Jews in China----a presentation by Archie Ossin

April 2001 – Jewish Genealogy Society – Orlando, FL
Oct 2001– Rhoda Goldman Plaza-San Francisco, CA
Dec 2001 – 39ers Club – Orlando, FL
July 2002– Dartmouth College-Berdakin-Ossinovsky Family Reunion- Hanover, NH
April 2003 - Kinneret - Orlando, FL
April 2005 Seminole Community College, Lake Mary Florida
Feb 2006 Seminole Community College, Lake Mary, FL
Aug 2006 – UC Santa Barbara – Berdakin – Ossinovsky-Skidelsky fam Reunion
April 17, 2007- Rishonah Chaverot Hadassah – Cong Reform Judaism Orlando

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6th-11th Century  Jewish Merchants and Traders come back and forth to China on Silk route

11th Century  First Group of Jews (70 families) come to Kaifeng to stay. Kaifeng is Capital of China during Song Dynasty, Population 1.5 Million

1163 First Synagogue built in Kaifeng

1492 Spanish Inquisition

1500 Kaifeng Jewish population peaks at 5000
Kaifeng repeatedly destroyed by flooding of Yellow River
Kublai Khan moved capital to Peking
Jews always intermarried in Kaifeng and Jewish traditions maintained for 700 years

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16th Century - Decline of Jewish community - intermarriage and assimilation

1605 Jewish community first discovered by Christian Missionaries. Jesuit Priest, Father Matteo Ricci, wrote about the Jewish Community, igniting a continuing interest in this community by missionaries and scholars ever since.

1792 Russia
Jewish Pale established in areas annexed in Poland

1800’s Kaifeng Synagogue repaired and rebuilt several times until the 19th Century when the last Rabbi died and Hebrew no longer taught.

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1842 Opium wars open China to Western Society

1842 China
First Sephardic Jews arrive in Shanghai

1850 China-- First Jewish office opened by Elias Sassoon son of David Sassoon, an Iraqi Jew, working in Bombay as a Commodities Dealer. Office opened in Shanghai with Jewish Clerks planting the seed for the Sephardic Jewish Community in Shanghai.
1881 Elly Kadoorie, Iraqi Jew, first arrived in Shanghai---worked for Sassoon before embarking on his own.

1881 Russia
Assassination of Czar Alexander II. Onset of Pogroms.
First emigration of Russian Jews to the USA.

1885 The Russian Pale 4 million Jews live in the Pale

1887 Shanghai
First Russian Jewish permanent resident in Shanghai
The Pale 1835-1917

- 1831: 20,000 Jews deported, many of them in chains
- 1853: Open to Jews
- 1881: 20,000 Jews expelled

Principal town from which in 1880 began the exodus of over two million Jews from the Pale to the United States, Britain, Europe, South America, and Palestine.
Map of the Ukraine
Shtetls in the Ukraine

SHTETLS
Ekaterinoslav
Osinova
Osinovka
Poltava
Kovtuny
1894 St. Petersburg, Russia

Nicholas II becomes Czar of Russia
Dec 1894  Alsace, France
French Army Captain Alfred Dreyfus falsely found guilty of espionage.
Austrian reporter, Theodore Hertzl sent from Vienna to cover news story.

Dreyfus  Hertzl
1896
Theodore Hertzl stunned by the Dreyfus case, recognizing that a political solution is needed for “the Jewish Problem”, writes book, entitled “The Jewish State”.

1898 Harbin
Chosen as Headquarters of East China Railway
China signs treaty with Russia --construction of Chinese Eastern Railway one of provisions, bringing a nucleus of Russian Jews to Harbin.

1898 Harbin - Skidelsky & Sons (Leontiy Skidelsky) gain 1.25 Million acres of forest concession rights along Chinese Eastern Railway. (Gita Lyon Skidelsky and Lisa Lyon Skidelsky--daughters of Sonia Ossinovsky).
FOREST CONCESSIONS ON THE EASTERN LINE
Aug 2, 1897  Ekaterinoslav
Joseph Ossinovsky is born

1897
Theodore Hertzl holds first of eight Zionist Congresses
1898    Paris, France
French writer Emile Zola publishes open letter “J’accuse” in defense of Dreyfus.

