be Jewish, inform visitors about antisemitism, and address

why Jews were targeted by the Nazis. He suggests that the SJRM administration engage with the themes historian Peter Hayes has explored in his groundbreaking work Why?: Explaining the Holocaust. In doing so, the Museum will not only convey information but challenge its visitors to grapple with tough historical questions. Ultimately, he hopes the SJRM can help visitors identify and reject antisemitism. He thinks this is an important task for any Holocaust museum and that the SJRM is uniquely situated to carry out this important work in China.

Spungen's hope is that these points will be taken by the staff of the SJRM as constructive criticism from a long-time supporter who firmly believes the Museum is among the best he has ever encountered. Even though there is still room for improvement, Spungen thinks the SJRM is "a magnificent museum. It's a must go for any tourist." Moreover, he would like to see the SJRM become more integrated within the world community of Holocaust organizations and museums. His "dream" is for the SJRM to host an Association of Holocaust Organization (AHO) conference and/or to promote trips for AHO members and students to the Museum.

A Number with a History:

Although he says he was not able to check out everything in the Museum, Spungen firmly believes the video material and the textual information is now more accurate than had been the case in the past. When asked what number the museum is presently using, with respect to the Shanghai refugees, Spungen reports matter-of-factly, "20,000."

Kevin Ostoyich, an SJI Board member, is a professor of history at Valparaiso University. He is currently serving as a guest professor at the Institut für Bayerische Geschichte and an associate fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. Kevin and his students at Valparaiso began working with the Florence and Laurence Spungen Foundation in 2013. The Foundation provided artifacts (mostly documents & postal history) to the students from Holocaust survivors who were in the Shanghai ghetto for archival studies and the curation of temporary exhibitions at the university. After introducing Kevin to many Shanghailanders, he started to interview and write stories about them on the Foundation's behalf. In 2021, he collaborated with the Foundation to author the preface and two additional chapters in the Foundation's book, *Forging Secrets: Faces and Facts Inside the Nazi Operation Bernhard Scheme*, published in 2022. In July 2023, he joined the Foundation staff as a researcher, writer, and interviewer, focusing on artifacts from the Spungen Foundation collection.

Genetic, continued from page 1

CE, while YFull, which gives the haplogroup the alternate name R-Y168245, believes the common ancestor lived around 1000 CE with a 95% confidence interval from 350 CE to 1450 CE. Leo Cooper, a co-administrator of the Kaifeng Jewish project, informed us that their haplogroup is also shared with a Jew from Baghdad, Iraq and a Jew from Iraqi Kurdistan.

Historians have known that some Kaifeng Jews converted to Islam several centuries ago and that some of them assimilated into the Hui ethnic group which practices Islam. The Dungan people of Central Asia descend from the Hui. A particular Dungan Muslim who had a patrilineal ancestor from Hebei province in northeastern China similarly belongs to this Jewish haplogroup according to his genetic test by the Chinese company 23mfang; his assignment of R-Y168245 is visible on YFull.

R-FT14557 is part of the R1b cluster and of West Eurasian origin. Two levels up from their haplogroup is R-Y99503, also called R-FT18731, which was found in a Palestinian Arab from the Muslim village of Beit Ikka (northwest of Jerusalem) and in Armenians and has a descendant subclade called R-FT388189 that was found in an Ashkenazi Jewish patriline from Khotyn, Ukraine who tested with Family Tree DNA. Cooper also informed me of a R-FT388189 carrier whose patriline is Sephardic Jewish from Greece. There is also a Kabyle Berber from Algeria in R-FT388189 who tested with the German company YSEQ. Cooper observes that the ancestors of these lineages lived in West Asia during the Bronze Age.

The other Kaifeng Jewish Y-DNA lineage of West Eurasian origin that has been found and confirmed through "Big Y" testing is called haplogroup J-FTF9916. Family Tree DNA lists a Kurdish Jewish carrier of the same haplogroup as having an origin in Iraqi Kurdistan. Their most recent common male ancestor is estimated to have lived around 550 CE with a 95% confidence interval from 269 BCE to 1122 CE. It is part of the J-ZS1737 cluster within haplogroup J1 which also includes an Iraqi Arab man and a man from Qatar, among others, and has a Lebanese match in its ancestral clade J-FT41076.

The genetic results above confirm that the Kaifeng Jewish community was founded by Mizrahi Jewish traders in medieval times, which had long been what historians posited. The first of them arrived no later than the 12th century. A stele dating from 1489 stated that Jews built their first synagogue in Kaifeng in 1163. According to Elkan Adler, Jews from Bukhara remembered through the centuries that some members of their community had moved to China and subsequently lost contact with them. Speaking of Kaifeng Jews in particular, Adler mentioned that "the Per-

sian rubrics in their liturgies" were "in the Bokharan dialect". A Jewish community had been established in Bukhara by the 13th century when Ibn al-Fati mentioned them and may have had a continuous presence in Bukhara from the 14th century.

Over the centuries, the Kaifeng Jews had heavily intermarried with Han Chinese women and men and thus acquired Chinese haplogroups, such as the Y-DNA haplogroup O-M175. It is currently unknown whether the Ashkenazi Jewish mtDNA haplogroup M33c, which is shared with Chinese people, had any connection to the Kaifeng Jewish community, but it too appears to have traveled along the Silk Road, just in the opposite direction.

Kevin Brook is the author of the book *The Maternal Genetic Lineages of Ashkenazic Jews*. His previous article, "The Chinese Lady Who Joined the Ashkenazic People", appeared in the November 2016 issue of *Points East*. He may be reached at kbrook@khazaria.com.

Bibliography:

Jews in Many Lands, by Elkan Nathan Adler (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1905)

Jewish Communities in Exotic Places, by Ken Blady (Jason Aronson, 2000)

"JewishGen Talks: The Genetic Origins of the Jewish People - Hanukkah 2020 Edition with Adam Brown", <https://www.facebook.com/JewishGen.org/videos/jewish-gen-talks-the-genetic-origins-of-the-jewish-people-hanukkah-2020-edition-w/511439379812719/>

"Kaifeng Jews - Y-DNA Colorized Chart", https://www.familytreedna.com/public/Kaifeng_Jews?iframe=ycolorized

"The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng (and what I've learned from them)", by Anson Laytner, The Interfaith Observer, <https://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2022/12/1/the-chinese-kaifeng-jews>

The Survival of the Chinese Jews: The Jewish Community of Kaifeng, by Donald Daniel Leslie (E. J. Brill, 1972)

"Y-DNA and the Jews", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqjX37dkkh0>

"YFull YTree: R-Y168245", <https://www.yfull.com/tree/R-Y168245/> (Bukharian Jewish sample # YF018962, Kaifeng Jewish sample # YF063535, Dungan Muslim sample # YF127282)

"Your Haplogroup Story: J-FTF9916", <https://discover.familytreedna.com/y-dna/J-FTF9916/story>

"Your Haplogroup Story: R-FT14557", <https://discover.familytreedna.com/y-dna/R-FT14557/story>

Renovation to Restore Ohel Moishe Synagogue to 1907 Glory

By Yang Jian

Excerpted from *Shine* (www.shine.cn), 6 May 2024.

A major renovation project began on Monday to restore historic Ohel Moishe Synagogue in Hongkou District to its original 1907 appearance.

