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**Kathryn Hellerstein and Song Lihong (eds.), *China and Ashkenazic Jewry: Transnational Encounters* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 359 pp., \$89.99.**

In recent years, the field of Jewish Studies has increasingly pivoted toward global history and engaged with scholars across the world. Kathryn Hellerstein and Song Lihong's co-edited volume is the product of such a collaboration. With nineteen contributions from a range of disciplines and scholars based in the United States, Israel, and China, this ambitious book explores the transcultural interactions between Ashkenazi Jews and China. It aims, in Hellerstein's words, "to shift the emphasis from 'Jews *in* China' to 'Jews *and* China'" (p. 1) in the field. In addition, this book introduces readers to a rich array of current research in Chinese Jewish Studies. By doing so, Hellerstein and Song showcase potential new trajectories in the burgeoning field of Jewish Studies in/on China.

This book is divided into three sections. The first one contains five essays on the translation and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in China. The first and last ones focus each on the Jewish Christian convert Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky (1831–1906). Irene Eber uses the story of Joseph to discuss Schereschewsky's translation of the Old Testament arguing that his Jewish background and sensitivity "between faithful versus literal translation" (p. 31) ensures that original meanings could be properly transmitted into vernacular Chinese. The following three essays put the Hebrew Bible in dialogue with Chinese literary culture. Fu Xiaowei and Wang Yi explore the representation of filial piety through a comparison between Chinese philosopher Mencius and the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. They trace how producing male offspring was a shared concern and one that was crucial in maintaining the family lineage, even at the risk of committing incest. Cao Jian's essay brings the reader to the 1910s, examining how the Old Testament prophets informed the Chinese intellectuals' concept of the "Chinese nation." These thinkers read Amos and Jeremiah not as religious figures, but as patriots and "spokesmen for their people" (p. 56), through which a narrative of national suffering and redemption could be adopted. Zhong Zhiqing explores the contrasting reception of Song of Songs as both a theological allegory according to Judeo-Christian tradition and "a wondrous collection of love lyrics" (p. 63) in the Chinese interpretation. Liu Yan concludes with a fascinating

investigation of two versions of Schereschewsky's Chinese translations of the Song of Songs, written in 1875 and 1902. Liu's comparison confirms Eber's argument that Schereschewsky adapts his translations to his intended audience: colloquial expressions in vernacular Mandarin for ordinary people, and a mix of classical and vernacular Chinese for the educated class.

In the second and largest section entitled "Jews in Modern China" eight essays cover the activities of individual Jews or Jewish communities in China, four of them on Shanghai Jewish refugees. Xu Xin opens with a historical overview of Jewish communities in China. He defines interactions between Chinese and Jews in two categories: Chinese interest in Jewish culture as a source of knowledge and Jewish cultural/scientific contributions to China. Ai Rengui's chapter explores how physical activities became a vehicle for Jewish diasporic nationalism. The physically fit Jewish (male) body redefined the meanings of "Jewishness," offering a pathway to challenge antisemitic stereotypes while embodying the Zionist ideal of the Jewish nation. Looking at the popular Jewish newspaper *Israel's Messenger*, Wang Jian's essay concludes that at least 25,000 Jewish refugees found shelter in Shanghai between 1938 and 1941. While Maisie Meyer focuses on four notable members of the Baghdadi Jewish community which helped Shanghai and Ashkenazim refugees, Nancy Berliner explores the works of three Jewish refugee artists. As she points out, their visual records "not only reflect their own lives and struggles, but also depict the Shanghai neighborhoods that they observed around them" (p. 165). Berliner's excellent essay shows how each artist's position informed their representation of Shanghai and the Chinese people, and the varying degrees in which they themselves were influenced by Chinese artistic culture. Yang Meng's chapter shifts to theatre, focusing on the only two published Jewish refugee dramas performed in Shanghai: "*Die Masken fallen*" [The masks fall] and "*Fremde Erde*" [Foreign land]. Both plays were influenced by Austrian German and Viennese theatre tradition, lacked Jewish religious imagery, and touched taboo topics (mixed marriage and sex work). Yang argues that these plays' importance lay in their realistic depiction of Jewish refugees' experiences in Shanghai. Marc B. Shapiro provides a detailed discussion on Mir Yeshiva's escape to Shanghai. In contrast to other authors in this volume, Shapiro notes "how *little* connection there was with Chinese society" (p. 213) and only minimal contact to the local Jewish community. Samuel Heilman concludes the section with an analysis of the Lubavitcher Hasidim Chabad's

outreach activities for Jewish expatriates living and working in the People's Republic of China.

The third section shifts the conversation towards the different forms of communication that brought Chinese and Jews together – within and outside of China. Katheryn Hellerstein offers a fascinating discussion of the 1925 Yiddish play “*Der krayd tsirkl*” [The chalk-circle]. But lacking an extant manuscript, Hellerstein draws from other Yiddish poets’ translations and a few surviving ephemera to explore the challenges that these Jewish immigrants faced in making their work accessible to a Yiddish audience. Zhang Ping looks at two more theater plays: the Chinese “Peking Man” and the Chinese-translated Israeli play, “Suitcase Packers”. Zhang highlights the themes of tradition, modernization, and escape, and their different receptions by a contemporary Chinese audience. Returning to the United States, Bao Anruo examines Yiddish newspapers for their representations of China during the Russo-Japanese War. Bao differentiates between war reports which show China as a battlefield with an untrustworthy population and government, and informative articles which presented “the similarities (real or imagined)” (p. 266) between Chinese and Jewish people. While Li Dong’s chapter shows the challenges of teaching American Jewish literature to Chinese university students, Rebecca Kobrin’s exceptional essay explores the fight against Chinese exclusion. Looking at American Jewish immigration lawyer Max J. Kohler and his unsuccessful but strong belief that “open immigration, if handled properly, could be an instrument of US power” (p. 298). Kobrin argues that he remains a significant authority in immigration jurisprudence and important figure in the Jewish-Chinese history of the United States. The career and personal life of late Sinologist Irene Eber concludes this book. Examining her memoir, Song Lihong finds in Eber’s decision to disobey her father and leave the family the reason she found refuge in the study of Chinese culture and history.

