

The Business of Stereotyping Business

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What has come to be known as the 'Fugu Plan'¹, a secret Japanese plot designed to recruit "world Jewish money" and use it to enhance Japan's war torn economy some sixty-five years ago, has been reconstructed in Harbin once again. Any plan aiming at bringing "Jewish business" to

Heilongjiang and to its capital city may very well be seen as a present day scheme to attempt at recruiting world Jewish business investments for a particular local purpose.

In June 2007 Harbin hosted an "International Forum on Economic Cooperation with World Jews"². The 3-day weekend event which coincided with the annual International Harbin Trade Fair aimed at bringing Jewish investment money to the capital of Heilongjiang province. Furthermore, it was the organizers' intention to display their ability of recruiting "Jewish money" from around the world, thus fulfilling a mandate given to them several years earlier, and by doing so, elevating themselves to an important position within the provincial and city governments. Like the failed Japanese Fugu Plan of the 1920s and 30s, so did they, being unsuccessful in fulfilling their purpose.

Although the number of Jews who engage in business very successfully is small, most Chinese people believe that the Jews own most of the world's fortunes.

Most Chinese have never met a Jewish person, nor hold a minimal knowledge of

what Judaism or being Jewish is all about. Never the less, stereotypes of high Jewish intellect and genius, that all Jews are very good in business, that Jewish money gives the Jews world power, as well as Jewish cunningness – Jewish skill in achieving one's ends by deceit or evasion, are being presented in academic, social and political spheres. These misguided notions have

penetrated all levels of the Chinese society.

How this concept of Jews being money dominant power of the world came into being in China, who introduced these and the other stereotypes into the Chinese minds and why, and how it manifests itself in today's China, are the key questions to which we are searching for answers.

The study of economics and business is fundamentally about human decision-making.



It is a branch of the social sciences concerned primarily with analyzing and explaining human behavior in making decisions about the allocation and distribution of resources.³ In this context, some construed the Jewish people as a valuable resource.

Economy and business have been two key concepts in China's policy-making in the past twenty years. It is well understood here that in order to be an active player within the global community, China should be using both economics and business concepts to its advantage.

Being an important industrial and agricultural center in China, Heilongjiang province has been vigorously engaged in promoting its resources and goods. In the past five years, the northeastern province has been trying to reach new sources of investments, without which its economic future will be stagnating and left far behind. The local government has been exploring various avenues to achieve its economic rejuvenation and one of those, the "Jewish file" was grabbed by the provincial Academy of Social Sciences.

A study of the policy and decision-making process of the various provincial government departments that are charged with these tasks reveals a serious lack of insight into the problem and many misconceptions or misunderstandings about human traits.

These misconceptions and or misunderstandings have been translated into a distorted reality, thus creating a misrepresented picture of the course of action needed and making it difficult to achieve favorable results. Moreover, it is characterized by attaching misguided labels that are, on many occasions, based on ignorance, stereotypes, and bias.

The etymology (语源学) of "business" refers to the state of being, in the context of the individual as well as the community or society. In other words, to be busy is to be doing commercially viable and profitable work⁴, and it refers to the community as a whole, not just to one group within it. But in

China, excellence in business is a trademark attached to all Jews.

Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang province, has been a home for the largest Jewish community in China for over half a century. Among the members of the Jewish community were some who engaged in different branches of business – local and international. Those few contributed to the economy of the city and laid the foundations for its growth. They were Jewish businesspersons who engaged in business – not "Jewish business", because there is no such concept to my knowledge.

The Jewish community in Shanghai was founded by several Jewish families who came there more than 200 years ago in order to expend their businesses. They were the exception because the growth of the Jewish community there was based on thousands of poor refugees who escaped the Japanese in Harbin and later the burning Europe.

The "Jewish business" biased phenomena has been manifested in a mental process that groups similar objectives, or people, into a stereotypical linkage of images and words⁵. Further more, since the enactment of the "opening up to the world" policy, China has been engaged in an endless festival of economics and business. In this festival, the Jews as a group are among the highly regarded guests of honor.