The century-old building within the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum will close for over six months for repairs inside and out. The goal is to un-

veil a refurbished synagogue by year-end, according to the museum.

Built in 1907 with grey brick walls and a red-sloped roof, the [building] was initially constructed by Ashkenazi Jews residing in Shanghai. In 1927, a Russian Jew transformed it into a synagogue. During World War II, the synagogue was a gathering place for Jewish refugees in the city. *Long Gang*. An artist's rendition of the renovated Ohel Moishe Synagogue.

After most of the refugees returned to their home countries in 1956, the synagogue was closed. It then served various purposes, including as a government office and hospital.

The building was repurposed to house exhibitions in 2007 when the museum was established. With expanded museum space, the synagogue was restored to its 1920s appearance, serving as a venue for theatrical performances and concerts. The current restoration aims to improve the building's multifunctional space.

Recent discoveries by the museum have inspired a restoration plan that seeks to restore the synagogue to its original state. The restoration focuses on the Ark at the center of the synagogue, which will be restored to its 1920s design.

The renovation includes repairing the facade, strengthening the roof and terrace frames, cleaning mosaic floors, and installing fireproofing. The renovated building will offer an improved experience to visitors, said Chen Jian, curator of the museum.

"The synagogue will have a more flexible use of space after the renovation, serving visitors better with expanded functionality," he added.

Yang Jian is the chief metro reporter for *Shine*, an online publication of the *Shanghai Daily*. He may be contacted at yangjian@shanghaidaily.com.



The English Sassoon Family's Chinese History

By Philissa Cramer

Excerpted from *JTA*, 12 March 2024

Internet sleuths scouring photographs to understand the befuddling tumult in Britain's royal family believe they have solved a different mystery: what happened to artifacts taken from China during the Qing Dynasty. Their conclusion, in turn, is drawing renewed attention to the imperial spoils of one of the wealthiest and most influential Jewish families in history.

To understand the story, one must start at the beginning: the announcement in January that Kate Middleton, who is married to the British heir apparent, William, would be undergoing surgery and thus exit public view.

It has now been nearly three months since anyone has seen convincing proof of life for Middleton, also known as Catherine, Princess of Wales. Kensington Palace's efforts to assure royal-watchers of her health and safety have included a series of baffling gaffes, including, last week, the release of a doctored photograph that news agencies retracted in a rare move and for which Middleton, or at least a digital simulacrum of her, has apologized. [She has since announced that she is being treated for cancer. Ed.]

A wide range of theories are now being promulgated about Middleton's disappearance, which comes while King Charles III has stepped out of public life after a cancer diagnosis. The theories range from the prosaic to the frightening to the utterly fanciful, but several popular ones are connected to the belief that Prince William is having an affair with Rose Hanbury, the Marchioness of Cholmondeley and Middleton's onetime friend. (Through an attorney, Rose has denied the allegations.)

This is where Jewish history comes in. Hanbury's husband David, the Marquess of Cholmondeley, is the grandson of Sybil Sassoon — a member of the influential Baghdadi Jewish family and also a member of the Rothschilds, the prominent Jewish banking family.

Born in London in 1894 to a father who was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) and a French mother from the Rothschild family, Sassoon was part of a generation of very affluent Jews who transitioned from achieving remarkable success in British society despite antisemitism to integrating completely into its most rarefied echelons. Sassoon married George Cholmondeley, Earl of Rocksavage, when she was 19, bore him three children and, when she died in 1989, was buried in a church on the grounds of their estate, Houghton Hall.

Rose and David live in Houghton Hall today, surrounded in part by the design choices made by his grandmother...The decor, Chinese internet users quickly re-

alized, includes furniture and art from the Qing Dynasty, China's last imperial dynasty, which reigned from 1644 to 1912.

The Sassoon family's ties to China were long and complicated. After Britain forced the flow of opium into China in the 19th century, during what are known as the Opium Wars, the Sassoon family became the dominant trader sending the narcotic from India to China. Victor Sassoon, who lived from 1881 to 1961, shifted much of the family's wealth to Shanghai, where he was both crucial to the city's modern development and to its role as a haven for Jews during the Holocaust.

A recent flurry of attention to the family, sometimes referred to as "the Rothschilds of the East," included uneven scrutiny of the family's role in the international opium trade. A museum exhibit in New York City, for example, focused almost entirely on the art and artifacts, including ornate Judaica, that the family collected and gave little mention to the opium trade. [See Jewish Museum article on p. xx.]

Many of the items collected by the family have made their way subsequently to museums, including the British Museum. But Chinese internet sleuths speculated that the items on display at Houghton Hall also came from their country.

Whether the items were purchased legally or were, as some have alleged, "pillaged" is impossible to know. The Sassoons' wealth meant they likely commissioned works from Chinese artisans in addition to acquiring antiques. Still, the Sassoons were active in China during what is known as the "Century of Humiliation," when foreign powers controlled China and wide swaths of art were stolen...

The Chinese internet discussion about the Cholmondeleys' home decor, which has spread on social media in recent days, is starkly emotional. "For Chinese netizens, this is a great hurt," said a TikTok user named Cathy Chen who was among the first to draw attention outside of Chinese social media to the raging debate about the images. "These cultural relics not only represent the history and culture of our nation but are also the wisdom and hard work of our ancestors," Chen continued. "They are being used as trophies to show off..."

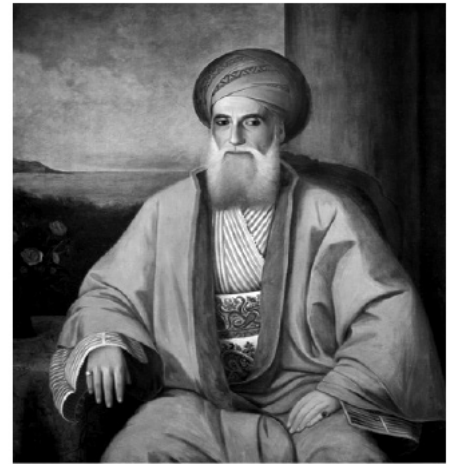
The Jewish Museum's Sanitized History of an Opium Dynasty

By Rebecca Schiffman

Excerpted from *Hyperallergic*, 5 July 2023

As with any dynasty, the history of the Sassoon family is filled with adversity, courage, intellect, and a name that binds them together. What separates the Sassoons from other wealthy families is their remarkable and vast tale of trade, travel, art collecting, architectural pa-

tronage, and civic engagement, which took them from Iraq to India, China, and England. The Sassoons at The Jewish Museum covers both the family and the objects they collected but falls short of addressing the underbelly of the Sassoons' greed and jealousy. And despite the initial wall text promising to "cast light on the important role of the Sassoon women," the show does not delve far enough into the trailblazing paths that the many Sassoon women forged.



Attributed to William Melville, "David Sassoon" (mid-19th century), oil on canvas, 41 1/2 x 33 inches; Private Collection (all images courtesy Jewish Museum)

The exhibition features 120 examples of artworks, manuscripts, and Judaica from around the world that the family members amassed. In the first of the five galleries, we are greeted by a portrait of David Sassoon (1792–1864), the family patriarch and the start of the story. David wears a flowing robe and intricate head-dress; accented by his long silver beard, he is the picture of an Iraqi Jew with means. He fled persecution in Baghdad, soon establishing himself in Mumbai (then Bombay). There, he was involved in the cotton trade, later expanding to trade Indian opium with China.

