Hong Kong

National Affairs

On the night of June 30, 1997, the tiny Jewish community of Hong Kong greeted Britain’s transfer of sovereignty to China with the same excitement and fascination its neighbors felt in witnessing this historic moment. While there was some measure of apprehension, few feared that the mainland would rule Hong Kong with an iron fist.

For years, the world had conjured a nightmare scenario in which China would shut down Hong Kong’s stock exchange, arrest its democracy activists, censor the press, ban the English language, suppress religious worship, and expel the expatriate community. But Jews in Hong Kong, like the rest of the non-Chinese community, were cautiously optimistic. Like others, some sent their Chinese antiques abroad, in case Beijing decided to reclaim its national treasures. Others temporarily moved assets offshore. But virtually nobody expected religious persecution. Hong Kong’s Jewish residents, who play integral roles in the fields of business, finance, and law, had good reason for confidence.

China had promised to preserve religious freedom as part of a commitment to “one country, two systems,” the principle by which it pledged to rule Hong Kong. Some Christian groups, mindful of China’s history of poor treatment of their co-religionists, were skeptical. But China had never singled out the small Jewish presence within its borders for ill treatment.

And indeed, the following months bore out the sanguine attitude of Jews and others in Hong Kong. China took a benign approach to its new sovereign role over what it called the “Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China,” sometimes referred to as the SAR. The only time soldiers from China’s People’s Liberation Army were seen in large numbers on the streets of Hong Kong—in fact in any numbers at all—was in the dawn hours of July 1, when they rolled in to replace the departing British garrison.

In retrospect, an event with far greater immediate consequences for Hong Kong came just one day later and more than a thousand miles away, when Thailand floated its battered currency, the baht, and sent regional financial markets plunging. The economic downswing that followed was so profound, and came as such a great shock to many in Hong Kong, that the handover soon felt like a faint memory.
The era of seemingly limitless Asian economic growth had come to an end. Exporters were unable to compete with plunging prices in neighboring countries. Moves to ward off speculative attacks on the Hong Kong currency's link to the U.S. dollar brought sky-high interest rates, which in turn undercut the crucial banking and property markets. The stock market went into a tailspin. Hong Kong's finance houses with extensive investments in the shaky Southeast Asian markets were faced with crises that, in some cases, led to downsizing and even closure. Business and career plans were thrown into disarray. As 1997 ended, there was anecdotal evidence that a small but significant number of Jewish community members had either lost their jobs, feared they soon would, or had taken pay cuts.

While the Asian economic turmoil was assessed as the worst in 50 years and was expected to continue for some time, it did not cripple either Hong Kong or its Jewish community. Despite some casualties, there were also signs of resilience and an ability to adapt to the new austerity. When, in October, Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index began an unprecedented free fall, the English-language South China Morning Post ran pictures of ten businessmen who had initially suffered the greatest losses. The one non-Chinese face in the lineup was that of Michael Kadoorie, the Jewish community's most prominent member. Significantly, Kadoorie was also shown some days later when the Post listed those who had profitably rebounded.

Despite the economic turmoil and a distinction as possibly the most expensive place on earth to live and do business, Hong Kong was still viewed as having an excellent business and telecommunications infrastructure, a reliable monetary system, potential for entree into the vast Chinese market, and attractive living conditions for expatriate employees.

Israel and the Middle East

Hong Kong's relations with Israel had always been strictly business, and that continued. While responsibility for external affairs reverted to China on July 1, Beijing and Israel signed an accord insuring that relations with Hong Kong would remain virtually unchanged after the handover. This included economic, legal, and cultural arrangements as well as mutual visa-free access for each other's passport holders.

Beyond retaining the existing ties, Hong Kong had a wide berth in continuing to shape its relations with Israel. For example, it was Hong Kong's secretary for economic services, not a Beijing official, who negotiated a civil aviation agreement with Israel's consul general in Hong Kong, Zohar Raz. The accord, which was already in effect in the latter half of 1997, was slated to be formalized in 1998. The introduction of direct flights from Israel increased the appeal of business travel and expanded possibilities for tourism.