Some Cases in point

A recent article in the American based Washington Post investigated the "Sold on a Stereotype" phenomena.⁶ Ariana Eunjung Cha, a Chinese correspondent for the Post, asserted that "in China, a popular genre of self-help books purports to tell the secrets of making money 'the Jewish way.'"

Showcased in bookstores are stacks of books built on a stereotype: "The Eight Most Valuable Business Secrets of the Jewish Business", "The Legend of Jewish Wealth," "Jewish People and Business: The Bible of

How to Live Their Lives," and "Jewish Entrepreneurial Experience and Business Wisdom," are among the most popular ones.

Making money "the Jewish way"? Cha asserts that "in the United States, where making broad generalizations about races, cultures or religions has become unacceptable in most circles, the titles of some of these books might make people cringe. Throughout history and around the world, even outwardly innocuous and broadly accepted characterizations of Jews have sometimes formed the basis for eventual campaigns of violent anti-Semitism."

Audrie Ohana, who works at her Shanghai family's import-export company and attended China's prestigious Fudan University, says that these "Jewish" success books are very dangerous. What they say -- it's not true. In our community, it's not everybody that succeeds. We're like everyone else. Some are rich, but there are others that are very poor."⁷

The books, despite their covers, focus on basic business genius that has little to do with religion or culture, and every book features one or more case studies of the success of the Lehman brothers, the Rothschilds and other Jewish "titans of industry and captains of finance," as one author put it.

Some works incorrectly refer to J.P. Morgan (an influential Episcopalian leader) and John D. Rockefeller (a devout Baptist) as Jewish businessmen.⁸

According to Cha, "among this booming genre's most popular books is William Hampton's 'Jewish Entrepreneurial Experience and Business Wisdom.' It comes packaged in a red-and-gold cover, and a banner along the top brags that it was a "gold list" bestseller in the United States. Among Hampton's credentials, according to his biography: "Business Week editor," part of the "pioneer batch of Harvard DBAs,"

"professor in business strategy and philosophy" with "many years of experience in Jewish studies."

Cha and her research associate Ai Ghee Ong spoke with He Xiong Fe, a visiting professor in Nankai University's literature department. Prof. He estimated "that more than half of the books are fakes, written by people who are not familiar with Judaism or Jewish history and who have made up their qualifications. There are only a few books that have value," said He, who has lectured on such topics as "Why are Jewish people so smart?" and "The mystery of the Jews."

When asked for contact information for William Hampton, author of "Jewish Entrepreneurial Experience and Business Wisdom," a representative for the book's publisher, Harbin Press, said the company obtained the manuscript from a translator and had never met the author. Several days later,

the publisher said she had trouble reaching the translator so she could not provide more details about the origin of the book.

A search of international ISBNs pulled up no hits for books by a William Hampton with a title similar to "Jewish Entrepreneurial

Experience and Business Wisdom." Harvard Business School has no record of a William Hampton in the first class of its doctorate of business administration program. Officials at Business Week magazine said there was a former employee with that name... He publishes an automobile newsletter, but had never served as an editor.

William Hampton, who lives near Detroit, said he had no idea where the book came from. "I can confidently tell you that this is not something that I did," he said. "This would not be a topic I would be

Some construed the Jewish people as a valuable socio-economics and business resource

knowledgeable about in any way. It would be helpful to be Jewish, for one thing."⁹

These kinds of books that contribute stereotypes about Jews and their supposed cleverness and business prowess have given them an iconic status in the eyes of the Chinese public.

These “pop” publications, including those of the Christian New Testament under the cover of the “Holy Bible” and the popular “Stories of the Bible” with stories from the Old and New Testaments mixed together, have penetrated also the libraries of China’s academic institutions.