An intricate ornamental ivory casket gives form to the family's opium-fueled wealth and sets the stage for a later room dedicated to objects from the Qing and Ming dynasties. The small Qing object, owned by Victor Sassoon, offers a painted view of the Bocca Tigris, which played an important role in the First Opium War. In an effort to dominate the opium trade, David sent his son, Elias David Sassoon, to scout out new customers. Opium became enormously lucrative for the Sassoons; a significant portion of their wealth was built on the highly addictive (though legal) drug.

One must be careful when judging the family's participation in the opium trade, especially through a contemporary moral lens. But at the time, the drug was already known to be addictive and dangerous. In fact, the family quietly dismissed some of their Chinese employees because of their addiction to opium.

The adjoining galleries follow the Sassoons' transition from Far East trading to assimilation into British society. In a small alcove, Rachel Sassoon Beer (1858–1927) takes the stage, the first of many strong Sassoon women. An ethereal 1887 portrait of her by Henry Jones Thaddeus hangs at the center. Rachel was an avid art collector and socialite, as well as an accomplished journalist and the first female head of two major news publications: *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* in London. The wall text in the room mentions Rachel's unprecedented female leadership, but the romanticized portrait, and a subsequent room that holds her collection of works by Rubens, Courbet, Corot, and Constable, depict her as a wife and collector first and as a revolutionary feminist icon second. Despite her major role in journalism, no copies of any newspapers or articles on which she worked are in the show. If this exhibition seeks to pay special attention to the women of the family, why not include copies of her legendary reporting on the Dreyfus Affair?

Silver Torah finials, scrolls, and pointers fill the fourth gallery, alongside a vast collection of manuscripts of ancient Jewish texts, from kabbalistic treatises to the Hebrew Bible, liturgical fragments, and the family Haggadah. This impressive collection of Judaic art and literature is juxtaposed with the Sassoons' art and architectural patronage. Here, Sybil Sassoon (1894–1989) and her connoisseur's

eye dominate. With a Sassoon father and a Rothschild mother, Sybil and her brother, Phillip, grew up in the company of prominent artists, as well as prominent social and political figures. Among the many works on view are a quaint sketch by William Orphen, paintings by their close friend Winston Churchill, and portraits of the family by John Singer Sargent, displayed together on a long wall.

It was strange to see so many portraits of Aline de Rothschild, Sybil, and Phillip, but none of Flora (Farha) Sassoon (1856–1936). Flora was David Sassoon & Co.'s first female partner, and in 1894 one of the first female presidents of a global company. Flora was pushed out of the company after seven years due to her brothers' inability to accept her success.

The exhibition's last section focuses on the family's role in World War I, in which Sir Victor Sassoon, Philip, and Siegfried served. Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967), a poet, became the voice of a generation with his defiant letter of protest against the war. "A Soldier's Declaration" was published in *The Times* of London and read aloud in Parliament. There was no copy of the newspaper to share in detail his revolutionary ideas, but tucked away in a small display case you will find a notebook with the draft of the statement written, crossed out, and edited.

The Sassoon dynasty is filled with merchants, poets, soldiers, socialites, rivalries, art, and drugs, and all the family members have stories to tell. But the Jewish Museum missed an opportunity to look more critically at the Sassoons' dependency on selling opioids to fund their lavish lifestyle, and to delve into the lives and careers of the women — who made strides toward gender equality that are only acknowledged in passing. Perhaps by casting a fresh light on such a legendary family with this exhibition, we can look forward to new scholarship that fills in these gaps.

The Sassoons ran at the Jewish Museum (1109 Fifth Avenue, Upper East Side, Manhattan) through August 13, 2023. The exhibition was curated by Claudia Nahson, Morris and Eva Feld Senior Curator at the Jewish Museum, and Esther da Costa Meyer, Professor Emerita at Princeton University.

Rebecca Schiffman is a Brooklyn-based writer, editor, and art historian. She is currently working towards her Master's at Hunter College and is the assistant editor at Art & Object. Some of her interests include Manet and the French salon, female Surrealists, and the role of criticism in art history. She may be contacted at rschiffman12@gmail.com.

The Oratorio Émigré Premiers

By Sam Lin-Sommer

Excerpted from *The Forward*, www.forward.com, 26 February 2024

...Émigré, a new musical commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and its musical director Long Yu, tells the story of star-crossed lovers, one Chinese and the other Jewish, who marry despite divisions between their people and a brutal war.

Long Yu, who originally conceived of the musical, said that he wanted to spread the word about Shanghai's welcoming of Jewish immigrants because it highlights the "goodness and kindness of humanity" that emerges when people are in need. Yu, who leads the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, grew up in Shanghai with a choreographer for a father and a pianist for a mother, part of a Chinese musical ecosystem that has long been influenced by Jewish artists. In the 1930s and 40s, Jewish artists who had taken refuge in Shanghai taught classical music to Chinese youth, launching the careers of artists who would go on to become professional musicians and play in China's national orchestra.

Yu has wanted to use music to tell the story of Jews in Shanghai for two decades, he said. This idea came to fruition when, after a 2019 performance at the New York Philharmonic, he met Aaron Zigman, a composer known for scoring films and TV shows such as *The Notebook*, *Sex and the City*, and *Bridge to Terabithia*. Yu asked Zigman if he would be interested in composing a musical about how Shanghai harbored Jews during World War II. "I couldn't say no," Zigman said. "I had too many, much too many, connections to this period of Holocaust."

Zigman, who is Jewish, calls himself a "Holocaust freak" and said that he has been studying the Shoah since he was seven years old. He had been interested in the Jewish diaspora in Shanghai for a long time, in part because a man who he calls his "surrogate father" was a part of the Jewish diaspora there before moving to the United States.

In composing the musical, Zigman decided to create a love story "for the sake of staying out of politics," he said. Mark Campbell and Brock Walsh wrote the lyrics, creating a story that is simultaneously an ode to cross-cultural friendship and a cautionary tale about the dangers of tribalism.

At the musical's debut in Shanghai, logistical snags and financial limitations caused the musical to be performed in a minimalist manner, with singers performing without any background images. For the New York production, Director Mary Birnbaum leads a team that will design wall projections and the singer's costumes, all based on extensive research into what life might have been like for Jews and Chinese at the time.



Lady Rachel Sassoon (née Isaac) (1857–1911) (photo courtesy private collection)

For Birnbaum, who has Jewish and Catholic heritage and was raised Quaker, the musical's nuanced depiction of Jews' relationships to Chinese people was particularly compelling. "I relate to mixed heritage entirely," she said.

For the wall projections, Birnbaum chose a variety of displays that correspond to the differing perspectives that characters might have had on Shanghai. For source material, she turned to the work of Jewish artists who lived in Shanghai, like Peter Max, now known for his psychedelic pop art. Embroidery, a medium shared by Jewish and Chinese artists, features heavily in characters' costumes, with some Jewish characters wearing embroidered images of family members left behind in Europe...

In the four years since Yu approached Zigman about what would become *Émigré*, global politics have tested the capacities of China, the U.S., and the Jewish diaspora to transcend tribalism: the relationship between the U.S. and China has soured; sinophobia, antisemitism, and islamophobia are on the rise; Russia and Ukraine, and Israel and Palestine, are embroiled in wars that have killed thousands of civilians. But the *Émigré* team maintained that the political tensions surrounding their project didn't influence their creative process, and that their job as artists is to focus on the minutiae of a human story rather than get caught up in wider political issues.

