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SHANGHAILANDERS: THE FORMATION AND IDENTITY OF THE BRITISH SETTLER COMMUNITY IN SHANGHAI 1843–1937*

British settlers in China were a sore problem for the British state as it attempted to re-negotiate its informal presence in that country in the face of the Nationalist Revolution of 1923–8. The most problematic group resided in Shanghai and called themselves Shanghailanders. These were the small treaty port people, whose fortunes were inextricably tied up with the existence of the British concessions and extraterritorial privileges in China. They worked in treaty port service occupations (administrative, service sector, police), or worked for, or ran, utility companies, land investment and real estate firms. Regardless of their social class or economic clout, their livelihoods were largely non-transferable, unlike the expatriate British businessmen who worked for the largest China companies (Jardine Mathesons, Butterfield and Swire), or for the multinationals (British American Tobacco, Imperial Chemicals Industries, Asiatic Petroleum Corporation), and whose interests and activities form the subject of most accounts of Sino-British relations.¹ Shanghai was all the Shanghailanders had.

* This article was presented at the 1994 Joint East Asian Studies Conference, Leeds, on 'Nationality and Nationalism in East Asia', and at a Berkeley Center for Chinese Studies Colloquium in 1995. I would like to thank all those who commented on it then, and on later versions, in particular Heather Bell, Christian Henriot, Meira Levinson and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom. I would especially like to thank Christian Henriot and Sebastien Cacquard for producing the maps.

¹ E. W. Edwards, *British Diplomacy and Finance in China, 1895–1914* (Oxford, 1987); S. L. Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy, 1933–37* (Manchester, 1975); E. S. K. Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924–1931* (Hong Kong, 1991); Jürgen Osterhammel, 'British Business in China, 1860s–1950s', in R. T. P. Davenport-Hines and Geoffrey Jones (eds.), *British Business in Asia since 1860* (Cambridge, 1989); Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Imperialism in Transition: British Business and the Chinese Authorities, 1931–37', *China Quart.*, no. 98 (1984); Nelson A. Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office* (New York, 1948); Y. N. Thomas, 'The Foreign Office and the Business Lobby: British Official and Commercial Attitudes to Treaty Revision in China, 1925–30' (London School of Economics Ph.D. thesis, 1981); L. K. Young, *British Policy in China, 1895–1902* (Oxford, 1970). This is partly a matter of habit, as it forms the established discourse, but it is also a matter of inclination: see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 2 vols. (London, 1993).

They defended their position with bluster and with violence. In May 1925 they almost caused the complete collapse of the British position in China with their belligerent approval of the Shanghailanders-run Shanghai Municipal Police after it mis-handled a Chinese student demonstration, fired on the crowd and killed eleven Chinese. The May 30th Movement which grew out of this incident, a nation-wide anti-imperialist campaign, was a defining moment in the development of modern Chinese nationalism, and also in the growth of the Chinese Communist Party.² Through their belligerent conservatism, but mostly through the intractable fact of their very presence, Shanghailanders set back British responses to the development of the nationalist movement and its political victories by at least one decade, and arguably by two. It was only in January 1943 that a Sino-British friendship treaty was signed, in which the props of informal empire dating back to the end of the first Opium War in 1842 — extraterritoriality, concessions, settlements — were finally abandoned. But by then Britain had been militarily defeated by Japan in East and South-East Asia, and diplomatically vanquished in China by the United States.

Although prominent in Chinese historiography,³ the history of the British communities on the China coast, and especially that which developed in the city of Shanghai between 1842 and 1949, has largely been ignored by historians of the British empire and the British diaspora. The settler communities in China have been difficult to define and their particularities and problems have been lost in wider accounts of the progress of Sino-British relations, which have examined the processes of diplomatic innovation and adaptation that became necessary in the face of the successive triumphs of the nationalist *Guomindang* in 1926–7, Japanese militarism in Manchuria in 1931 and in China proper after 1937, and

² R. W. Rigby, *The May 30 Movement: Events and Themes* (Canberra, 1980); Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924–1925* (Cambridge, 1995), 241–62.