Israel regarded Hong Kong as a fertile potential investment source. It actively courted Hong Kong business figures for major domestic projects such as the am-
bitious new Ben-Gurion Airport terminal, and sought joint ventures involving
the many small Israeli startup firms. ZIM, Israel's national shipping company,
had long had a presence in Hong Kong, and despite China's rejection of formal
ties with Israel until 1992, some Israeli companies used Hong Kong as a launch
pad into the mainland market. Chief among these was U.D.I., founded by the late
Israeli industrialist Shaul Eisenberg. U.D.I.'s general manager in Hong Kong,
Avishai Hamburger, also chaired the local Israel Chamber of Commerce. The
chamber held regular luncheons for its 50 members and played a pivotal role in
promoting trade with Israel.

Hong Kong was a substantial market for Israeli goods, receiving US$800-mil-
lion worth of direct exports annually. The vast majority was in diamonds, bound
for customers in Hong Kong and for re-export to other regional destinations. In
the latter, leaner months of 1997, the market for luxury items shrank consid-
erably, and the diamond trade took a beating. The growth of high-technology busi-
ness, however, continued apace, with exports tripling toward the end of 1997.

Major Israeli high-tech firms including Orbotech, E.C.I., Scitex, and Rad had
regional offices in the SAR. The growth of high-tech sharply increased the num-
ber of Israelis living in Hong Kong, roughly estimated at 300 households. (Acc-
curate numbers are not available because reporting to the consulate is voluntary.)

Anti-Semitism

There were almost no external threats to the Jewish community of Hong Kong.
Certainly none came from the Chinese residents of Hong Kong or from main-
land China, which had no record of anti-Semitism.

Anti-Jewish sentiment could be found, however, among the British subjects who
ruled Hong Kong. Colonialism stamped Hong Kong with an acute sense of class
and status. For many years, the territory's bastion of highbrow hobnobbing, the
Hong Kong Club, was closed to Jews and others deemed unsuitable. At least one
top bank was known to have barred Jews from its board of directors in deference
to Arab interests, and the territory's numerous, active Christian institutions at
times also created an exclusionary atmosphere.

Still, it is hard to point to any tangible hindrance. Members of Hong Kong's
Jewish community had reached great heights of wealth and social standing. At
the beginning of the 20th century, Hong Kong had a Jewish governor, Sir
Matthew Nathan. Earlier, the Sassoon and Kadoorie families carved out promi-
inent places in the island's commercial foundation. More than a century later, in
1981, Lawrence Kadoorie would become Hong Kong's first peer of the British
realm and would bear the title of Lord. Several Jews held prominent positions in
the legal arena. "There have been occasions when anti-Semitism raised its ugly
head, although fortunately infrequently," said Anne Godfrey, chairwoman of the
Jewish Community Center's board of directors, whose husband, Gerald, sat on
the Court of Appeals.
When, on several occasions in the autumn of 1997, Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohammed blamed Jews for the escalating market turmoil, Hong Kong's Jewish community was divided over whether and how to respond. Some members dispatched a letter of protest, while most preferred to play down or ignore the remarks. The incident raised concern over the absence of a framework for responding appropriately to anti-Semitism. Hong Kong's Committee of Jewish Organizations began discussions with the Anti-Defamation League about setting up an ADL branch in Hong Kong.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

At the end of 1997, some estimates put the number of Jews at about 3,000. Others went as high as 6,000. It was thought that many had no formal ties to Jewish institutions.

The makeup of the community was a tapestry of contrasting backgrounds, interests, and religious views. Its beginnings were in the mid- and late-19th century, when a number of merchant families of Baghdadi origin, including the Sassoons and Kadoories, came to set up outposts in their families' merchant empires. Their employees were other Jews, mainly from Bombay. Among the legacies of these two dynasties were giant corporations, leading philanthropic institutions, and Ohel Leah, the turn-of-the-century Sephardic synagogue that would eventually become a gold mine for the community.

After World War II, the small, close-knit community, which had endured Japan's occupation of Hong Kong, received a flood of predominantly Ashkenazic Jews from Shanghai who had survived the miseries of Japanese occupation. Most went on to Israel and other destinations, but some stayed and successfully rebuilt their lives and businesses in Hong Kong. In the postwar years, other business people began trickling in. By the early 1960s, Ashkenazic Jews outnumbered the Sephardim, but the community was still very small. The number of Jews began to increase considerably in the late 1980s, when economic slumps in the West and elsewhere made the prosperous territory an attractive destination.