"The nouns will change, the places will change, the conflicts will change," said lyricist Brock Walsh. "But there will always be conflict, and there will always be a need for people to respond, and to respond humanely."

Sam Lin-Sommer is an editorial fellow at the Forward. You can reach him by email at linsommer@forward.com.

More on *Émigré*

By Ronald Blum

Excerpted from *The Times of Israel*, www.timesofisrael.com,

1 March 2024

[The New York Philharmonic Orchestra performed *Émigré* on Feb. 29 and March 1 at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall. Ed.]

...Zigman's 90-minute, two-act work, given its US premiere by the New York Philharmonic on Thursday night, evokes a World War II-era sound reminiscent of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II...

"I thought this was a really, really exciting opportunity to think bigger than the Holocaust stories we usually hear and think about the cross-cultural implications and also the implications of migrancy in our world today," director Mary Birnbaum said.

Commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and Shanghai music director Long Yu, "*Émigré*" was given its world premiere at Jaguar Shanghai Symphony Hall on Nov. 17 in an unstaged performance.

Zigman met Yu in 2016 and they worked together on "*Tango Manos*," a 2019 piano concerto for Jean-Yves Thibaudet. That same year, Yu asked Zigman to join the "*Émigré*" project.

Zigman was impressed by "*Silent Night*," the 2011 opera by composer Kevin Puts and librettist Mark Campbell, and added Campbell, a veteran of roughly 40 libretti. Campbell brought in Birnbaum, who worked with him on Laura Kaminsky's "*As One*" in 2014 and Rene Orth's "*Empty the House*" in 2016.

Campbell's text mostly is English with some Chinese, Hebrew and Latin. Brock Walsh, who has worked with Céline Dion and the Pointer Sisters, contributed lyrics for five of the 17 songs, including the especially impactful "*In a Perfect World*" and "*Once Upon a Night*." The closing "*Through A Window*" quotes "*You'll Never Walk Alone*" from "*Carousel*"...

Additional performances are planned for Beijing in October, Berlin in November, Hong Kong in April 2025 and London in June 2025. Deutsche Grammophon made a recording in Shanghai that was released digitally on Feb. 2, with CDs to follow on June 28.

[The New York Times, in a 2 March 2024 review, pronounced the oratorio "bland", noting "Few milieus could be as seductively dramatic as that Chinese city in the 1930s, with its cosmopolitan glamour and wartime danger. But "*Émigré*" evokes none of this theatrical allure, failing to grab the ear or the heart...the 95-minute score is so blandly cloying, the rhymed-couplets text so stiff and the characters so cardboard, that not a moment ends up surprising or moving." Ed.]

Why Japan Exaggerates the Sugihara Story

By Jordyn Haime

Excerpted from *JTA*, 19 July 2023

Chiune Sugihara...a Japanese diplomat to Lithuania from 1939 to 1940, [who] helped thousands of Jewish refugees flee wartime Europe by issuing transit visas that allowed them to travel across the Soviet Union to Japan. Today, his name and story can be found all over the country, from his supposed hometown in Yaotsu to a museum at the northern Tsuruga port where Jewish refugees landed. His likeness is found in memorials in Tokyo

and in manga series and films, in addition to nearly every modern history school textbook. In 2017, the Tokyo Weekender magazine dubbed Sugihara the "best Japanese person ever." Some Catholics have even expressed hope that Sugihara will be officially canonized by the Catholic church as a Saint.

But over the past few years, a growing number of researchers — in addition to his own son — have publicly challenged Sugihara's superhero status and many details of the version of his story pushed in Japan and around the world. Some researchers say that Japan has used him as a symbol of humanitarianism in the face of criticism of Japan's World War II record...

Sugihara issued some 2,140 transit visas, some used for entire households...Sugihara's act was also only one step in a series of events that led to the refugees' escape. Tokyo required them to have a final destination permit as a condition of their transit through Japan, and those were provided by Jan Zwartendijk, a Dutch consul in Kaunas at the time who stamped thousands of Jewish passports to visa-free Dutch Curacao. Jewish organizations stepped in to pay for the refugees' transit across the Soviet Union, which was miraculously granted by Soviet authorities.

Andrew Jucobowicz, whose parents escaped wartime Europe with the help of a Sugihara visa, emphasized the importance of Zwartendijk's role in an interview. In recent years, the Dutch consulate has also attempted to boost the profile of their own Holocaust hero, who is often "hidden" in the shadow of Sugihara.

"The critical person in the whole game was really Zwartendijk," said Jucobowicz, a professor of sociology at the University of Technology Sydney who has spent four decades researching the conditions of his family's survival...

Jucobowicz said his father barely met Sugihara, whose visa was just one chapter in a long journey to safety. The survival of this group of Jews was "almost pure luck at every point," he said...

"My feeling is that it was an extraordinary wormhole that opened up through these essentially conflicting empires, and as they crashed into each other, this little hole opened up and people were able to scurry into it," he said.

Yaotsu's claim as Sugihara's birthplace is also disputed, said Nobuki Sugihara, the consul's only surviving child. Nobuki said that according to family documents, his father was born in Mino, about 30 miles away from Yaotsu.

"It's shocking. People come from around the world to visit Yaotsu [but] my father was not born there, he has never lived there," Nobuki told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "They made up a story that he was born in Yaotsu in order to get tourists because in that village there is nothing."

The memorial and museum in Yaotsu,

despite its distance from a major city, receives 20,000 tourists per year both foreign and domestic, according to Ito Yuko, who works in Yaotsu's regional development and promotion division. She said the Sugihara family once lived in their small town, and elderly townspeople still remember them... Local tourism officials have also promoted a "Sugihara Remembrance Route," part of a multimillion-dollar effort promoted widely in Israel that is described as "a nostalgic journey of discovery that will take you to places associated with the great man and areas where the Japan's [sic] original landscape and traditional culture remain strong." Although sometimes referred to as the "refugees remembrance route," the route curiously excludes the city of Kobe, where Jewish refugees lived for months before leaving Japan for other destinations. Sugihara had no connection to many of the areas on this route, Nobuki said. He explained that much of the common narrative about Sugihara comes from his mother Yukiko's memoir, published in 1995... In a recent article for the academic journal *American Historical Review*, University of Haifa professor and prominent Japan scholar Rotem Kowner examined how Sugihara became a "Holocaust paragon of virtue." Sugihara, he wrote, "was not the only consul to issue visas to Jews during this period, and not every consul who issued visas turned into a hero." As Japan rebuilt and rebranded into a peace-loving nation after the war, said Chiharu Inaba, a professor who researches Jewish refugees in Japan, "The people didn't know what a hero was anymore. They needed a new hero"... Sugihara's Rise to Fame

The start of Sugihara's rise to hero status can be traced back to his nomination as one of Yad Vashem's "Righteous Among the Nations" in 1968. According to Kowner's research, Sugihara did not earn the honor for 16 years after his initial nomination because of Yad Vashem's initial doubts over whether he risked his life or professional position to help Jews — normally a requirement of Righteous Among the Nations status. Instead, Sugihara was at first given a certificate of recognition for his actions. Eventually, though, when a panel was presented with new evidence and testimony from survivors, it determined that Sugihara had taken a career risk, and his Righteous status was granted in 1984. Authorities also saw it as an opportunity to improve Israel's image in Japan, Kowner argues, as Japanese public opinion about Israel had sharply deteriorated amid the conflict with Lebanon at the time. A former head of Yad Vashem's "Righteous Among the Nations" department recently disputed the claim that political considerations were involved in Sugihara's nomination.