³ Ren Wuxiong and Xu Yulin, *Lieqiang zai Zhongguo de zujie* [The Concessions the Powers Established in China] (Beijing, 1992); Fei Chengkang, *Zhongguo Zujie shi* [History of the Concessions in China] (Shanghai, 1991). Two important recent comprehensive histories of Shanghai have both integrated the history of the foreign presence and its impact into their narratives: Tang Zhenchang *et al.* (eds.), *Shanghai shi* [History of Shanghai] (Shanghai, 1989); Zhang Zhongli *et al.* (eds.), *Jindai Shanghai chengshi yanjiu* [Modern Shanghai Urban Research] (Shanghai, 1990). See also the journal *Shanghai yanjiu luncong* [Papers on Shanghai Studies].

finally the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.⁴ Metropolitan-based interest group politics have dominated most works on this painful diplomatic process; Shanghailanders get short shrift. Aspects of Shanghai's history have dominated much recent Western research on republican-era Chinese history, but the foreign presence is still underexamined.⁵ Rhoads Murphey's inclusion of the treaty ports in what he wildly identified as Britain's 'grand colonial design' for China has been one exception to this pattern. But, in fact, much of what came to characterize the establishment of those that he labelled the 'outsiders' evolved haphazardly in the interstices of a British China policy that was hardly grand, was certainly not colonial, and was arguably not at all designed.⁶ It is important, then, that historians of empire, of China, and of Sino-British relations, properly understand the nature of this problematic British presence in the city. As William C. Kirby has recently noted, 'Nothing mattered more' in republican China than issues of foreign relations — 'at home and abroad'.⁷ We need to understand the varieties of the foreign

⁴ For example: Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921–1931* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); William Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919–1939* (Oxford, 1971); Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League, and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933* (London, 1972); B. A. Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline* (Stanford, 1973); Nicholas R. Clifford, *Retreat from China: British Policy in the Far East, 1937–1941* (London, 1967); Chung-p'ing Fung, *The British Government's China Policy, 1945–1950* (Keele, 1994); J. T.-H. Tang, *Britain's Encounter with Revolutionary China, 1949–1954* (New York, 1992); David Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited: Political and Economic Relations between Britain and China, 1950–54* (Basingstoke, 1997).

⁵ For an introductory bibliography to this research, see Christian Henriot, 'Cities and Urban Society in China in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Review Essay in Western Literature', *Jindai Zhongguo shi yanjiu tongxun* [Newsletter for Modern Chinese History], no. 21 (1996). The exceptions include Jerome Ch'en's survey, *China and the West: Society and Culture, 1815–1937* (London, 1979), and such recent works as Nicholas Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Middlebury, Vt, 1991); James Huskey, 'Americans in Shanghai: Community Formation and Response to Revolution, 1919–1928' (Univ. North Carolina Ph.D. thesis, 1985); Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074–1858* (Stanford, 1995); Kathryn Brennan Meyer, 'Splitting Apart: The Shanghai Treaty Port in Transition, 1914–1921' (Temple Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1985); Rudolf G. Wagner, 'The Role of the Foreign Community in the Chinese Public Sphere', *China Quart.*, no. 142 (1995).

⁶ Rhoads Murphey, *The Outsiders: The Western Experience in India and China* (Ann Arbor, 1977), 12–35.

⁷ William C. Kirby, 'The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era', *China Quart.*, no. 150 (1997).

presences in China if we are to understand the intractability of the problems they presented; and, in the case of Shanghai, we can only understand their politics if we accept that Shanghailanders actually formed the settler society that they 'imagined' for themselves.

As this article shows, the British community in Shanghai actually provides a clear model of what a settler community looks like and how it develops. The nature of its multilayered identities and their interaction are also clearly identifiable. Shanghaier identity was always British and imperial, but Shanghailanders' local 'imagined' identity, so easily and readily dismissed by contemporaries and by historians, was of crucial importance to them, and to the Sino-British imbroglio. At different times their British, imperial or local identity was more prominent than the others, but all three were ever-present. Historiographically, the recent profusion of studies on the culture of colonialism and the society of the settler has greatly enriched our understanding of the processes of colonial expansion, consolidation, retrenchment and, in particular, the resistance of settler or, at the very least, settled, interests to decolonization. Missionaries have long been known to have had a different agenda and to have clashed with colonial thinking; but now beginning to be strongly delineated are the conflicts and competitions between and among other groups in colonial societies.⁸ C. A. Bayly's call to put Britain, and British social and intellectual history, back into studies of South Asia identifies some of the further insights, firmly rooted in British studies, to be gained from an examination of the colonizer. Domestic class, nationality and gender tensions were exported with settlers, administrators and missionaries; and these tensions found new modes of expression, especially as they interacted with issues of race, as they underpinned the improvised communities