1898    Paris, France
Zola accused of libeling French Army. Zola flees to England, later granted amnesty

French Nobel Laureate, Anatole France joins Zola in support of Dreyfus.
1903-1905 Bessarabia; Ukraine
Extremely violent pogroms took place in 1903 and 1905 in Ukraine and Bessarabia. Hundreds killed, thousands injured, some buried alive, hundreds of homes and businesses destroyed. Jews in mass leave Russia.

1905 Mukden, Manchuria

1905 Harbin--- Russian Jewish soldiers stay in northern China rather to return to anti-Semitism in Russia
Jewish Emigration from the Russian Pale

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1905  Harbin
Kovtun family moves from Poltava to Harbin
Manchuria.

Isaac Kovtun (Sarah Ossin’s Father)
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Circa 1906
Skidelskys build Harbin
Talmud Torah

1909-1922
Skidelsky and Sons operate
Chalinor Coal Mine (largest
mine in Northern Manchuria)
for the Chinese Eastern
Railway.

1900-1935 Skidelsky and Sons
operate Muling Coal Mine.
The Skidelskis build the *Skidelski Talmud-Torah School* located at 22 Konnaya (Horse) Street (now Dongfeng Street).
1905 Ekaterinoslav, Russia
Ossinovsky family flees to Nimes France.

1907 Paris France
Embarrassed French authorities acquit Capt. Alfred Dreyfus.

1907 Nimes, France
Ossinovsky family moves to Vladivostok, Russia. S. Ossinovsky becomes Trustee of Skideldky and Sons, and Director of Mulin Coal Mines.

1907 Shanghai--First Ashkenazi Synagogue (Russian Jewish) founded in Shanghai
Muling Coal Mine Corporation
Operated jointly by S.L. Skidelsky and Jilin Province. The headquarters was in Ashihe Street, Nangang District, Harbin.
S. Ossinovsky

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Nadia Spivak
Aug 12, 1909  Harbin, Manchuria
Sarah Kevtun born.

1912  Vladivostok
Sebastian Ossinovsky buys property in Harbin, Manchuria. Purchases 2.7 Acres on 62-74 Uchastkovaya St. in the Center of the Japanese Business District for $15,000 US.
1914-1918  WW I

1917  Russia  Bolshevik Revolution
   Russian Jewish soldiers and civilians trekked to China
   escaping atrocities of Russian Revolution

1920  Peking
   Chinese President, Dr. Sun Yat-sen,
   publishes letter supporting Zionism
1921 Vladivostok, Russia
Joseph and Jack Ossinovsky leave for Troy, New York to enter college at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Two Ossinovsky sisters leave to enter the Music Conservatory in Strasbourg, Austria.

1921 Vladivostok, Russia
Ossinovsky family moves to Harbin, Manchuria.

1921 Shanghai-- 500 Russian Jewish Settlers living in Shanghai
1922 Vladivostok
Bolshevik occupation of Vladivostok

1922 Harbin
Sebastian Ossinovsky builds one commercial building and 5 houses on property for $30,000 US.

1924 Shanghai
Number of Russian Jews reach 800---settling in the International Settlement--later in the late 20’s moving to the French Quarter

1925 Sebastian Ossinovsky purchases property in Palestine (today a Tiberias Central Business district)
Ossinovsky Compound and Home in Harbin

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Picture shows a diagram of Ossinovsky Compound, with details on the buildings and their construction dates. The diagram includes notes on the total area of the lot and buildings on the lot. The diagram is labeled with various building numbers and descriptions, indicating different structures and their construction years.
Skidelsky Home in Harbin, Manchuria
1924 Harbin

Luba, Gala, Sarah, Baba Rachel, and Frieda, pickling cucumbers
1927 Pittsfield, Mass
Joseph Ossinovsky becomes Joseph Ossin, naturalized citizen of the United States.
1927 Harbin, Manchuria
Sarah Kovtun enters Harbin University of Legal and Political Sciences
1928 Harbin
Russian Government turns over Chinese Eastern Railway to China----Jews migrate from Harbin to Shanghai

1929 Pittsfield, Massachusetts
Joseph Ossin returns to Harbin.

1930 Harbin, Manchuria
Sarah Kovtun meets Joseph Ossin at Railroad Club tea dance.
July 6, 1931    Shanghai, China

Sarah Kovtun marries Joseph Ossin

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1931 Manchuria - Japanese Army occupies all of Manchuria. Sets up puppet state of Manchuko, and puts former child Emperor of China, Pu Yi, as Emperor.