Recognition of Sugihara remained scant within Japan until 2000, when the Japanese government for the first time officially recognized him at a centennial celebration of his birth. But Prime Minister Shinzo Abe — known throughout his 2012-2020 tenure for his conservative politics, revisionist views of Japan's World War II activities and desire to ramp up Japan's military — embraced Sugihara more than any other Japanese leader. In Sugihara, Abe saw an opportunity to not only boost diplomatic relations with Israel and Lithuania, but to make Sugihara a positive representative of the Japanese people in its darkest historical period. But the process had already started before Abe's tenure. In the 2000s, revisionist writers began adding Sugihara's name into texts that denied the Nanjing Massacre — a Japanese attack on the Chinese city in 1937 that resulted in an estimated 300,000 deaths — "to show that wartime Japan did not resemble Nazi Germany," Kowner wrote... "Sugihara posthumously allowed his country to shed a long-lasting self-justifying policy of victimization and, instead, rebrand itself as possessing proactive humanitarian values," Kowner wrote. "Critically, Japan could cast itself in the role of a 'good' country that helped the Jews rather than that of an Axis villain"... Madoka Sugihara, Chiune Sugihara's granddaughter and soon-to-be-director of Sugihara Visas for Life, noted the dramatic change in the government's reception of Sugihara in the past several years. "The way the government changed their attitude is a very cynical thing," but "it is a good thing that they regard Sugihara-san's act very fairly. I'm convinced that it's a good thing," she said.

Jordyn Haime is a Taiwan-based freelance journalist who writes about religion, culture, and geopolitics. She graduated from the University of New Hampshire in 2020 with degrees in journalism and international affairs and recently completed a Fulbright fellowship, under which she researched Judaism and philosemitism in Taiwan.

Max Fishman's Adventure in Manchuria Mostly

[Max Fishman, the father of one of SJI's founders, Norm Fishman (z"l), recorded his memoirs in 1974. His granddaughter, Devora Weinapple, shared a transcript with us, from which this portion is excerpted. Max was born in the village of Kurhamova, Russia in 1891. As a young adolescent, he went to a yeshiva in Yisrawi, in the state of Nogilev, but he left during the tumultuous years of 1905-06, when Russia underwent political turmoil. He helped found a Jewish self-defense group (against pogromists) and later became a Zionist. He

used his training to work as a teacher of Hebrew and Judaic in villages until he was almost drafted for WWI in 1914. Although he was keen to go to Palestine, his father and uncle advised him to go to America instead, and the only way to get to America was by going east. Traveling alone, he boarded a train bound for Manchuria, with the intent of getting to San Francisco. Ed.]

Interviewer: I think last time you told us that you were going to Manchuria planning to wait out the war. You thought the war would be short.

Fishman: When I came to Manchuria, we thought the war was a terrible war and it wouldn't last more than about three to six months. So I went to Manchuria at the end of May 1915. I thought the war will end by fall, so then I'd turn and go back to Russia. Of course it didn't end. So after six months I decided to proceed to the United States.

I: What was life like in Manchuria at the time you were there?

F: I was teaching.

I: Teaching Hebrew?

F: Teaching Hebrew and some Yiddish.

I: Did you teach in private homes or did you teach in the synagogue?

F: No, private homes.

I: One student at a time?

F: One, maybe two, but no school. Just private lessons.

I: Were there many Jewish families where you were living in Manchuria?

F: I would say around between forty and fifty families.

I: Do you remember the town?

F: The Station Manchuria. That's the name of the town. And I tell you, it took me seven days to cross the length of Siberia by train.

I: What was the trip like?

F: Well, as I can remember, it was a beautiful trip. I passed all those Russian cities: Omsk and Tomsk and Cheyabin and especially Yirkutz. Yirkutz was the most beautiful city in all of Siberia. And then the train was running all around the Lake Bakal—it was a beautiful sight.

I: When you got to Station Manchuria, how did you get in touch with the Jewish families?

F: There was no synagogue but there was some kind of a small temple. I don't remember exactly—it's a long time ago, about sixty years.

I: Did you meet other Jewish young men who were fleeing?

F: I think at the station I met a few Jewish people there, and there were a few—how you say?—draft-dodgers. We met there and they took me...there was a Yiddishe schochet. You know what a schochet is?—who kills the poultry. I lived in their house. I paid them so much and I stayed with them for room and board all the time I was there. Their name was I think Yerzikov.

I: That was a good place to stay to get con-

nections for Hebrew and Yiddish lessons?

F: Yeah. When they found out there is a teacher there, so they came to see me: "Are you interested in giving some Jewish education to the children?"

I: Were there any political activities in the town?

F: No. I don't think they were interested. I'll tell you, on the Station Manchuria and all over Siberia there were a lot of Jewish prisoners that were freed after they paid their debts to society, and also some Jewish criminals. There are Jewish criminals too. They were sent to Siberia, and they stayed there for a year or two, and some stayed there for good. And some moved down to Manchuria, Harbin, and all over the Far East.

I: And they settled there or they planned to emigrate?

F: Some of them settled there. That is an easy life there.

I: Why?

F: Well, there were very few Jewish people and there was a good field for business and industry.

I: Did you meet any rich Jewish ex-criminals?

F: I met a few in Harbin. I didn't stay in Harbin too long—just for one month. I was about six months in Manchuria Station and about a month in Harbin. At Harbin I had to report to the Commandant once a week.

I: Why did you leave Station Manchuria when you did?

F: I decided to leave to the United States; that the war would continue, so I'll go to America. When I decided that, I had to move on. So I moved on from Station Manchuria to Harbin. I got my passport, and then when I came to Harbin I had to show it in the hotel. The name of the hotel was Siber. I gave them my passport, of course, and they said to report to the police. They told me to report to the Commandant every week.

There was in Harbin at that time an old city and a new city: Starygod and Novygod. And that's what I did for about four weeks. And then, before I had to report next time, I got a passport—[the] passport I couldn't get from the Commandant. So I bought a passport for 25 rubles. And I proceeded to Chang-Chung—that's the other side of the Korean border.

I: Was it difficult to get a forged passport in Harbin?

F: If you had a certain amount of money, you could get all you want. But I tell you I didn't need it. I paid for the passport—it was 25 rubles. And I crossed with somebody. I didn't cross myself. And that party—it was a young woman—she took the passport back.

I: So somebody else could use it.

F: So somebody else. That was going on all the time. The same passport could be

used and used over.

I: But didn't you need a passport to travel internationally? Wouldn't you need a passport in Korea?

F: I don't think I needed anything. They didn't ask any passport at that time. Just to get out.

I: Were there a lot of young Jewish men at Harbin trying to get out?

F: Let me remember. No, I think I took the passport with me. That's how I came to this country under the name of Goosa Kole. And I didn't know exactly what to do. Then when I landed in Seattle, Washington I gave them my passport and I came into this country under that name—Goosa Kole.

I: And then you changed your name later?