Communal Affairs

The community grew up around one major institution, Ohel Leah, which was built in 1901. Predating the synagogue was a small Jewish cemetery above Happy Valley, its driveway flanked by Buddhist seminaries, its gravestones telling the story of a trickle of Jews who came—whether because of commerce here or calamity elsewhere—to this far-flung corner of the Orient. A Hevra Kadisha (Jewish burial society) made sure that funerals were handled properly. Some time
around Shavuot of 1997 the society helped lay to rest the last Jewish resident of the China Coast Community, an ecumenical home for destitute, stateless, elderly people that was supported by the Jewish Benevolent Society.

The trustees of Ohel Leah (today known officially as the Incorporated Trustees of the Jewish Community of Hong Kong) were responsible for funding—often out of their own pockets—and administering various institutions. Among the community's earliest institutions was the Jewish Recreation Club, established in 1905, which provided a homey alternative to the often exclusionary clubs that still formed the backbone of Hong Kong's expatriate social life. For many years the Ezekiel Abraham School, founded in 1969, offered the only formal Jewish education, and was run on Sundays and afternoons by volunteers from the community. The Jewish Benevolent Society provided discreet no-interest loans to members in need.

The Jewish Women's Association (JWA), founded in 1947, took on the massive task of assisting the World War II refugees, while also contributing to Youth Aliyah. The JWA has continued its work till this day, raising funds in true Hong Kong style with a lavish annual Israel Independence charity ball. The group, which came to be dominated by Israeli women, continued to support a shrinking number of Shanghai refugees living out their last years in a nursing home in Israel and took on new charitable causes in Israel.

The status quo began to change in the 1980s, when religious controversy led to the formation of several new congregations. Ohel Leah's centrality receded, and a nonpartisan community center replaced the venerable yet time-worn Recreation Club. The impressive new Jewish Community Center of Hong Kong became the main focus of communal activity, a place where all members of the community could meet and interact—if not pray—on common ground.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

In the mid-1980s, the fund managed by the Incorporated Trustees was nearly depleted and unable to pay for legally required repairs to the supporting wall of the Ohel Leah Synagogue property. In solving this crisis, the Incorporated Trustees found themselves holding the strings to a purse of near-mythic proportions. In a deal rumored to have fetched at least US$150 million, the grounds of the historic synagogue were leased to a real-estate developer for 99 years. In 1992 twin luxury apartment towers were built on the land, which was on Robinson Road in the pricey Mid Levels residential neighborhood, where cramped three-bedroom apartments were renting for US$8,000 a month. A number of the units in the complex, named Robinson Place, were sold, at preferential prices, to the trustees and to community members. The first few floors of one of the towers became the home of the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Hong Kong, equipped with a library, swimming pool, function halls, a kosher goods store, classrooms used by the Carmel Day School, and two kosher restaurants, meat and dairy.
JCC membership was automatically granted to anyone joining one of the three congregations recognized by the trustees. The 700 JCC member families came in nearly equal numbers from the Reform United Jewish Congregation, modern Orthodox Ohel Leah Synagogue, and Chabad-Lubavitch. (A 1996 poll of religious “sensitivities” showed that 35 percent of Hong Kong’s affiliated Jews considered themselves Conservative, the one major Jewish stream with no institutional framework.)

A breakdown by nationality showed Americans far outnumbering others at 57 percent. Their ideas about Jewish life differed sharply from those of the once-dominant British subjects. American Jews were accustomed, for example, to the tripartite landscape of the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox movements. For most British Jews, the Association of Orthodox Synagogues reigned supreme, regardless of whether they themselves were strictly observant.

Different tastes and expectations had to be reckoned with in determining the JCC’s atmosphere. Some wanted the aura of an exclusive Hong Kong social club. The JCC was, after all, the offspring of the Jewish Recreation Club, whose members came together for the same games of tennis, croquet, and bowls played at all the finest social clubs. The marble walls, plush carpets, and elegant fixtures throughout much of the new center seemed to embody that approach, as did the center’s rules prohibiting its own staff and members’ maids from using the front entrance.

Others, coming from the American community-center tradition, with its mission of bolstering Jewish identity, preferred a less formal style, one emphasizing Jewish educational and cultural events. Programs became a major feature of the center, with a wide selection of social events, lectures, and classes on topics ranging from mah-jongg to medieval Jewish history, and visiting scholars-in-residence throughout the year.