1931 Shanghai, China - Ossins move to Shanghai - Purchase apartment in French Concession at 9/7 Rue Paul Henry
1931 Sephardic Jews (Perrys and Kadoories) build Shanghai Jewish School on Seymour Road.

MID to late 1930s  Sassoons donate millions to help Jews in Germany and Austria migrate to China
May 19, 1932
Harbin, Manchuria
Sarah goes to Harbin to have child.
Esther Ossin born.
Harbin Jewish Hospital
On November 5, 1933, the first floor was completed and started receiving patients. In 1936, the two additional floors were finished.
I. Kovtun (Sarah Ossin’s father) and workers in Fur trade
1937 Nanking, China
Nanking massacre
Japan occupies China
Provisional government set up in Shanghai.
1938
Shanghai

March 1938 ---- Vienna, Austria--- Nazis enter Vienna. Esther’s 8 year old cousin expelled from school. Family flees to Shanghai 3 mos. before Kristallnacht.
Jan 7, 1940
Shanghai, China
Isaac Arcadi (Archie) Ossin
born at Country Hospital

Feb 1940 Harbin
Sebastian Ossinovsky dies
October 1941 Shanghai, China
Joseph Ossin sails to United States.

Dec 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
Japanese Pacific Fleet attacks Pearl Harbor. United States enters World War II. Ossin family separated for four years. Sarah, Esther and Archie are in Shanghai. Joseph is in San Francisco.

Feb 1943 Japanese plan to isolate European Jews to island in Yangtze River. Dr. Abraham Kaufman, leader of Harbin Jewish Community and developer of the Jewish Hospital, travels to Tokyo, and meets with Japanese leaders. Dr. Kaufman is instrumental in getting European Jews confined in a suburb of Shanghai.
1943 Shanghai, China—Japanese Occupying government sets up district for European Jewish refugees in Hongkew, a suburb of Shanghai.

Mrs. Bliss, a Jewish refugee from Austria, walks through a typical Chinese lane in Hongkew—European Jewish refugees, as well as Chinese, lived together in overcrowded lanes.
1943-1944 Shanghai, China
Esther in a French School from 1937-1941, and
Shanghai Jewish School from 1941-1945.
Sarah rents extra rooms at #9/7 Paul Henry

1944-1945 Shanghai, China
Shanghai frequently bombed. French Quarter
Bombed. Some close calls for Ossins.

Hongkew takes a hit.
Sept 2, 1945    Tokyo Bay, Yokohama
Attack Transport Flagship, USS Lavaca, steams into Tokyo Bay for Surrender Ceremonies

Sept 8, 1945    Shanghai Harbor
Sarah, Esther and Archie board USS Lavaca, headed for Okinawa, Guam, Pearl Harbor, and San Francisco

1945--The Bund at Shanghai Harbor

Nov 5, 1945    San Francisco, Calif
USS Lavaca arrives in San Francisco. Sarah, Joseph, Esther and Archie Ossin are reunited.
Summer 1948 Jerusalem-Israel declares Independence

1949 China---Communists takeover China
-- all Europeans forced to leave
Circa 1995
Sonoma, California

Sarah Ossin and daughter-in-law Myrna Ossin
in the Wine Country
EPILOGUE

In 1945, near the end of WWII, Russia declared war on Japan, invaded Manchuria, and took over Harbin. At the end of the war, the Russians invited all of the leaders of the minority communities to a Black Tie reception. Dr. Kaufman attended this reception. His driver, who was waiting to take Dr. Kaufman home, was himself told to go home since he would not be needed any more that evening. That night the Russians kidnapped Dr. Kaufman and sent him to the Gulag. Since Dr. Kaufman's college roommate was Chaim Weitzman, a Passport to Palestine was immediately issued to Dr. Kaufman, but the Russians would not let him go.
EPILOGUE

Kaufman spent 10 years in the Gulag, practiced his medicine, and wrote a book on his experience. In 1955, he was finally released, and went to Israel to live, where he joined his other son Teddy, who had a high position in the Israeli government. Teddy’s wife, Rasha Segerman, is Esther Ossin life long friend from the Shanghai Jewish School. Dr. Kaufman spent the rest of his life practicing medicine in Israel and is buried there.