F: And then when I applied for my citizenship first papers, I told them that I came in under this name but my true name is Fishman. So then it was changed. It was changed there when I got my citizenship papers in Santa Rosa.

I: Do you remember much about your trip across Korea and across Japan?

F: I remember to a certain degree. I liked the Korean people, very nice. It was the wintertime. I remember they were all in white. And I admired those people—they are so quiet, they talk within themselves, they don't talk too loud.

I: How long did it take to cross Korea?

F: It took me by train about a day or a day and a half by train from Chang-Chung to Fusan. At that time they called it Fuzan.

I: Is that Japan?

F: Simonsetti is already Japan. And then we went by train again. Then I took a boat, a steamer, and it took us a few hours to cross to Simonsetti, from Simonsetti to Yokohama.

I: How did you make yourself understood in all these places?

F: Well, somehow. I don't remember exactly (laughter). Listen, dear, [when] people have to, they find a way. There is always a way if you want to very badly.

I: Were there other Jews traveling with you at that time through Korea?

F: No, not Korea. Korea was all myself. But then from Yokohama I took the boat for Seattle Washington, we had on the same boat a couple of hundred draft-dodgers like me.

I: All young men? Any women, families?

F: Well, yes, some women went to join their husbands.

I: Were there any single women on that boat?

F: No, I don't think so. They were married with children coming to join their husbands in the United States.

I: Last time you told us it was a very difficult journey.

F: The journey was very difficult. One night was very stormy. It was stormy and the older people, men and women, started to pray.

Some of them thought that was the end... they would drown in the Pacific. It was a very stormy night, but in the morning it cleared up and it was nice.

It was a 6,000-ton boat, Japanese, and it took us 17 days from Yokohama to Seattle. And we went the northern route, close to Alaska. At that time it was between Christmas and New Year's—it was awful cold. We couldn't stay on top. We had to warm up below.

I: Did you see this entire trip in terms of going to the United States, or eventually getting back to Israel?

F: I don't remember now what I was thinking about. The main thing at that time was coming to America and see what will happen with the war. And meanwhile the Revolution happened in Russia. So that made a whole change in plans.

I: In what respect?

F: For a while I landed here in Seattle Washington on January 15. It already was a cold winter in Seattle and there was a lot of snow. There was about ten or twelve inches of snow and my first job in the United States was shoveling snow [chuckles].

I was cleaning up the roofs—they paid more than down below because it was dangerous. Down below, they paid something like 25¢ an hour, but on the roofs they paid 50¢ an hour. And that was my first earnings in this country.



[After a 5 month stay in Seattle, Max made his way south to San Francisco, fully intending to go back to Russia to help transform the country after the first revolution. But the Bolshevik seizure of power changed his mind and he ended up staying in the Bay area, eventually becoming a chicken farmer in Petaluma, where he was a resident from 1920 to 1958. In 1939 he began assisting European refugees to find employment in the poultry business. Max was an active Labor Zionist, fundraiser for the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and chairman of the first Jewish Appeal in 1942. He was also president and founder of the Jewish Community Center in Petaluma, and a representative of the Petaluma Hebrew Free Loan Association (HFLA). Max and his wife Tova moved to San Francisco where they managed two apartment houses in the Sunset District. Max died on March 23, 1975 at the age of 84.]

BOOK NOOK

Two Books by Dan Ben-Canaan

Echoes of Harbin: Reflections on Space and Time of a Vanished Community in Manchuria

Lexington Books, 2024, Pages: 480
978-1-66691-690-4 • Hardback • \$145.00 • (£112.00)
978-1-66691-691-1 • eBook • \$60.00 • (£46.00)

Harbin, a Chinese city that was established by Russians in 1898 and was a home for 38 different national ethnic communities for more than 60 years. Among the communities, and second in size, was the Jewish community. This book exposes several areas that have contributed to the Jewish experience in China, particularly in Harbin, and paints a revealing picture of what a Jewish community in an alien land was and how it functioned in a space that was shared with other communities. While it starts with a unique space called Manchuria that had its mark on the town of Harbin, it uncovers the active and productive life of a community that wished for a haven but found unrest and hostilities and had to look for it elsewhere. "While much international attention has been focused in recent years on China's northwest (Xinjiang and the Uyghurs), the study of modern northeast China, which was a considerably more important historical and strategic arena, has been somewhat marginalized. Focusing on Harbin, this volume provides a vertical and horizontal analysis of northeast China since the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, within the context of contemporary international events, while covering the lives and interrelations of the regional ethnic and religious communities, underlying the role of Jews, in comprehensive, virtually encyclopedic, details never discussed before, let alone in one volume. As such, it is an outstanding lifelong achievement."

Yitzhak Shichor, professor emeritus, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Special 30% Discount Offer! To get discount, use code LXFANDF30 when ordering from <https://Rowman.com/Lexington>

Tombstone Histories: Tales of Jewish Life in Harbin

Earnshaw Books (Hong Kong: 2023)

Tombstone Histories: Tales of Jewish Life in Harbin presents the Jewish experience in the city in a personal and unforgettable way. It paints a revealing picture, never shown before, of Jewish daily life in this far-

away and alien land, of how people functioned, struggled, and sometimes thrived in a space that was so different and unfamiliar. Tombstone Histories offers glimpses of the lives of the rich, the poor, and those in between with daily stories and reminiscences of close to sixty families. "I loved reading the little details of life. The picture these stories paint is certainly far from heavenly. My certainty is that this will be a great addition to how people view the "Jewish years" of Harbin. I feel grateful to have gotten to read this."

— Professor Jean Ispa

About the Author: Dan Ben-Canaan is Professor of Research and Academic Writing Methodologies, and Professor Emeritus at both the Forestry University / School of Postgraduate Studies, Harbin and at Heilongjiang University / School of Western Studies, Harbin.



Two New Years

by Richard Ho (Author), Lynn Scurfield (Illustrator)

Chronicle Books, 2023, 44 pages, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.

For this multicultural family, inspired by the author's own, two New Years mean twice as much to celebrate! In the fall, Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, offers an opportunity to bake challah, dip apples in honey, and lift voices in song. In the spring, Lunar New Year brings a chance to eat dumplings, watch dragon dances, and release glowing lanterns that light up the sky. With bright, joyful prose and luminous illustrations, Richard Ho and Lynn Scurfield invite readers of all backgrounds to experience the beauty of two New Year traditions, paying homage to the practices that make each unique while illuminating the values of abundance, family, and hope that they share. A Sydney Taylor Gold Medalist from the Association of Jewish Libraries

A National Jewish Book Award Winner from the Jewish Book Council
A word from the author, Richard Ho:
As a Chinese American who converted to Judaism, I'm delighted to share this book with all readers, and especially those who find themselves bridging two or more worlds. Two New Years is especially close to my heart because it reflects the duality of my children's experience. They're growing up with the rituals and traditions of two cultures that intertwine so beautifully. With Lynn's breathtaking illustrations bringing this story to life, I hope the joyful depictions of Rosh Hashana and Lunar New Year celebrations inspire everyone to look for the common threads that bind us all together.

A word from the illustrator, Lynn Scurfield:

Two New Years was one of those books that I knew instantly I had to illustrate. I myself am half-Chinese, my step-family is Jewish, and never in a million years did I think I'd have the chance to illustrate a story that felt so close to home. This book allowed me to learn more about both celebrations, gave me time to delve into papercut art, and is a project I am deeply thankful to be a part of. Many thanks to Richard for sharing the story of his family and the team over at Chronicle for creating such a beautiful book. I hope you all enjoy reading about these two New Year Celebrations!

