

**THE JEWS IN CHINA: THEIR
SYNAGOGUE,
THEIR SCRIPTURES,
THEIR HISTORY. &C.**

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The Jews in China: Their Synagogue, Their Scriptures, Their History. &c. by James Finn

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JAMES FINN

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CHINA;

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THEIR HISTORY, &c.

BY JAMES FINN,

AUTHOR OF "SEPHARDIM;" OR, HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN SPAIN AND
PORTUGAL.

"They built a synagogue, and in it laid up sacred books which concern
not only themselves but all men; kings and subjects, parents and children,
the old and the young."—INSCRIPTION AT KAN-FUNG-POO.

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MDCCKLIII.

P R E F A C E.

THIS little work may serve to call attention to a very peculiar branch of the children of Israel, to whom but an occasional allusion, almost without remark, has hitherto been made in this country.

Rather more has been done on the Continent, and some learned foreigners have written disquisitions upon various points of the subject; yet all have been too much contented to give the bare statements of the missionaries, with their mistakes and inconsequences; not always citing even these with precision, and therefore differing somewhat from each other. The present digest is by no means a mere translation.

For the sake of a uniform orthography in European letters, the Chinese names and terms here cited are regulated by Dr. Morrison's Dictionary, and his "View of China for Philological Purposes," the vowels having their

English sound. The difference of spelling the same words in the various books referred to, is often sufficiently amusing.

We are indebted for our present knowledge of the Chinese Jews to the Jesuit missionaries in that country. Let us hope to receive new information concerning them from future missionaries, who shall preach only according to the written word of God, who shall be free from the least taint of idolatry; men animated with zeal for the salvation of mankind, and at the same time rendering obedience to ecclesiastical discipline.

The new position of England, arising from the Treaty of Nan-king, 29th August, 1842, ought to encourage many such men to proclaim Christianity in that Empire. Facilities of various kinds for such a work are now before us. The Jews there will be unimpeachable witnesses to the truth of the Old Testament,—the New Testament and our scriptural Liturgy are already rendered into Chinese by English predecessors in the field,—and we may rest assured that the Divine blessing will not be wanting to sanction every effort made in promoting the spiritual good of China.

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2. Imperio de la China, i cultura evangelica en él. Por el P. Alvaro Semmedo. Madrid, 1642, p. 196.

3. Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, Recueil vii. Paris, 1707. Lettre 1ra.

4. Duhalde, Description de la Chine. Fol., Paris, 1735, tom. iii. p. 64.

5. Deguignes, Histoire générale des Huns, &c. Paris, 1756, p. 26.

6. Brotier, Tacitus, Paris, 1771, tom. iii. p. 567. The dissertation on this subject is omitted in the later editions.

7. Kennicott, Dissertatio generalis in Biblia Hebraica. Fol., Oxon., 1776, p. 65.

8. Michaelis, Orientalische Bibliothek. Th. v. p. 70; Th. ix. p. 40; Th. xv. p. 15.

9. Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, Recueil xxxi.

10. Eichhorn, Einleitung in das alte Testament. Leipzig, 1781. Th. ii. p. 131.

11. Murr (Chr. Theoph. de) Diarii litterarii. Halm, 1797. Th. ix. p. 81.

12. Murr (Chr. Gottlieb von) *Neues Journal zur litteratur und kunstgeschichte*. Leipzig, 1798. Th. i. p. 147.

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14. Kæglerii (P. Ignatii.) *Notitiæ S.S. Bibliorum Judæorum in Imperio Sinensi*. Halæ, 1805. This is a reprint from the "*Neues Journal*," &c., of Murr., Th. vii., and accompanied by the treatises, 1. De Sacy de ærâ Judæorum Sinensium. 2. Chr. Theoph. de Murr., "*Series chronologica rerum Judaicarum in imperio Sinensi.*" 3. Cibot, reprinted from the above-mentioned "*Memoires concernant*," &c.

15. *Traité de la Chronologie Chinoise* par le P. Gaubil, et publié par De Sacy. Paris, 1814, p. 264.

16. *Jewish Expositor*. London, 1816, pp. 101, 135, 414.

17. Grosier, *Description de la Chine*. Paris, 1819, tom. iv. p. 484.

18. *Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible*. London, 1823. Vol. iv., p. 251.

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THE JEWS IN CHINA.

CHAPTER I

DISCOVERY AND INTERCOURSE.

THE Jesuit missionaries were but a short time settled in Pe-king, when one summer's day, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a visitor called upon Father Matthew Ricci, induced to do so by an account then recently published in the metropolis, of the foreigners who worshipped a single Lord of heaven and earth, and yet were not Mohammedans. Entering the house with a smile, he announced himself as one of the same religion with its inmates. The missionary remarking how much his features and figure differed from those prevailing among the Chinese, led him to the chapel. It was St. John Baptist's-day, and over the altar was a painting of the Virgin Mary with the

Infant Jesus, and the future Baptist on his knees before them. The stranger bowed to the picture as Ricci did, but explained at the same time, that he was not accustomed to do so before any such representations; only he could not refrain from paying the usual homage of the country to his great ancestors. Beside the altar were pictures of the four evangelists. He inquired if these were not of the twelve? Ricci answered in the affirmative, supposing him to mean the twelve apostles. Then, returning to the first apartment, he proposed questions in turn, and an unexpected explanation ensued. The stranger was a descendant of Israel, and during his survey of the chapel, had imagined the large picture to represent Rebekah with Jacob and Esau, and the other persons to denote four of the sons of Jacob.

It was some time before this simple explanation could be elicited, on account of the misunderstanding on both sides, which impeded the use of direct interrogation. The visitor, however, knew nothing of the appellation, Jew: he styled himself an Israelite, by name Ngai, a native of Kae-fung-foo, the capital of the province, Ho-nan, where, having prepared himself by study for a Mandarin degree, he had now