The Russians kidnapped members of the Skidelsky family. It has been reported that Solomon, who assumed the role of the head of Skidelsky and Sons upon his father’s death in 1916, and Simeon, and possibly Moses were kidnapped. Solomon was said to have died in prison in Khabarovsk and Simeon in prison in Nikolsk Ussuriysk.
EPILOGUE

In 1949, China is taken over by the Chinese communists. All Europeans leave China. The new Chinese Communist Government “Nationalizes” all the Ossinovsky properties and businesses. Anatole and Henrietta Ossinovsky stay on in Harbin to run these operations for the Chinese, and are one of a few Europeans to stay. Anatole is instrumental in financially aiding many Jews leaving Harbin to emigrate to other countries. In 1955 the Ossinovsky’s only son, Lyoka, dies of a kidney infection at the age of 8, and is buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Harbin. Although it is difficult to leave their child’s grave in Harbin, Anatole and Henrietta leave Harbin in the 1964 and resettle in Switzerland. The Ossinovsky siblings decide to sell the property their father bought in Tiberias, Israel, and give the proceeds to Anatole and Henrietta so that they could start again in Switzerland.
EPILOGUE

Today the Skidelsky House in Harbin is used as a Club House for High Ranking Chinese Communist Party and Government officials.

The Ossinovsky house is the home for 20 Chinese families.

Joseph Ossin passed away in October 1975.

Esther Ossin is married to Don Woll. They have been married for 53 years, have three married children, and have three grandchildren. Esther and Don live in San Rafael, California.

Archie Ossin is married to Myrna Shulman. They have been married for 37 years and have 4 children and one grandchild. Archie and Myrna live in Altamonte Springs, Florida.
EPILOGUE

Armund Klein, grandson of Sonia Ossinovsky, and son of Gita Klein (formerly Gita Skidelsky), lives just outside of Washington D.C., in Annandale, Virginia.

Robert Skidelsky, great-grandson of Sonia Ossinovsky, and Grandson of Liza Skidelsky, was made a peer by John Major in 1991, and took a seat in United Kingdom’s House of Lords.

Teddy and Rasha Kaufman are the heads of Igud Yotzi Zin, an organization in Israel that helps Jews in Israel, who were formerly from China.

Sept 22, 2004 Sarah Ossin passed away at the Jewish Home in San Francisco, California at the age of 95.
China Resource List

- **BOOKS**
  - *China Legacy* - Marion Cuba (a novel)
  - *Echoes of Chinese History* - Hope Willis Rathbun
  - *China Emerges* - Steven Warshaw
  - *Strangers Always* - Rena Krasno (a novel)
  - *The Jews of Harbin Live on in my Heart* - Teddy Kaufman
  - *Escape to Shanghai* - James R. Ross
  - *Jewish Genealogy* - Gary Mokotoff and Warren Blatt
  - *Secrets and Spies – The Harbin Files* - Mara Moustafine
  - *Hotel Bolivia* - Leo Spitzer
  - *The River at the Center of the World* - Simon Winchester

- **WEBSITES**
  - [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)
  - [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Chinatoc.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Chinatoc.html)
  - [www.stevemorse.org/](http://www.stevemorse.org/)
  - [www.jewishgen.org/](http://www.jewishgen.org/)
  - [www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker/](http://www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker/)
  - [www.jewishgen.org/DNA/](http://www.jewishgen.org/DNA/)
  - [http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/index.htm](http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/index.htm)
China Resource List

Amleto Vespa, SECRET AGENT OF JAPAN. Garden City Publishing Co., Garden City, New York, 1941.

ARTICLES & PAPERS
Dan Ben-Canaan, “NOSTALGIA VS. HISTORICAL REALITY.