A Brief Interview with Richard Ho

Richard Ho is Chinese, Jewish, and an author whose previous books include *The Lost Package*, illustrated by Jessica Lanan, and *Year of the Cat*, illustrated by Jocelyn Li Langrand. He loves to craft stories about diverse cultures and the delightful ways they intertwine. He and his proudly multicultural family live in the melting pot of New Jersey.

1. What prompted you to write this book?

Watching my kids grow up Chinese and Jewish, with the customs and traditions of both cultures being integral parts of their



lives from birth. As a convert to Judaism, I made a conscious choice to add Jewish observances to the practices of my Chinese heritage. But for my kids, there is no clear distinction between the Chinese and Jewish parts of their identity. That duality is fundamental to their identity! And it manifests in so many beautiful ways, including in

how we celebrate the start of a new year.

2. Tell us more about your background.

I'm a first-generation Chinese American. My parents immigrated to the U.S. from Hong Kong in the 1970s, and my sister and I were both born in New York. Growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood in the suburbs of Manhattan, we had a traditional Chinese upbringing at home while receiving a typical American education in school. It wasn't until college that I first got interested in Judaism. Over the course of several years, I learned more and more about the various facets of Jewish life - spiritual, intellectual, and cultural - and found so many striking similarities to the Chinese perspective. I believed in my heart that the parallels had to be more than a coincidence, and I eventually decided to convert. I completed my conversion process in 2007, and I've been living as a proud Chinese Orthodox Jew ever since!

3. What do you hope parents (and children) will learn from reading your book?

I hope parents and children of all backgrounds will learn to appreciate the inherent beauty of multicultural families. While the book features a Chinese Jewish family, it isn't meant only for Chinese readers, or Jewish readers, or readers who happen to be both. The universal themes of family togetherness and hope for the future are central to all cultures, and I hope that all readers see themselves reflected in the pages of this book.

4. Do you have plans to explore the Chinese-Jewish connection in future works?

Absolutely! I have a book coming out this August called *A Taste of Home*, which follows a group of children as they explore the foods of various ethnic neighborhoods within the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Of course, one of the children is Jewish, and one is Chinese! I also hope to explore the Chinese-Jewish connection more directly in future stories.

Josh Stampfer's Story

By David Michael Smith

Excerpted from *To Learn and To Teach: The Life of Rabbi Joshua Stampfer*, Portland, OR: The Institute for Judaic Studies, 2003.

In the early 1980s, Joshua began research for a book about Julius Eckman [Pioneer Rabbi of the West], the first rabbi of Ahavai Shalom, founded in Portland in 1859. In the course of his research, Joshua did discover that Rabbi Eckman was publisher of the first Anglo-Jewish newspaper in the western U.S., the *Weekly Gleaner*...and learned that his predecessor had developed a fascination with an obscure community of impoverished Kaifeng, China...

The London Society for the Conversion of the Jews sent two Christian missionaries during Rabbi Eckman's time to further explore the Jewish community, in the hopes of gaining converts to Christianity, and when the rabbi learned of this he became deeply concerned... In their account of life in Kaifeng, the Christian missionaries described a community in decline... Rabbi Eckman published portions of the missionary's story in the *Weekly Gleaner*, trying—without much success—to arouse concern within the American Jewish community about the fate of their fellow Jews in China...

In 1983, after finishing the writing of Rabbi Eckman's life story, Joshua was ready to travel to Kaifeng, eager to see for himself just how much of the Jewish community remained intact...

Professor Michael Oksenberg of the University of Michigan...suggested [that if] Joshua could receive an invitation from a scholarly organization to deliver a lecture, he would probably be granted a visa. There was, the professor said, an Institute for the Study of World Religions headed by a Professor Gao in Beijing...The Institute was affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and they would undoubtedly appreciate a lecture on Judaism...

[Joshua wrote to Prof. Gao and also met with the president of Portland State University to develop a proposed exchange program with Zhengzhou and Kaifeng universities. He got his visa, arranged for funding, and recruited Harry Dawson, a freelance filmmaker to document the trip, and Professor Katherine Shen of PSU, to serve as interpreter. In Beijing, Joshua delivered what turned out to be a six-hour lecture, visited with Sidney Shapiro, and met his first Chinese Jews, Professor Jin, and her daughter Yi-Nan. Jin had recently discovered her Jewish roots—readers

may read her story in Points East 1:1, 1986.]

Madame Jin determined to learn more about the Jewish faith [and] she asked Joshua innumerable questions. Joshua recalled, "Her excitement, and that of her daughter, was clearly evident. They wanted so much to learn that I impulsively invited Qu Yi-Nan to come to America, to live with us in Portland, and to learn more about Judaism so that she could return to China as a teacher of the Jewish faith." Six months after Joshua's return to the United States, Qu Yin-Nan would take him up on his invitation, coming to live with the Stampfers for a year. [She never returned to China.]...

Upon their arrival in Zhengzhou, on a hunch, Joshua asked if they could see the Moslem places of worship. [The third mosque confirmed his hunch, as he recalled.] "It was a beautiful classical Chinese structure that had recently been restored with fresh paint. It had been built around 500 years ago, roughly the same time that the synagogue of Kaifeng was being built just thirty miles away...This mosque looked like an exact reproduction of that structure..."

[Upon reaching in Kaifeng], a representative of Kaifeng University [probably means Henan University in Kaifeng], Madame Jan, arrived to bring Joshua and his companions to an initial meeting with university officials. Joshua told her of their interest in establishing contact with members of the Jewish community of Kaifeng.

"It is doubtful there are any left," she said curtly. "Even if there were, they would be extremely difficult to find. And the local authorities are becoming increasingly annoyed by American tourists who come to Kaifeng for this purpose, causing unnecessary trouble."

[The next morning, Joshua and his companions evaded Madame Jan by leaving the hotel at 5 a.m. to seek out some Kaifeng Jews.] After five or six fruitless inquiries, Katherine spotted the owner of an art shop...and asked him the same question. He instantly responded by pointing them in the direction of a home...where he said a family named Ai lived. Joshua was flabbergasted: this was the name of the very first Chinese Jew who became known to the Western world in 1605...

That he was standing in front of the Ai home in Kaifeng, four centuries later...sent chills through Joshua. On that early August morning, after knocking on the door of the modest home, they found an aged Madame Ai at home with her small grandchild. The parents had left for work but she received the American as graciously as though she had been expecting them

Bequest Request

Please consider putting the
Sino-Judaic Institute in your will.

www.sinojudaic.org

for weeks. Katherine addressed many questions to her. Basically she knew nothing else other than that she was a Jew...She explained that, as a daughter-in-law, she was not given much information. The only relic that the family owned was a picture of her father-in-law, an Ai or the original clan, which was proudly displayed on the mantel...Joshua was disappointed with the lack of information he obtained...[They were back at the hotel by 8:30, still early enough to fool their university host, Madame Jan, that they were just finishing a leisurely breakfast.]