Hellerstein and Song have co-edited a remarkable collection showcasing the breadth and complexities of Sino-Jewish transnational and transcultural interactions along the overarching themes of religious studies, history, and literature. “The Bible in China” is perhaps the most cohesive section in the book. The essays are individually compelling and together serve as points of conversation between the five chapters. “Jews in Modern China” as a whole leaves the reader unsatisfied. Some articles (Ai, Wang, Shapiro, and Heilman) reinforce the image of isolation and limited interactions between Jewish and

Chinese communities, while others (Xu, Berliner, and Yang) highlight areas where Jews contributed to China's modernization or were themselves informed by its tradition. This tension weakens the proclaimed goal of moving towards "Jews *and* China," and suggests that more work is needed to tease out the specifics of this reconsideration. "Jews and Chinese" is consistent in emphasizing intercultural communication, revealing the transnational linkages outside the nation-state framework. Yet, there remains an awkward gap: except for Song's chapter, three essays are on early-20<sup>th</sup> century United States and two on contemporary China. Moreover, the language and description are occasionally problematic. Xu calls Hong Kong and Shanghai "Chinese treaty cities" (p. 100) when in fact only the latter was a treaty port.<sup>3</sup> Meyer incorrectly conflates the unconditional surrender of all German troops in April 1945 as also "concluding the Pacific war" (p. 158). Japan did not surrender until August 1945. In addition, a few structural decisions are puzzling. It may have helped to reduce the size of "Jews in Modern China" by creating a separate "Shanghai Jewish refugees" section, while Song's essay could have been made into a standalone epilogue – since this book is dedicated to Irene Eber.

Nonetheless, Hellerstein and Song's co-edited volume demonstrates the growing potential of Sino-Jewish scholarship and international scholarly cooperation. Not only does it reveal the current priorities in the study of the Jewish diaspora in China, but also offers a roadmap for future research. Were there meaningful differences in the activities of Ashkenazim and Sephardim in China? What role do overseas Chinese, such as those in the *Nanyang*, play in Sino-Jewish interactions? Could a microhistorical lens (like Berliner or Kobrin's essays) uncover cross-cultural interactions from Jews who stayed in China after the PRC's establishment or reveal lesser-known connections between Israel and China? Although women were mentioned in a few essays, it was not a focus. Does the absence of women as historical subjects, or gender as a category of analysis open potential areas for further exploration? Overall, the essays in this co-edited collection are indisputably a valuable resource for

<sup>3</sup> Xu does expand on the historical contexts in footnote 4 but does not make the distinction clear. Hong Kong was ceded in perpetuity to the British in 1841 and was later established as a Crown Colony in 1842. It was only after the acquisition of the New Territories in 1898 on a 99-years lease that Hong Kong's colonial status became ambiguous.

graduate students and scholars interested in Chinese Jewish Studies and Sino-Jewish interactions.

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**Andrea Dara Cooper, *Gendering Modern Jewish Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2021), 270 pp., \$34 (paperback).**

The scope of the book is much narrower than the title promises. Focusing on Franz Rosenzweig (d. 1929) and Emmanuel Levinas (d. 1993), with some discussion of Jacques Derrida and Hannah Arendt, Cooper argues that modern Jewish philosophers can be properly understood only if we attend to the “organizing metaphors of kinship: erotic love, marriage, brotherhood, paternity, and maternity” (p. 7). Kinship language, however, is neither innocent nor neutral, but one that is based on exclusion and that brings about further exclusion and marginalization. This is most evident in the case of “brotherhood,” a trope that functioned as a “regulative theological and philosophical ideal for modern Jewish thought” (p. 8). “Brotherhood” is problematic because it can efface gender, support patriarchy, prioritize procreation, privilege fraternal relations, endorse “troubling gender dynamics,” (p. 10) or take embodiment to be “merely a metaphor” (p. 11). Reading for gender, as Susan Shapiro named the practice, Cooper analyzes how gendered metaphors frame the philosophy of these two influential thinkers. She argues that only if we undertake this interpretative labor, can we “see how they [i.e., Jewish philosophers] provide valuable models for intersubjective ethics, reciprocity, embodiment, and positionality” (p. 11). The mission of the book is thus twofold: to expose the limitations of Jewish philosophy from a feminist perspective and to make (problematic) Jewish philosophy usable for Jewish feminists. Reading philosophical text through the lens of feminist theory, Cooper highlights the “positionality” of Rosenzweig and Levinas as Jewish males who did not transcend the social and cultural conventions of the Jewish tradition. The purpose of the analysis is to “reveal and disrupt relations of power in these texts,” but without “reproducing the exclusionary logic within foundational works that make uncritical use of gendered terms” (p. 12). This is not a particularly novel strategy, but it is skillfully executed.

The book consists of five chapters and an epilogue: Chapter 1 and 4 focus on Rosenzweig; chapters 2 and 5 focus on Levinas, and Chapter 3 brings