⁸ See, for example, John G. Butcher, *The British in Malaya, 1880–1941: The Social History of a European Community in Colonial South-East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979); Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Basingstoke, 1987); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997); Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1939* (Durham, NC, 1987); Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley, 1996); P. J. Marshall, 'British Society in India under the East India Company', *Mod. Asian Studies*, xxxi (1997); Ann Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities in Sumatra and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and Hist.*, xxxi (1989).

of empire.⁹ This was particularly true in the outposts of Britain's informal empire in China.

This article first outlines the structure of the Shanghai polity from 1843 onwards. It then describes the evolution of the specific Shanghailanders community, its identity and ambitions, and analyses the key areas in which Shanghailanders articulated and maintained this identity (through social, sexual and racial taboos, for example, and through demonstrations of communal purpose and military power). The intractable and concrete nature of the Shanghaider identity is then examined during the period when the mature character and form of the community provided most problems for the British state: the period of its slow dissolution between 1925 and 1943. In so doing, it demonstrates how different, indeed competing, interests operated in Shanghai under the Union Jack; most importantly, it outlines the economic, social and political gulf between the expatriate trader and the settler, and then after 1925, between the diplomat and the settler.

I

THE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT AND THE SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The 1842 Treaty of Nanjing opened up five Chinese ports to foreign trade and residence, and extraterritorial provisions ensured that these new British residents in China were subject only to British consular jurisdiction. Over the succeeding decades, the British acquired a complicated network of concessions, settlements and military bases cemented by extraterritorial and inland navigation rights, a gunboat fleet and the Royal Navy's China Station; an informal imperium, in fact, symbolized most blatantly by *de facto* British control of the Chinese Maritime Customs.¹⁰ At Shanghai, the English, later the International, Settlement was established in 1843.¹¹ The new foreign residents were allowed to

⁹ C. A. Bayly, 'Returning the British to South Asian History: The Limits of Colonial Hegemony', *South Asia*, xvii (1994).

¹⁰ The best guide remains Albert Feuerwerker's *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, xxix, Ann Arbor, 1976).

¹¹ A French Concession was also established in 1849; a still smaller American Concession was delineated in 1854 and amalgamated with the British settlement to form the International Settlement in 1863. See Ch. B.-Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la concession française de Changhai* (Paris, 1929); Huskey, 'Americans in Shanghai', *passim*. The best narrative of the first decade remains John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Stanford, 1969).

rent land in a strip alongside the Huangpu river outside the Chinese walled city of Shanghai. Regulations governing land use in this settlement were first drawn up by the Chinese authorities, and later versions (1854, 1869, 1898) provided the basis on which the mainly British Land Renters elected a committee to maintain order and construct roads and jetties; in 1854, this became the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC). Also in 1854, these Land Renters established a Shanghai Municipal Police Force (SMP) and, in response to the seizure of the Chinese city of Shanghai by rebels in 1853, a Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC).¹² The Shanghai settlement was no city colony like Hong Kong, nor was it arguably unimportant in the life of its host city, as other smaller concessions were. Conclusions about the real economic impact on China of the treaty port system are still the subject of argument, but clearly the modern city of Shanghai grew up around, and because of, the foreign self-administered enclaves at its centre (Map 1).¹³

