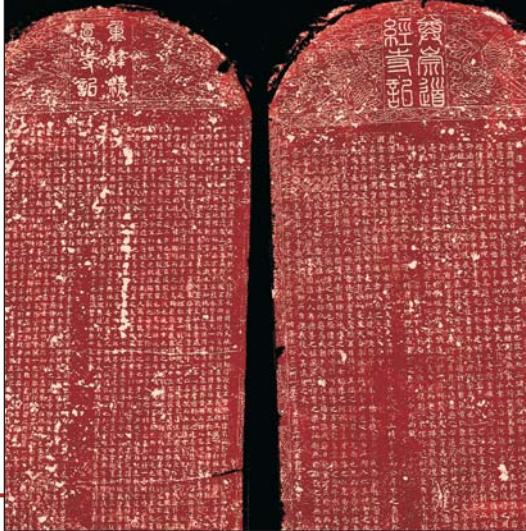


THE THEOLOGY OF  
THE CHINESE JEWS, 1000–1850

JORDAN PAPER

Postscript by Rabbi Anson Laytner



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## The Theology of the Chinese Jews, 1000–1850 Jordan Paper

Postscript by Rabbi Anson Laytner

\$85.00 Hardcover • 175 pp. • 978-1-55458-372-0 • February 2012

This fascinating book offers a history of Chinese Jewry based on existing sources and articles, and places this in the context of a broad overview of Chinese religious life. It is a wonderful, somewhat popular, but also very sophisticated achievement. Paper helps one see the complex ways that religions emerge and attain stability, even within a mighty tradition like Judaism.

– Michael Fishbane, Nathan Cummings Professor of Jewish Studies,  
University of Chicago

A thousand years ago, the Chinese government invited merchants from one of the Chinese port synagogue communities to the capital, Kaifeng. The merchants settled there and the community prospered. Over centuries, with government support, the Kaifeng Jews built and rebuilt their synagogue, which became perhaps the world's largest. Some studied for the rabbinate; others prepared for civil service examinations, leading to a disproportionate number of Jewish government officials. While continuing orthodox Jewish practices they added rituals honouring their parents and the patriarchs, in keeping with Chinese custom. However, by the mid-eighteenth century—cut off from Judaism elsewhere for two centuries, their synagogue destroyed by a flood, their community impoverished and dispersed by a civil war that devastated Kaifeng—their Judaism became defunct.

*The Theology of the Chinese Jews* traces the history of Jews in China and explores how their theology's focus on love, rather than on the fear of a non-anthropomorphic God, may speak to contemporary liberal Jews. Equally relevant to contemporary Jews is that the Chinese Jews remained fully Jewish while harmonizing with the family-centred religion of China. In an illuminating postscript, Rabbi Anson Laytner underscores the point that Jewish culture can thrive in an open society, "without hostility, by absorbing the best of the dominant culture and making it one's own."

**Jordan Paper** is a professor emeritus at York University (East Asian and Religious Studies) and a fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. He studied Buddhist Chinese at and received his doctorate in Chinese Language and Literature from the University of Wisconsin (Madison). His many books on religion and Chinese philosophy include *The Fu-Tzu: A Post-Han Confucian Text*, *The Spirits Are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion*, *The Chinese Way in Religion* (2nd edition), and *The Mystic Experience: A Descriptive and Comparative Approach*.

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