In a 1998 essay “on stereotypes of Jewishness in China”¹⁰ Zhou Yun tries to trace the Chinese perception of the Jews. “In modern China, the term 'Jew' or 'Youtai', can be a symbol for money, deviousness and meanness; it can also represent poverty, trustworthiness and warm heartedness. It has religious as well as secular meanings.

While it represents individualism, it also stands for a collective spirit. It symbolizes tradition, and can equally invoke modernity. One day the 'Jew' is a stateless slave, another day he is the dominant power in the world. The 'Jew' is nationalist and at the same time cosmopolitan. He can be a filthy capitalist or an ardent communist, a committed revolutionary or a spineless loser. In other words, anything which the Chinese aspire to is Jewish, and, at the same time, anything which they despise is also Jewish.”

Not all of the Jews have much money. As a matter of fact there are, and there always have been, gaps between the wealthy and the poor within the Jewish communities, the same as in any other community. In fact, impoverished Jews exist much like impoverished Chinese or any other group of people anywhere in the world.

Never the less, most Chinese people believe that Jews own the most of the world’s riches.

Baron de la Brede et de Montesquieu¹¹ has said in his book *Persian Letters* that “there are Jews where there are riches”. The book has been translated into Chinese.

William Shakespeare’s plays are part of the Chinese students’ study curriculum. When they learn the “Merchant of Venice” most of them are being introduced to stereotypical commentaries by ill-informed teachers or popular internet sources.

Being fascinated by the term “Jew”, many Chinese look for sources that may reveal the

secrets of the “Jewish wisdom”. They buy books such as the “Bible” or “Biblical Stories” with the hope that those will help them understand better the Christian phenomena to which they include the Jews. Although the books available in the Chinese stores carry on their cover graphic images of Moses or Abraham, they are popular

versions of the Christian “New Testament” and have nothing to do with the Bible – the “Old Testament”, or the Jewish religion.

Among the books that one can purchase in today’s China are publications that promise to provide the readers with a better understanding of Jewishness. Those books “present” a large spectrum of subjects, among them Jewish laws, Jewish economics, business and money. These books are available as the Jewish knowledge part in all of China’s libraries, including those in the universities.

In many cases these books are being produced by publishing companies that follow popular trends with a hope to enlarge their bank accounts. The books, compiled boastfully with articles copied from unknown sources or written by obscured authors, proclaim that one may find an answer to any

In China the secrets of Jewish wisdom and Jewish business are hot sales

question he has about Judaism and Jewish power – wisdom or money.

Between 1978 and 2002 a total of 384 books on the subject of Western religion were published in China¹². Most of the books were written by Western Christians, and the rest were translations done by Chinese. *The Moses Mystery: The African Origins of the Jewish People*, was the only book written by a Jewish person¹³. Peter S. Temes of the New York Times Book Review wrote on January 26, 1997 that “Most readers won't be able to make any connection between these arcana and their own experiences of the Bible. The scholarly audience is likely to reject *"The Moses Mystery"* for its poor method, while the general reading audience is not likely to make it beyond the first page of argumentative, obscure prose.” Never the less the book was translated to Chinese.

Between 2002 and 2007 China witnessed a surge in local publications on the subject of Western religion. We could not find a single translated book on Judaism or the Bible – Old Testament written by an authoritative Jewish or Israeli scholar.

“Judaism is not a recognized religion in China, but people here regard the Jews as highly intelligent people and want to learn from them,” say Dr. Pertti Sulevi Nikkila and his wife Dr. Aune Kaisa Maria Nikkila from the missionary Institute of Sino-Christian Studies Ltd. in Hong Kong. They were invited to lecture on "Christian Thoughts" in November 2007 in Heilongjiang University in Harbin. Both of them received their Th.D from the University of Helsinki in Finland. Their interests are mainly on Systematic Theology, Religion and Culture and Religious Education. The couple teaches the values as presented in the Christian “Holy Bible” and do not make a clear distinction between that and the Old Testament. In a lecture they gave on November 13, 2007 to students from the Religion Department at the university, they spoke about the position of man before “the lord” and about good and evil. “Bad and good are not for us to judge. Hitler and Mother Teresa or Gandhi are equal

before the Lord and only he can judge them for being good or evil,” the missionaries said.