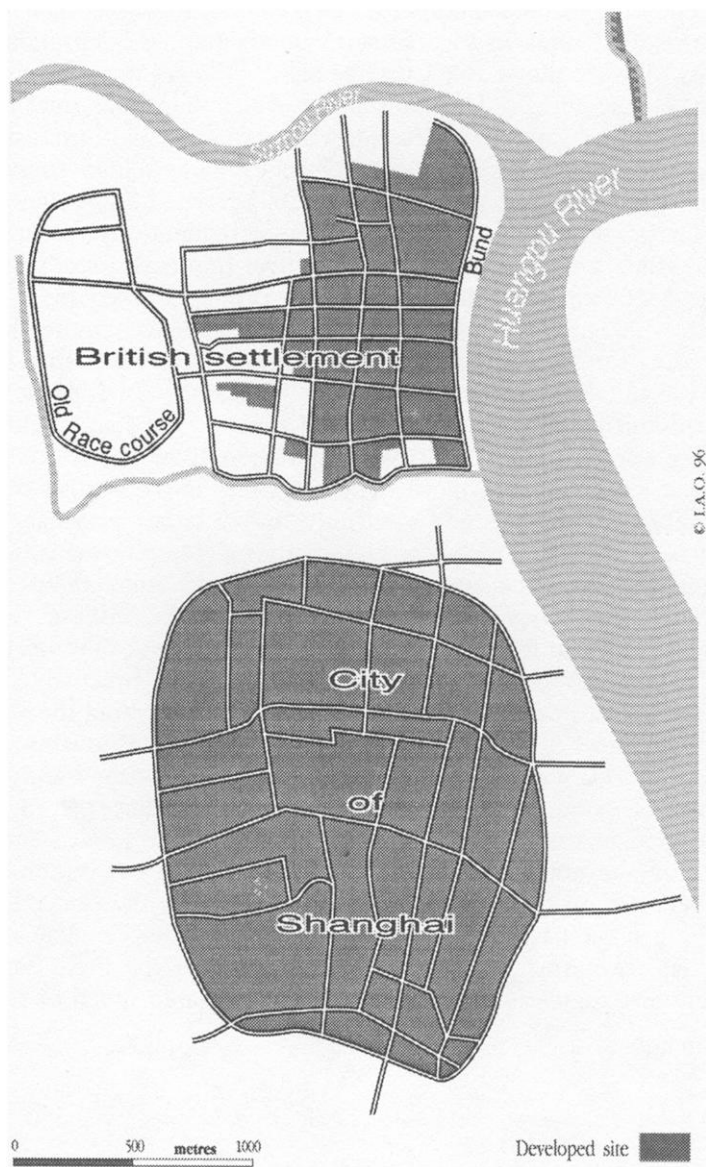
Shanghai became China's biggest, most industrialized and modernized city. The cauldron of Chinese cultural, intellectual, industrial and political innovation before the establishment of the communist regime in 1949, it was the most important focus of trade for Britain.¹⁴ It served as an entrepôt, and as the headquarters for most British China interests. Shanghailanders formed the largest single British community in China and had political and military control of the heart of the city until the late 1930s. Despite being largely ignored by posterity, they had developed a complex and distinctive identity by the 1920s and actively attempted to follow policies of their own and influence the policies of the British and other foreign governments. There never was a grand 'Yangtze Protectorate' based on the city, which some agitated for in the late 1890s, but Shanghai thrived and was

¹² *North China Herald*, 2 July 1854, 203; 2 Sept. 1854, 18; 11 Nov. 1854, 58–9.

¹³ For recent assessments, see Thomas G. Rawski, *Economic Growth in Prewar China* (Berkeley, 1989); Albert Feuerwerker, *The Chinese Economy, 1870–1949* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 172–83; Murphey, *Outsiders*. For the interrelationships between British Hong Kong and Shanghai, see my 'The Colony's Shifting Position in the British Informal Empire in China', in Judith M. Brown and Rosemary Foot (eds.), *Hong Kong's Transitions, 1842–1997* (Basingstoke, 1997).

¹⁴ In 1931 Shanghai accounted for some 75 per cent of total British direct investment in China; five years later some 60 per cent of British trade was going through the city: F. C. Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin with Special Reference to Foreign Interests* (London, 1940), 77–9, 83.

MAP 1
SHANGHAI AND THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT IN 1855



soundly protected.¹⁵ British naval and military reinforcements were sent at times of acute crisis, but on the whole the International Settlement was left to defend itself, unless this was patently impossible, and to order its own affairs. As the Chairman of the SMC remarked at the settlement's Jubilee celebration in 1893, 'We are allowed a pretty free hand'.¹⁶ There was no equivalent of the viceregal establishment which kept the unofficial British in India in their place, nor was there a colonial administration to lord it over the men of business. The China consular service were small fry; Shanghailanders governed themselves.