Since 1996 the program director has been Jody Hirsh, a prominent U.S. Jewish educator with a strong arts background and an inclusive approach. Hirsh held a number of successful events and celebrations that brought the various synagogues and organizations together. In some cases, however, Orthodox leaders chose not to participate when they feared their presence would lend legitimacy to Reform Judaism. For example, attendance at a communal study day (Yom Limud) was reduced by a Chabad boycott because some classes were taught from a non-Orthodox perspective.

Other trends at the JCC included catering to the growing number of young children and providing more Hebrew-language programs, such as films, sing-alongs, and debates, to accommodate the large number of Israeli members. Israelis edged out the British as the second-largest group and constituted 18 percent of JCC membership. A JCC survey also showed that the number of singles had increased, and the community had become younger, with the largest group 30–39 years old. There were 450 children, nearly half of them between the ages of five and 12.

Apart from its regular members, the JCC also served the many travelers who came through, who helped to imbue Jewish life in Hong Kong with a sense of tran-
sience. Temporary sojourns, whether they lasted days or years, were the rule rather than the exception. The proud descendants of the Kadoories and Sassoons, who sailed in on the China trade over a century ago, remained key figures in a power elite that determined the success and shape of leading Jewish institutions, but they were few in number. Short-term visitors—tourists, business travelers, U.S. Navy personnel, or fund-raisers for Jewish religious institutions abroad—could count on a minyan for prayer and a kosher meal. Longer-term residents included young professionals spending three years on their way up the corporate ladder and entrepreneurs lured by uncharted Asian markets, living in the territory for ten or 15 years.

Looking toward the future, the community debated whether the Incorporated Trustees should continue heavily subsidizing the operations of the JCC and other Hong Kong institutions or require the members to take up more of the slack. Also, while the Jews of Hong Kong were blessed with a world-class building and facilities, they had yet to decide whether their JCC was simply a kosher recreation center for Jews or an institution with a Jewish cultural mission to fulfill.

Religion

Adjacent to the JCC stands the historic Ohel Leah Synagogue, with its white-washed facade, twin turrets, and vaulted roof. In keeping with the Sephardic style, seating is in horseshoe formation around a central bimah, with women's seating on the upper balcony. Entry to the grounds is through a guarded street-level portico and down cascading stone stairs, which also lead to the mikveh behind the synagogue. Despite periodic partial renovations over the years, the building reached such a state of cosmetic and structural disrepair that a thorough US$5-million restoration effort was launched in 1997.

While Hong Kong was a British colony, Ohel Leah had links with the Association of Orthodox Synagogues in the United Kingdom. England's chief rabbi was considered the community's top rabbinic authority and was accorded a dignitary's welcome on his annual visits. With the end of British rule, the nearly 250-member congregation, while self-described as modern Orthodox, ceased to have formal ties to any movement.

The welcoming atmosphere of the congregation, which includes a weekly Sabbath kiddush luncheon, was at times marred by internal strife, with some disagreements escalating into brawls of startling intensity. In summer 1997 a bitter fight over selecting a new rabbi divided the community and was fought in such an incendiary war of words, faxes, and fliers that it was reported in a full-page Sunday feature story in the local English-language paper, much to the chagrin of all involved.

The rift faded with the arrival of the energetic new rabbi, Yaacov Kermaier, whose previous job was as assistant rabbi at New York's Riverdale Jewish Center. "My goal is to establish Ohel Leah as a premier educational synagogue," said Rabbi Kermaier. The 28-year-old Yeshiva University graduate added that he
wanted to "color the synagogue with a modern Orthodox character, to focus more on Zionism and to present to people a broader and more open-minded version of Orthodoxy than they might have been exposed to before."

If the past was any indication, Rabbi Kermaier faced some potholes on the road ahead. In fact, in the 1980s, Ohel Leah had seen several fissures that ran so deep they led to the formation of three new congregations.

**CHABAD-LUBAVITCH**

In 1985 a group of Hong Kong Jews, dismayed by what they felt was a deterioration of religious life, solicited help from a number of Orthodox organizations abroad. Chabad-Lubavitch was the only group to respond, and it did so by sending two young emissaries. One of them, the freshly ordained Mordechai Avtzon, served as Ohel Leah's rabbi for one year, then founded Chabad of Hong Kong and helped set up the Carmel School.