According to a report by an unidentified member of the State Council's Bureau of Religious Affairs, published in *Beijing Review*, Sept. 1-7, 1997, there were 18,040,000 Muslims and 14,022,000 Christians among them 4,004,000 Catholics and 10,018,000 Protestants. The number of missionaries and people who say they are Christian believers has grown dramatically since then.

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The Talmud and the understanding of Jewish laws is one of the books written by Chinese scholars. It describes the relationship between people in many matters. The laws play a great role in the Jewish religious life. They tell people how to deal with everyday issues among them money, labor relations, and damages. However, these books misinterpret and misguide the ignorant or the uninformed reader.

A Chinese book written by Prof. Zhang Qianhong and titled 犹太人-犹太精神 *Jews · Jewish Spirit*¹⁴ presents the Talmud as a source of laws and rules regarding the Jewish dealings with matters of money for one's own selfish and sole benefits. In the chapter titled “The Famous Spirit of Financing”¹⁵ the first quotation as a subtitle reads as follows:

“金钱叮当作响，坏话便戛然而止。《圣经》放射光明，金钱散发温暖。”

“Money stops those who put a knife in your back, and the Bible shines like the sun and money sends out warmth.”

The author continues and says that “the Talmud teaches people to cherish money as well as cherish oneself”:

“身体依靠心而生存，心则依靠钱包而生存。”
“One can not live without the heart, while the heart stops beating without the purse.”

“钱不是罪恶，也不是诅咒，它在祝福着人们。”

“Money is a blessing, not a vice or a curse.”

“拥有很多财产，忧愁可能相对增加，但完全没有财产的人，忧愁更多。”

“Those who have money live with worries, but those who have not, carry greater worries.”¹⁶



Programs and conferences on subjects such as “Bringing Jewish Business”, and “Uncovering the Jewish Wisdom”, are among those which are being conceived, debated, and implemented in governmental departments and academic institutions.

In 1999 Prof. Zhang Tiejiang, a Research Fellow at the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences and the Assistant Director of its Jewish Center, wrote an essay titled ‘Suggestions for the Study of Harbin Jews to Quicken Heilongjiang Economic Development’.

“In December of that year, Prime Minister Li Peng went on a visit to Israel for the first time. Soon after that Zhang Tiejiang's essay was published by the Xinhua News Agency. And on April 7, 2000, the essay was sent to the related departments in the Central government, and then to the Provincial government. Mr. Song Fatang, then the Party Secretary of the province, sent a document to the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences. In the document he wrote “Comrade Qu Wei, please intensify the study of the history of Harbin Jews, in order to help expend our cooperative services”.¹⁷

“Zhang Tiejiang’s proposal of taking advantage of the Jewish asset in Harbin just coincided with the Government of Heilongjiang Province’s intention of developing. The experience gained in Shanghai stimulated the Government of Heilongjiang. Shanghai, which started the study of the history of Jews in 1988, made the most of Jewish special historical complex for the Jewish sites and distinguishing features of buildings and succeeded in

attracting investments. As a result, room for Jewish Studies was set up in the Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, and it was renamed as Center of Jewish Studies.

The reporters of this investigation found that the reports of the Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences to the government, always advised of integrating,

A letter of invitation

December 15, 2006

Dear Sir or Madam:

The International Forum on Economic Cooperation between Harbin and the World’s Jews sponsored by Heilongjiang Provincial People’s Government and Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences will be held in Harbin on June 15, 2007.

We take pleasure in inviting you to attend the Forum.

Your hotel accommodation and meals will be paid by us, but you will be responsible for your airfare.

If you have any paper or topics on which you would like to give talks, please inform us as soon as possible and the program is being finalized soon.