The government of the International Settlement was a complicated affair, an accretion of precedent over thin legal foundations. The SMC was annually elected on a property-based franchise that excluded most Britons from voting, and even more from standing for election, while others held multiple votes depending on the number of properties they represented.¹⁷ In 1854, when the Council was formed, there were some 30–40 Land Renters out of a foreign (mostly British) population of about 250.¹⁸ Only in the late 1930s did more than one-sixth of the British community get the vote, and then only to assist the gerrymandering necessary to hamper Japanese activism. Despite the limited franchise, Shanghailanders much preferred this restrictive arrangement. They did not need to vote for the SMC or serve on it to feel that it was their body: as will be shown, they worked for it and paid for it, and they lobbied for policy implementation in the press. They also voted with their feet, by joining the SVC, the volunteer fire brigade, or the Police Specials during the First World War. These were communal institutions and the sense of community transcended the restrictions placed on Shanghailanders' representative involvement. The Land Renters (and ratepayers) met once a year in full session to vote on the budget and on substantive issues put forward by the Council, or by other ratepayers. The nine members of the Council (five British, two American, and two Japanese after the First World War) met regularly in full session, but delegated much of their

¹⁵ Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office*; Young, *British Policy in China, 1895–1902*.

¹⁶ Shanghai Municipal Council (hereafter SMC), *Ann. Rept, 1893*, 262.

¹⁷ *Report of the Hon. Mr Justice Feetham, CMG, to the Shanghai Municipal Council*, 3 vols. (Shanghai, 1931), i, 80.

¹⁸ Zou Yiren, *Jiu Shanghai renkou bianqian de yanjiu* [Research on Population Change in Old Shanghai] (Shanghai, 1980), 141.

work to committees of elected councillors and co-optees. All of these men were usually drawn from the ranks of the managers of the bigger expatriate and Shanghailanders companies. The very first Council appointed a Secretary to oversee the embryonic administration. By 1922, some 600, mostly British employees, were employed in the Secretariat, and in the Revenue, Public Health, Public Works and Police departments, supervising a far larger number of Chinese. The SMC had become by far the biggest employer of British personnel in the settlement.¹⁹

Individual Britons in Shanghai were subject, like all Britons in China, to the jurisdiction of their consuls. The SMC, however, was constitutionally responsible only to its electorate, and not to any direct consular or diplomatic authority (unlike its French neighbour). Shanghailanders were fond of reminding themselves, and the world, of this fact. Exactly who the SMC was answerable to always remained unclear. The British Minister in Peking could not formally order the Council, as a body, to do anything, although the Land Regulations themselves were subject to diplomatic agreement and the SMC was subject, as a body, to claims made against it in a Court of the Consuls, convened when necessary, of those foreign powers with interests in the settlement.²⁰

Unshackled then by formal consular or diplomatic control, the SMC consistently arrogated to itself greater and greater degrees of autonomy as it grew in size and influence over the century of the settlement's formal existence. It acquired a sizeable Chinese population during and after the calamitous Taiping rebellion which devastated the provinces of the Yangzi valley, and it was soon representing the interests of, as it was termed in 1872, the 'real estate oligarchy': those Britons who made their fortunes, or even just a comfortable living, out of land and property deals as a result of this influx.²¹ The Chinese, who formed the majority of the settlement's population throughout its history, were denied representation on the Council until 1928, when three new seats

¹⁹ *Directory and Chronicle of China and Japan . . . 1922* (Hong Kong, 1922), 808–11.

²⁰ F. L. Hawks Pott, *A Short History of Shanghai: Being an Account of the Growth and Development of the International Settlement* (Shanghai, 1928), 68.