Rabbi Avtzon came to a community that barely managed to get a quorum at its weekly Saturday morning services and served a kiddush that was flagrantly unkosher. He overhauled the Jewish Recreation Club's kitchen and managed to increase attendance at Sabbath services and set up a daily minyan. At the same time, he failed to win over key community figures, who were uncomfortable with his brand of Orthodoxy and, in some cases, perceived his approach as coercive.

After a year—by then Avtzon had married and would soon start a family—the Ohel Leah trustees dismissed him. With support from a group of disaffected members, Avtzon moved operations to the Hilton Hotel. By 1997 he was working out of the five-star Furama Hotel in a deal that gave him dedicated space for a synagogue and special rates on rooms for the many religious business travelers he catered to.

Chabad in Hong Kong raised money through its worldwide movement and from local members. The economic slump of late 1997 hit the group relatively hard, dependent as it was on member contributions. It did receive some funding from the Incorporated Trustees, but, Avtzon said, it was far less than what Ohel Leah got and just one-fourth of what was allocated to the Reform UJC. Rabbi Avtzon was unequivocal about the Reform movement: "Judaism has only one denomination and that's Torah and Mitzvot. Anything else is simply not Judaism."

"But," he hastened to add, "we were sent down in this world to be God's agents of Torah, not to be his policemen. Our job is to turn lights on, not to debate darkness and confusion."

Hong Kong had also become headquarters for a budding Chabad presence in Asia, with representatives in Bangkok, Singapore, and Japan.

**UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION**

The United Jewish Congregation was formed in 1988 when Ohel Leah's rabbi refused to allow a bar mitzvah ceremony for a boy he considered not Jewish be-
cause the boy's mother had undergone a Reform conversion abroad. The father, angered over the decision as well as how it was handled, broke away along with a number of other congregants and founded the UJC, as it is known.

The UJC is affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and while it had grown to 230 member families, it still faced difficulty in finding a rabbi able to make a long-term commitment. Just after Rosh Hashanah in 1996, Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman came to serve during a one-year sabbatical from Jerusalem's Kol Haneshama community. He was followed by Joel Oseran, director of education for the World Union in Jerusalem, also on a one-year stay. Like Ohel Leah's rabbi, the UJC rabbi is provided with a spacious apartment in the Robinson Place towers that house the JCC.

Services are held in an auditorium that belongs to the JCC and is in Robinson Place but that has no physical connection to the rest of the center. This is by design, in order to maintain the center as a strictly Sabbath-observing facility. The restrictions also mean that some UJC events are held at other locations in Hong Kong, such as the Hong Kong Country Club, the American Club, and—sometimes—at sea.

Rabbi Oseran said that his main focus was "helping people to maintain and to expand on their Jewish connection, and their sense of belonging to the Jewish community." He observed that many of those who became involved in the UJC had a minimal connection to their Jewishness and would probably not have joined a congregation in the United States.

In the latter half of 1997, the UJC launched a well-received Chavura program, creating 15 small groups for members to meet informally around common interests. The community also continued to raise funds for a development project in Shanghai administered by the American Jewish Distribution Committee. The funds assist Chinese residents of a neighborhood that harbored over 20,000 Jewish refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe in the 1940s.

OTHER SYNAGOGUES

Yet another breakaway synagogue, Shuva Israel, was founded by a group that accused Chabad of religious laxity. In 1990 Rabbi Avtzon and several parents started a nursery school, Torah Island, which, the following year, became the Carmel School. Operating in quarters rented from the Jewish Recreation Club, the school had open enrollment. To the dismay of some, this meant that many of the children were not Jewish under Halakhah, Jewish law. At the same time, some Sephardic members felt increasingly marginalized by the growing Ashkenazic presence. They founded their own nursery school, their own congregation, and, later, their own kosher restaurant, the Shalom Grill. By 1997, however, the Shuva Israel community was in decline: its founder had left to live in Israel, Chabad had arranged for a separate Sephardic service on the High Holy Days, and some members were interested in benefiting from services offered by the JCC.

Finally, there was Kehilat Zion Synagogue. Located in Kowloon on Hong
Kong's peninsular tip, it served the many business travelers who stay in that area. The rabbi, Netanel Meoded, was from Israel. Kehilat Zion was one of 48 synagogues worldwide established by Rabbi Sam Kassim, the head of a haredi (ultra-Orthodox) religious seminary in Jerusalem. At year's end, Kehilat Zion was applying to the Incorporated Trustees to be a member community in the JCC.