Please confirm your participation at your earliest convenience.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Professor Wei Qu

President of Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences

packaging and promoting Jewish culture in Harbin only for investments. Meeting dignitaries, and calling on political leaders of the host countries, also had these to be a main point for a good use of the human resources for investments here.

In fact, the Academy’s Jewish Research Center has established the similar direction long before. Its central promotion site described it like this: ‘...attracting [Jewish] business investments as the tenet of our existence and purpose’...¹⁸

The “International Forum on Economic Cooperation with World Jewry”¹⁹ held in Harbin in June 2007 is a good case study. The conference’s original title was “The International Forum

on Economic Cooperation between Harbin and the World's Jews - Bringing Jewish Business to Harbin". It was organized and implemented by the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences to coincide with the Harbin International Trade Expo between June 14 and 17, 2007.

A calendar examination shows that the main activities of the conference fell on Friday and Saturday, excluding any observant Jew from active participation. The activities included "Viewing in the exhibition hall of "Harbin fair for trade and economic cooperation, enterprises hold trade talks, attend the introduction meeting of Northeastern Old Industrial Base, and see the theatrical performance of Harbin fair for trade and economic cooperation".

Of the 83 participants, 16 were Israelis among them the Israeli ambassador and his wife, a delegation of five local politicians from the Givataim municipality (a twin city to Harbin), the mayor and deputy mayor of Amikam Regional Council, three persons representing the Israel-China Friendship Association, two businessmen, one of Ehud Olmert's brothers who read a congratulatory letter of the Israeli Premier, and one professor from the faculty of the School of Western Studies at Heilongjiang University. There were nine guests representing the Jewish community Center in Birobijian, the "Jewish autonomous region of Russia". Three Americans, among them a history professor. Six guests from Hungary, all dentists, representing the Hungarian and Austrian Jewish Federations. The rest were Chinese, among them 15 from the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences, a former ambassador of China to Israel, academicians from several universities in China, and officials representing the Heilongjiang and Harbin governments. There was one Chinese businessman who came from Beijing to promote his travel agency.

But according to the official printed program, most of the foreign guests, including the Israelis, were enterpenures.²⁰

In his paper presented at the opening ceremony of the Forum, Harbin Mayor, Mr. Zhang Xiaolian, explained the important task of bringing Jewish investments to the city and the province. "The most memorable outstanding Jewish figures, for instance, Carl Marx, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl, John Rockefeller... the admirable entrepreneurial spirit and extraordinary wisdom of the industrious... Jewish nation has won them the reputation of 'world's No. 1 merchant' with their unique business skills and large number of successful entrepreneurs over the world... In today's world there is a classic appraisal of the Jewish wealth, 'the world's money is in the pockets of Americans, and the Americans' money is in the pockets of the Jews'. This is the highest acclaim and praise to the Jewish wisdom... We will be more supportive, more open-minded and more pragmatic, and work together with you, for a brighter tomorrow..."²¹

The Business of Bringing "Jewish Business"

Jewish entrepreneurs in China say they are bombarded with invitations to give seminars on how to make money "the Jewish way."²²

People in China may be fascinated by Jews because they feel both cultures share a strong entrepreneurial spirit. But, in fact, most Jewish people place higher value on superb education rather than on business.

"Jews are rich, powerful, rich, and shrewd. They know the secret of success in banking, trade and industry. And they know the key to gaining influence in the US in general and in the White House in particular."²³

These shared Chinese characterizations of Jews might sound like anti-Semitism, and many Jews object to it. But to sociologist Shalom Salomon Wald it is not. "It's actually a statement, he says, of the high regard in which China holds the Jewish people: These

are the very traits that endear the Jews to the Chinese.”²⁴

Never the less, this kind of “high regard to the Jewish people” is provocative and extremely dangerous, especially in a society that develops and promotes nationalism and race to its utmost.

Business has nothing to do with Judaism, and those who associate the two and equate them as inseparable parts will not bare their desired fruits.