²¹ *Shanghae* (sic) *Evening Courier*, 23 Aug. 1872, 789. On the real estate market, see, for example, Jeffrey W. Cody, "'Nous vous vendrons le terrain, nous construirons vos habitations': l'immobilier résidentiel à Shanghai de 1911 à 1937", in Christian Henriot (ed.), *Les Métropoles chinoises au XX^e siècle* (Paris, 1995).

were allotted them.²² The Chinese-ness of the foreign settlement, which often surprised Europeans arriving there for the first time, must always be borne in mind. Shanghailanders constructed their community in the midst of China's most populous metropolis.

The 'Shanghaileader' identity was a British affair. Other national communities in Shanghai mostly remained communities of expatriate foreign nationals,²³ but the British became Shanghailanders. And Britons dominated the patterns of political and social life in the nominally International Settlement. The institutions established in Shanghai more closely resembled those in British towns such as Oldham or Birmingham than the 'synarchy' with Chinese institutions which John K. Fairbank claimed to have identified, or the political institutions found in other countries represented in the International Settlement.²⁴ Under the Shanghai Municipal Council's motto, *Omnia Juncta in Uno* (everyone together as one), overt British dominance was cloaked by rhetorical cosmopolitanism. This rhetoric was important because it provided the basis on which British settlers differentiated between their Shanghaileader and their British identities; it also lent some credence to their periodic demands for a city-state. Such cosmopolitanism was, however, always limited in its scope; the Chinese, Japanese and White Russians were excluded. It was certainly the case, as has been observed, that foreign and Chinese families lived side by side, both in the French Concession and in the International Settlement, but actual, physical proximity meant very little.²⁵ This cosmopolitanism, in practice, meant that Europeans of different, competing, even warring, states, and Americans, lived side by side, and nominally ran the International Settlement jointly; but in truth there was little interaction at

²² This rose to five in 1930: Robert Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese, 1928–1931' (School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1992), 154–5.

²³ This is the essential theme of Huskey, 'Americans in Shanghai'.

²⁴ John K. Fairbank, 'Synarchy under the Treaties', in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago, 1957); Lucian Pye, 'How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied', *Australian J'l Chinese Affairs*, xxix (Jan. 1993), 114. Fairbank also erred in incorporating Chinese into his definition of Shanghailanders: Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 464, 466. See Robert Bickers and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Shanghai's "Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted" Sign: History, Legend and Contemporary Symbol', *China Quart.*, no. 142 (1995), 466.

²⁵ Pye, 'How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied', 114.

other than an élite level even between the different foreign communities.²⁶

Politically, Shanghailanders were mostly directly excluded from local politics and local decision-making. To believe that the SMC and Shanghailanders were synonymous is to misperceive the tensions and conflicts within the British community, and within the Shanghaileander community. The Council held its meetings in private and did not favour publicity. Even a proposal to distribute a questionnaire soliciting the opinions of ratepayers on orchestral policy was rejected in 1934 as it might 'establish an undesirable precedent in respect to other municipal activities and it may be assumed that the section of the public which has advocated the disbandment of the orchestra would take advantage of the opportunity to renew its demands'.²⁷ Before 1924, contested elections were the exception rather than the rule. As part of the slow reassertion of diplomatic control after 1925, a bid was made to avoid contests by striking a balance between local élite and expatriate interests. That way ordinary Shanghaileander voices could be kept out. The SMC was rightly seen, then, by ratepaying and nonratepaying residents alike, as a secretive, self-perpetuating oligarchy composed equally of the managers of the expatriate trading companies, who bowed willingly to diplomatic pressure, and the representatives of some of the big property-owning interests, who were less amenable to such influence. The subcommittees which oversaw most of the Council's affairs were packed with like-minded co-optees.

For most of its history, however, the Council represented the settlers and their ambitions because securing Shanghai for expatriate trade meant, *ipso facto*, securing the International Settlement for the Shanghailanders. The SMC usually managed to balance the interests of these groups. On the whole, the Council's expansionist policies and steady accumulation of powers inside the settlement suited the unenfranchised and the ratepayers very well. Occasionally, the Council accurately articulated the anger and feelings of Shanghailanders — after the May 30th Incident, for example — but they could not rely on it to do so, nor could they predictably influence it. After 1928, in particular, the divorce

²⁶ Even élite intercourse was much dented by the First World War: Meyer, 'Splitting Apart', *passim*.