Education

For many, the community's day school was the most vibrant Jewish institution in Hong Kong. Carmel School had 120 students in preschool to fifth grade and another 40 enrolled in the nursery program. Founded in 1991 by Chabad's Rabbi Avtzon and a group of mainly non-Orthodox parents, Carmel was struggling to maintain a fragile balance between following the Orthodox approach mandated in its constitution and creating an atmosphere welcoming to Jews of all affiliations. Since Carmel was constitutionally independent of all other Jewish institutions in Hong Kong, and remained unaffiliated with any particular educational stream, it could pick and choose from the available British and North American Jewish curriculum materials. The current administration defined Carmel as modern Orthodox and Zionist, although admission was open to "any child whose family thinks the experience of a Jewish school would be of benefit." This policy extended to those who were not halakhically Jewish, such as the children of mixed marriages.

Jonathan Cannon, a modern Orthodox British educator who became executive director of the school in 1996, said that Carmel was "not in the business of negating one view or another," but rather promoted an approach that "acknowledges and validates" students' diverse backgrounds. He noted that, back in their home countries, many expatriate parents would not be sending their children to Jewish schools. They chose Carmel not only because most of the alternatives were Christian parochial schools, but because they were far away from extended families and community attachments. A school decorated with Hanukkah symbols rather than Christmas lights was a comforting haven for them, and many parents became deeply involved in supporting the school.

Over the years, parents and staff have navigated a number of disputes, including whether or not to teach about dinosaurs (they chose to teach), whether or not to allow a non-Jewish parent to head the PTA (they opted for allowing), and whether or not to let a Reform rabbi lecture in the school (they decided not to). Cannon said that, while the Jewish studies program would remain ever controversial, with challenges from both ends of the religious spectrum, parents were satisfied with the school's high level of academic excellence, which they viewed as a priority.

The school was housed in the Jewish Community Center, while remaining institutionally independent. It was planning to move to a larger facility provided by Hong Kong's Government Property Agency, which had categorized Carmel
as a nonprofit international school. A loose five-year plan envisioned increasing
the student body to 250, but, as with so much in Hong Kong, the precarious eco-

nomic environment made it impossible to predict future developments.

Carmel's budget of roughly US$2 million was largely covered by tuition fees
(up to 70 percent of the students had their US$9,000 tuition fees paid by parents' 
employers), with additional funds raised in an aggressive campaign by parents, 
and the rest subsidized by the Incorporated Trustees of the Jewish Community 
of Hong Kong, whose contribution included use of the building. The trustees 
made their continued support contingent on a goal of fiscal self-sufficiency. They 
were willing to fund the school during its startup years, but ultimately Carmel 
had to stand on its own. It was a principle that many in this business-driven town 
took for granted, one meant to deter irresponsible spending, but others worried 
that the school's potential could be limited by bottom-line considerations.

The trustees also continued to sponsor a Hebrew school, Ezekiel Abraham, 
which in 1997 had 90 students from a wide assortment of Jewish backgrounds. 
In addition to the Sunday program, there were after-school classes for Hebrew 
speakers and for those with minimal background, and a number of privately tu-
tored students. Because the children of the more Jewishly committed families were 
placed in Carmel, Ezekiel Abraham had a high proportion of children with scant 
Jewish knowledge. Many of these children were seen as increasingly vulnerable 
because they were enrolled in the Hong Kong International School, with its 
American curriculum, high academic reputation, and what some parents de-
scribed as Lutheran missionizing.

Culture

Preserving the community's past was the task of the Jewish Historical Society 
of Hong Kong. It was founded in 1984 by community members Dennis and 
Mary Leventhal and Anita Buxbaum, and S.J. Chan, an authority on the Jews of 
Kaifeng. The society's efforts included a catalogued Judaica library and several 
monographs on the Jews of Hong Kong, as well as assistance in the creation of 
the first Chinese version of the Encyclopedia Judaica, and service as liaison for 
academics engaged in Sino-Judaic studies. Near the end of 1997, a postdoctoral 
student at Hong Kong University began a two-year social history of the Jews of 
Hong Kong, funded in part by the Incorporated Trustees. There was also an ef-
tort to create the first inventory of the more than 300 people buried in the Jew-

ish cemetery.

Miriam Herschlag