Entrepreneurs will come to China only if it offers attractive incentives for doing business here. The same applies to Harbin. It has nothing to do with being Jewish or with the history of the city.

To achieve successful results the province should promote its resources and goods both domestically and abroad in a scientific and progressive way. Its course should be based on what resources, goods, and special appeals the province has. It should match these with countries around the world that may be in need of such resources or, with foreign enterprises that can find these very attractive and beneficial to their business goals.²⁵

There are some examples of successful Israeli or Jewish owned companies that operate in China. Their success is due to their ability to maneuver through the complexity of rules, regulations and the huge bureaucracy.

But, many Israeli companies that came to China failed. They thought China was the new Promised Land but found it was not as simple as they anticipated, and could not adapt to the Chinese way of conducting business, to the cultural differences, nor could understand the markets and the potential partners here.²⁶

The Economic and Trade Attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Beijing says that too many of the Israeli and Jewish people who have come to China looking for golden business opportunities did not succeed because they are not good in doing business here, they are arrogant and do not understand or except cultural differences. What usually happens,

the attaché says, is that they return home disappointed and burn the connections to the ground.

Such is the case with many other representatives of businesses from around the world. One does not have to be Jewish in order to succeed or fail.

Now after China has joined the WTO, the country adheres to global standards. This makes it relatively easier to all foreign multinational companies to conduct business here.

A recent study done by the McKenzie company concludes that by 2025 China will have more than 270 million middle-class consumers, thus becoming the third largest consuming market in the world, with private consumption of 2.3 trillion dollars. China will be by then a huge market for international enterprises.²⁷

Many in China, especially the younger generations, believe that Jews own most of the international enterprises.

The concept of Jews being the money dominant power of the world came into being in China through missionaries who introduced these and the other stereotypes into the Chinese minds. The on going study on the subject by the Sino-Israel Research Center at Heilongjiang University School of Western Studies shows that ill informed contemporary scholars, as well as the rise in publication of “Jewish success” books, have contributed to the deepening belief in such stereotypes.

Some of the scholars believe that the Jews had come to China through both the Silk Road and by way of the sea during the 7th and 8th centuries. The main reason cited for their travels to China was for trade and for avoiding discrimination and persecutions in the lands they lived in.

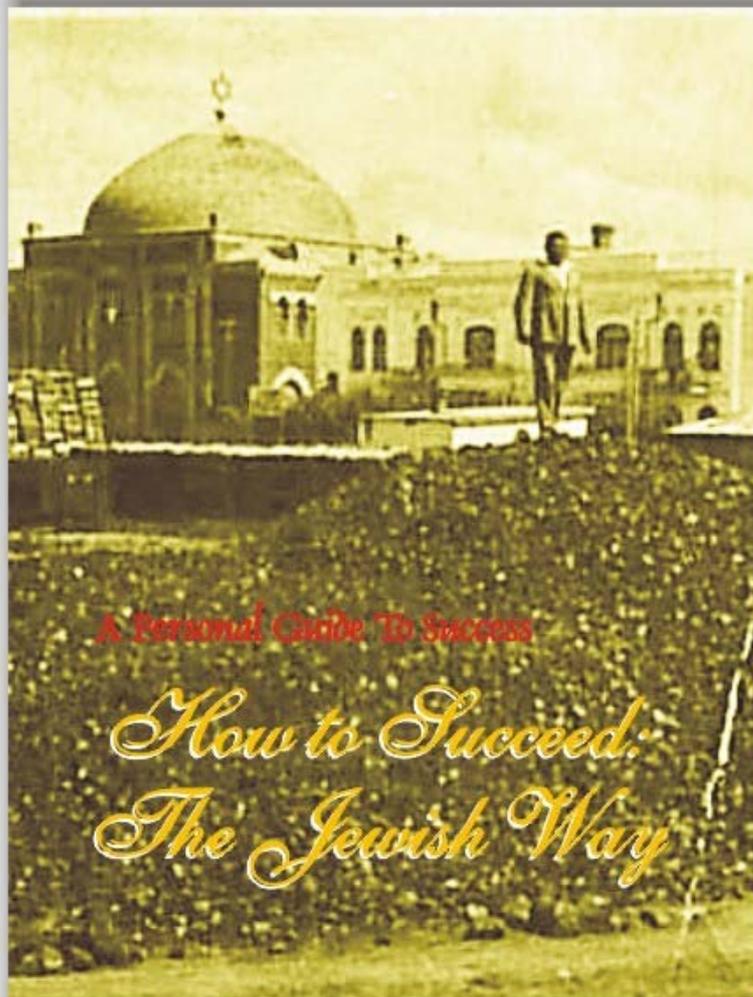
From these and other occasional publications one can not conclude that the Jews, as a group, possessed particular business skills that made them rise above any other group of people. As was the

