

Battalion Classified

Heritage of 8th century Chinese Jews dying out

OFFICIAL NOTICE
OFFICIAL NOTICE
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
English Proficiency Examination
ALL JUNIORS and SENIORS
in curricula of the College of Science must take the English Proficiency Examination on

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1980,
AT 7:30 P.M.
BIOLOGY Department Curricula . . . Room 113 BSBE
CHEMISTRY Department Curricula . . . Room 228CHEM
MATH Department Curricula . . . Room 101 Milner
PHYSICS Department Curricula . . . Room 301 PHYS

In order to qualify as a candidate for a degree in the College of Science, each student must demonstrate an ability to express himself (or herself) in acceptable English. This requirement may be satisfied by (1) passing an examination in English composition (EPE) taken not later than the spring semester of the junior year, or (2) completing English 301 with a minimum grade of "C".

ANY STUDENT WHO FAILS THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION (EPE) MUST SATISFY THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT BY TAKING ENGLISH 301 AND EARNING A MINIMUM GRADE OF "C".

For information and guidelines on the nature of the examination, check with the departmental secretary. 11417

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United Press International
KAIFENG, China — Ai Fen Ming, a retired carpenter in this 2,000-year-old central China city, remembers when Japanese soldiers burst into his home during World War II on orders from their allies, the German Nazis.

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"They came to all the houses in our neighborhood to ask who was Jewish," Ai said. "We were very afraid. They had knives and guns."
"We did not say that, yes, we were Jews."

And several dozen other members of seven family clans are all that remain of a community of Chinese Jews that flourished in Kaifeng, beginning around 960 A.D. They were immigrants, apparently from India, Central Asia or even Palestine. They intermarried with Chinese and blended through the generations.

They practiced their religion in the Chinese language until their synagogue fell into disrepair. It was leveled in 1860.

Today Ai and other descendants say they no longer practice the religion or Jewish customs but some still regard themselves as ethnic Jews.

"When I was four years old, I remember being with father and mother near the old Christian church that we went to and my parents told me we were Jews," said Ai, now a grizzled and portly 73.

He sat stiffly in the tiny main room of his mud brick hut near the site of the former synagogue. His almond-shaped eyes and high cheekbones made him look more Tibetan than the Han, the majority people in China.

"When I was young, my grandfather wore a black cap on his head and we did not eat pork," Ai said, "but now the Jews are so few here that we dress and eat the same as the Hans."

"Some people used to be afraid to say they were Jews because minority

groups were oppressed before the revolution. But not now."

Another Kaifeng Jew, Shih Shiao Yu, 63, is a prosperous building contractor. "My parents told me we were Jews and that we could not smoke, drink alcohol or eat pork," Shih said. The parents apparently confused Moslem and Jewish restrictions.

"Now we eat pork but I don't drink or smoke," Shih said.

The Shihs live with their son, daughter-in-law and grandson in a new apartment.

"I have five sisters and brothers and we all graduated from the university and the government gave us all jobs," the son said, "so this means equal treatment for Jews and Hans."

The father keeps his head shaved to disguise his non-Chinese trait — curly hair that is evidence of Middle Eastern ancestry.

Neither Ai nor Shih was familiar with the menorah, the seven-branched candelstick of the Jewish faith, or the sixpointed Star of David. They said they did not practice circumcision and did not know anyone who did.

They did know Jews lived in other countries and that the state of Israel existed.

Research by the Jewish Publication Society of America indicates Jews probably entered China from India and Central Asia in the 8th Century.

Other accounts say Chinese Jews were among the "10 lost tribes" or were driven from Israel in 732 B.C. by the conquering king of Assyria.

The Kaifeng synagogue, built in

1163, was damaged by floods built in 1279 and again in 1521.

By 1860, the Kaifeng Jews were poor, were unable to enter the synagogue, so it was closed.

All that remains today are stone tablets in the dusty walls of the Kaifeng museum, now closed.

"When we build a new museum the two stones will be placed in the said former museum director Yi Sha."

Both stones are inscribed in Chinese. One dated 1673 is illegible. The second stone, 1521, tells how "the patriarch (a-Tan) handed the scriptures to Abraham (A-Wu) and Noah (Nu-Wo) and Noah told them to Abraham (A-Wu) and American and European Jewish Christian delegations from Kaifeng in mule carts and to investigate the Chinese colony."

The 19th century traveler aged to buy remaining books of the synagogue. Its books now to the British Museum and libraries at Oxford and bridge Universities. St. Methodist University in Dallas two torah scrolls. Hebrew College in Cincinnati. Others some small books.

A century ago, some Kaifeng became Moslems, known as "Blue Moslems." In the recently some worshippers wore blue caps to distinguish themselves from white-capped Moslems of Arab descent.

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