One of their highest priorities in Kaifeng was to view the steles that had stood in the courtyard of the synagogue for centuries...The stelae, like many other historical records, were almost destroyed by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Last minute efforts enabled the local Anglican Church to secrete them into hiding until the danger had passed. Today they rest in the Kaifeng Municipal Museum. When Joshua asked Ms. Jan about the possibility of visiting Wong Shou [probably Wang Yi-Sha], the curator of the museum, she informed him that, regrettably, the curator was ill and would not be able to meet with the visitors. That may have deterred a casual questioner, but not Katherine Shen. At the hotel, she telephoned Mr. Wong who said that although he was extremely busy, he would be happy to meet...He turned out to be quite healthy and busy indeed...Even though they were allowed to see the monuments the following day after considerable pressure from university officials, but the group was not permitted by the guard, who was present, to take photographs.

Friends of Katherine reported that when they had tried to obtain names and addresses of Kaifeng Jews from the city register, they were refused permission to conduct the search. Joshua had received a name and address from Art Rosen of the China-American Friendship Association [later an SJI Board member] and decided he would try to locate him. Ms. Jan told Joshua that she had arranged for a cab to take the group that evening to the home of the Shu family [probably the Shi family] whose address Rosen provided. Immediately after supper, she called to tell them that the driver was ill.

[Katherine instead arranged for them to travel in three pedi-cabs to their destination.] When they arrived at the Shu household, completely unexpected by its inhabitants, they were warmly received, just as they had been by Mrs. Ai. On this occasion they met three generations of the Shu family. Mr. Shu introduced them all and was very willing to be photographed with them. He had little more to tell them

than Mrs. Ai about Jewish practices or artifacts. He had met several Jewish visitors from the West in the past year and was very appreciative of their attention. He showed this latest group of inquirers a magazine that one of the earlier visitors had left containing Hebrew words and was most curious as to what they meant and how Hebrew differed from English. He recalled that his grandfather baked flat cakes in the spring of the year and that the family was to avoid eating pork but was aware of little more of his heritage than that. He did tell Joshua that his family had possessed an extensive family record which had been taken from them during the Cultural Revolution. The Americans enjoyed a warm and cordial visit and it was with great reluctance that they took their leave.

The next day was their last one in Kaifeng. Joshua had arranged with Ms. Jan to meet the best known local Jewish figure, Mr. Zhou, at the hotel on his way to work. He was the man generally chosen by the local government to meet with tourists who were seeking contact with local Jews. It was very clear during their conversation that his Jewish identification was simply an expression of the Chinese tradition of identifying with one's ancestors and had no further meaning to him than that.

After their meeting with Zhou, Ms. Jan took the group to the original site of the synagogue. There they saw a new street sign bearing the inscription, "The Street of Teaching Scriptures." Other than the sign, there was no trace of Judaica nor the slightest remnant of the synagogue. A hospital now stands in the corner of the neat and attractive square that was once the locale of the synagogue compound.

SJI

A year after Joshua's visit to Kaifeng, a Jewish professor, Louis Schwartz, was invited by the Chinese government to Beijing...to teach a course in Sociology at Beijing University. During his stay, the professor wrote to Rabbi Stampfer. "He knew I had visited Kaifeng," says Joshua, "and also wished to explore the fading Jewish community there. In his letter, he asked that I share my insights with him from my experience, which I was delighted to do."

Professor Schwartz had a parallel experience with that of Joshua's. No one in the remnant community expressed the slightest interest in learning more about Judaism. At the conclusion of the professor's year long tenure at Beijing University, he and the rabbi decided to form a society which would focus on learning more about Kaifeng's Jews, and to assist them should any of them ever awaken to their heritage. Joshua and the professor contacted Leo Gabow, a longtime student of all things Chinese who living in the San Francisco Bay area. Gabow had been a successful businessman, living in China for a number of years before returning home to settle in California. He suggested a meeting of interested parties in Portland. Joshua convinced him to host the meeting in San Francisco. Connections between that California port city and the Chinese mainland were more substantial since Chinese immigration had been a steady flow into the Bay area for more than two centuries.

Eight people attended the meeting. One of them, Al Dien, a Jewish professor of Far Eastern Studies at Stanford University, had been to China on several occasions. The group initiated the Sino-Judaic Institute for the purpose of developing ties between Jews inside China and those in the rest of the world. "It has been a successful enterprise through the years," says Joshua.

[After reciting all that SJI has accomplished over the years, including seeding a number of Jewish/Israeli Studies programs in China, Joshua concludes his reminiscences with the following:]

An irony is that the Jews of Kaifeng remain a moribund community. No Jewish educator has ever visited there to teach, and despite the Chinese government's professed conversion to a pro-Israel policy, they still resist what they consider meddling by religious clergy from the West. They have no desire to witness a resurgence of religious practices, Jewish or otherwise, on the part of the Chinese people.

David Michael Smith is the founder of *Personal Saga*, a personal, family and business biography writing and publication service located in Portland, Oregon.

David Michael Smith is the founder of Personal Saga, a personal, family and business biography writing and publication service located in Portland, Oregon.

Visit SJI's Website

www.sinojudaic.org

**Featuring updated articles and links
and open access to Points East archives**

In Memoriam



Flori Isaac Cohen
5 July 1931 ~ 1 December 2023

Flori Cohen (née Isaac), a proud Shanghainese and Israeli Jew, passed away on December 1st at the age of 92.

Flori was born and raised in Shanghai of the 1930s as the oldest of 3 girls in the respected Isaac family, a strong Sephardic family of those years.

In 1951, at the age of 19, she married her sweetheart Shaya (Isaiah) Cohen. Their wedding ceremony was the last Jewish wedding in the Ohel Rachel Synagogue in Shanghai.

In 1952, fearful of the Communist Regime, with their few-months-old baby David, they fled China and went to England. There they stayed for 4 years, where their daughter Sharon was born. Finally, in 1956, fulfilling their prolonged dream and arriving in

Israel, the family settled in Tel Aviv and, soon after, Judy was born and, a couple of years later, Yoel.

Flori was a devoted wife and mother, raising her family respectfully with both the Sephardic and Shanghainese customs close to heart. She had 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 17 great grandchildren.

In 1995, Flori and her sister, Esther,

founded the Sephardic Division of Igud Yotzei Sin. As a devoted and valuable member of Igud in Israel, she worked for more than a decade editing the English edition of the Bulletin. She initiated an article exchange program with the Sino-Judaic Institute and, as a result, both the Bulletin and Points East were much enriched in content. Flori also contributed Igud scholarships in the name of her late husband.

In 2010, with fourteen members of her family, Flori and Esther returned to visit Shanghai. They saw the family homes, schools and even managed to enter the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, which has been closed for many years.



Mail to: The Sino-Judaic Institute, Prof. Steve Hochstadt, Treasurer, Sino-Judaic Institute, 34 Colgate Rd., Unit 1, Roslindale, MA 02131, or sign up online at www.sinojudaic.org

JOIN THE SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE

Regular Member \$60	Supporter. \$100	Patron **\$1,000+	Benefactor ***\$5,000+
Senior 35	Sponsor 250	***Receive Chaim Simon's Religious Obersevanace by the Jews of Kaifeng China	
Library 60	Corp/Org/Synagogue. . . 250		
Student/Academic 40	Sustainer. 500		

Selection: _____

I wish to become a member of the Sino-Judaic Institute and to receive Points East three times a year. Enclosed is my check for \$_____

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____ E-Mail _____

Home Phone # _____

Work # _____

Fax # _____