²⁷ Shanghai Municipal Archives, Shanghai (hereafter SMA), U 1-1-130, SMC Orchestra and Band Committee Minutes, 23 July 1934.

between the Council and Shanghailanders, and often between the Council and the ratepayers, grew more manifest. The Council's drive for reform on such issues as the Parks (from which Chinese had been barred since at least the 1880s) and the admission of Chinese members to the Council was too quick even for most ratepayers. Many saw such reforms as craven surrender of all that they had built up. The SMC was reduced to haranguing its voters at annual meetings and, on one memorable occasion, when the ratepayers had misvoted on an important issue, it convened a special emergency meeting to 'correct' their decision.²⁸ Business interest groups such as the China Association and the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce also failed to represent the Shanghailanders: they took their cues from London. John Swire and Sons' director, Warren Swire, summed up the relationship accurately in 1933 with characteristic bluntness: 'There is a difference in opinion between people like ourselves and the small treaty port people and . . . we are not going to sacrifice what we consider to be bigger national interests to their desire to go backwards'.²⁹

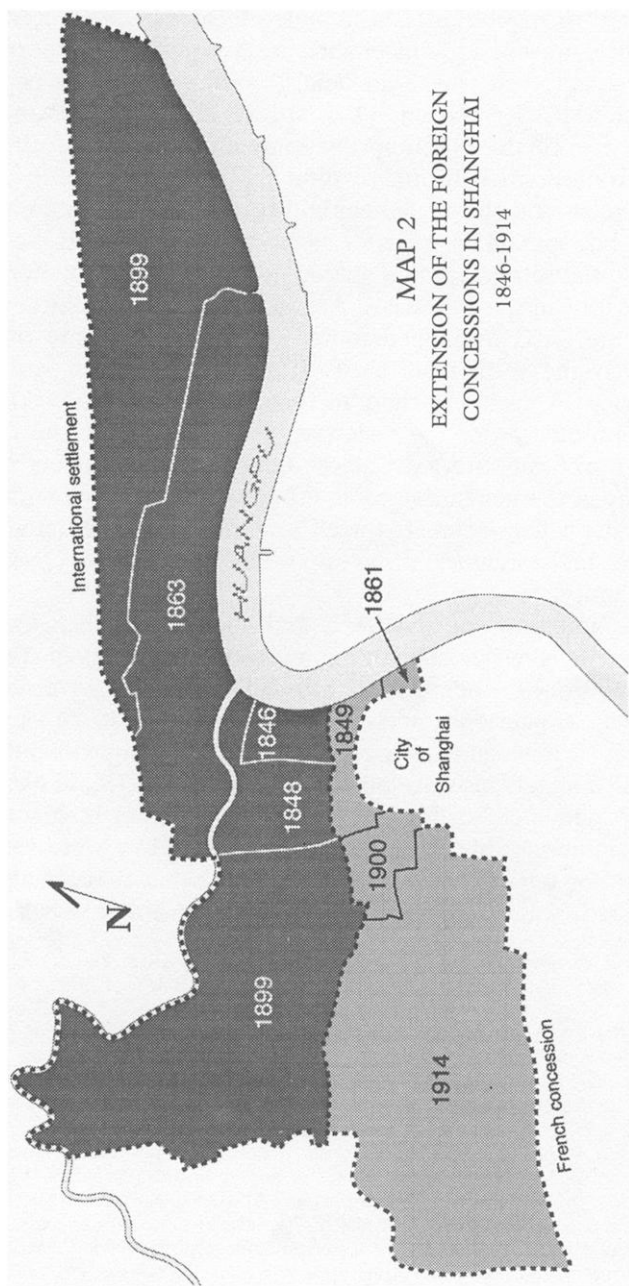
The small treaty port people had never had any intention of going backwards; in fact, they desired to go forward by making their identity more tangible and permanent. As early as 1862 there were demands for the creation of a self-governing city-state and, in various forms, this proposal was made again and again until the 1930s.³⁰ The SMC used its free hand over the century after 1843 to expand the boundaries of their settlement deep into Chinese administered territory, notably in the 1860s and in 1899 (Map 2).³¹ Thereafter, as further appeals for extension were denied in 1909, it kept on probing and pushing, constructing roads outside the settlement when the psychological moment was right, or when the local Chinese authorities were preoccupied

²⁸ The issue was increased Chinese representation on the Council: Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office (hereafter PRO, FO) 228/4283/27 69B, letters from the Shanghai Consulate-General (hereafter cited by number), Shanghai no. 103, 22 Apr. 1930.

