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The Forgotten “Dialogue between Judaism and Confucianism” : A Study on the Interpretation of Couplets in Kaifeng Synagogue

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Abstract: This article revolves around couplets hanging in the Jewish synagogue in Kaifeng during the Qing Dynasty, interpreting, comparing, and analyzing the content of the couplets. It examines Kaifeng Jews' flexible use of traditional Chinese culture such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and their attempts to interpret the teachings, classics, and history of Judaism. For example, borrowing the Taoist concept of “having or not having thoughts” to explain the concept of the sole deity in Judaism, quoting lines from the *Book of Songs* that contain the meaning of respecting the heavens and ancestors to interpret the commandment of worshipping God in Judaism, and using the Confucian concept of “birth and death” to interpret and understand the commandment of “not to kill” in the Ten Commandments of Moses. The “dialogue between Confucianism and Taoism” presented by the couplets provides a novel case for the existing research on Chinese religious dialogues such as “dialogue between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism”, “dialogue between Islam and Confucianism”, and “dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism”.

Key Words: Kaifeng Jews, Sinicization of Religion, Religious Dialogue, Couplets