case with many of the travelers who reached the Chinese territories, some were merchants, but many others traveled for various reasons among them explorations of peaceful environments to settle in.

The study shows also that in modern times 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' forgeries are in part responsible for Chinese beliefs and perception of the characteristics of the Jews. Those forgeries were disseminated here first by the "White" Russian army during its quest to annex Manchuria into Czarist Russia's empire, then by the "Reds", and later, in the 1900s, by the Japanese and the representatives of Nazi Germany in China.

No new business will come to China because of historical, emotional or nostalgic attachments. Foreign enterprises, among them enterprises owned by Jews, will arrive here because of the incentives that will be offered in order to generate profits. This is the name of the economic game.

China should promote aggressively its resources and progressive enterprises. Harbin will be an attractive business destination for foreign enterprises because of its resources and incentives and the ability of any new business to be profitable here regardless of who owns it – Christians, Jews, Muslims or atheists. ●●



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The New York Times Book Review - January 26, 1997, By Peter S. Temes - In "The Moses Mystery," Gary Greenberg, a trial attorney with the Legal Aid Society in New York, holds aloft scattered fragments of archeological findings, along with flat-footed bits of textual analysis, to argue that the Jewish people originated in Africa. He seems to take to heart any bit of evidence supporting his broad thesis, no matter how trivial. He also refers to a longer, unpublished manuscript that presumably holds the answers to many of the questions this book raises but does not satisfy. However, even if his data were expertly handled and convincing, few people would care. Mr. Greenberg's argument is, finally, a quibble, though it pretends to be more. The broad significance of the Bible is not as a detailed historical record, but as an embodiment of faith -- or faiths. Mr. Greenberg seems to delight in a game of scholarly "gotcha," proving that individual biblical characters couldn't possibly have been in a given place on a given day in an early century, thus overthrowing some obscure thesis hatched by other (generally more credible) scholars. Most readers won't be able to make any connection between these arcana and their own experiences of the Bible. The scholarly audience is likely to reject "The Moses Mystery" for its poor method, while the general reading audience is not likely to make it beyond the first page of argumentative, obscure prose.
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Prof. Zhang Qianhong is the Director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the College of History and Culture, Henan University, Kaifeng City, China.
Notes: The institute was established in March 2002 at Henan University at Kaifeng, Henan Province, China. At the opening ceremony, the university vice-president, Li Xiaojian, was joined by Mr. Len Hew (Canada), Prof. Zhang Qianhong and Prof. Liang Gong. Mr. Hew was recognized for his efforts and his contribution that led to the founding of the Institute. Prof. Zhang Qianhong was appointed director of the Institute.
Several scholars and representatives of the Kaifeng Jewish descendants held a discussion on the subject of "Jewish Studies in China." In attendance were Mr. Hew, Prof. Zhang Qianhong, Prof. Liang Gong, Dr. Lu Shirong, and Prof. Wei Qianzhi. At the meeting, Mr. Hew pledged to offer two scholarships each year, together with the necessary finances, to promote interest in Jewish studies among the population of university students.
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