²⁹ G. W. Swire to John C. Scott, London, 27 Jan. 1933: School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London (hereafter SOAS), Swire Papers, JSS I, 3/8.

³⁰ See, for example, *North China Herald*, 7 Aug. 1862, 122–3, and the debate which rumbled on for the best part of a year thereafter. The Foreign Office took little notice, following the lead of the local consul: PRO, FO 228/329, Shanghai no. 173, 25 Sept. 1862.

³¹ Pott, *Short History of Shanghai*, 137–42; SMC, *Ann. Rept.*, 1908, 226–35; SMC, *Ann. Rept.*, 1909, 264–71. See also the *Memorandum on Settlement Extension* (Shanghai, 1912), in Hong Kong University Library.



with war or revolution, and in a piecemeal fashion secured rights to police, tax and administer such areas. Sometimes opportunities were squandered; there are angry comments in the papers of former SMC Secretary J. O. P. Bland about the failure of the Council to retain its temporary control of the northern Chinese suburb of Zhabei during revolutionary disturbances in 1913.³² Plans to extend the settlement still further were abandoned after 1925, but some 45.5 miles of roads built by the SMC remained outside the settlement and subject to festering jurisdictional dispute with Chinese regimes.³³ Accompanying geographical expansion, the SMC developed more and more autonomy over the years in the settlement itself. It excluded Chinese authority, reserving to itself the right to arrest Chinese in the settlement upon production of the necessary warrants, to tax the Chinese and to prohibit external Chinese tax collectors. Furthermore, it developed the machinery of an efficient, modern municipal government, which insinuated itself into all areas of settlement life, Chinese and foreign, despite opposition from both sectors of the community.³⁴

The ambitions of the SMC and its leading Shanghailanders for even greater autonomy were underpinned, then, by the continued independent-mindedness that governed the Council's expansionist actions. These ambitions strike us now as absurd: an independent, foreign-controlled Shanghai would have been in a hugely insecure position; physically, it would have been a tiny, and indefensible, toe-hold on the Asian mainland. But such ambitions should be taken seriously. They were sustained by the not unreasonable Shanghailese belief that Shanghai, as it existed, was so valuable to China that Chinese governments

³² W. E. Leveson to J. O. P. Bland, Shanghai, 30 Aug. 1913: Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, MS. Collection 81, J. O. P. Bland Collection, box 13.

³³ Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, 31–3; Frederic Wakeman Jr, *Policing Shanghai, 1927–1937* (Berkeley, 1995), 60–77; also his *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937–1941* (Cambridge, 1996), *passim*.

³⁴ Contemporary sources on the growth of the activities of the Shanghai Municipal Council remain the most informative: apart from the pages of its *Annual Reports*, which also document its continual efforts to eject and repel Chinese jurisdictional efforts, see G. Lanning and S. Couling, *The History of Shanghai: Part 1* (Shanghai, 1921); *Report of the Hon. Mr Justice Feetham*; A. M. Kotenov, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council* (Shanghai, 1925); also his *Shanghai: Its Municipality and the Chinese* (Shanghai, 1927). The one modern historical monograph is Kerrie L. MacPherson, *A Wilderness of Marshes: The Origins of Public Health in Shanghai, 1843–1893* (Hong Kong, 1987).

would continue to acquiesce in the situation which had developed, and so valuable to British trade that the diplomats would continue to allow Shanghailanders free rein.³⁵

II

SHANGHAILANDERS

After 1843, a complex community of Britons developed in this legal grey area — less than formal colonialism but more than mere informal influence — assisted by what can only be termed the benign neglect of the British state. Identifiable groups with British passports or under British protection were excluded in varying degrees from this community: from its formal and informal gatherings; from its self-ascription; from its public discourse; and especially from its memoirs and commentaries. The Sephardic Jews, who came from Baghdad via Bombay and Hong Kong certainly saw themselves as British but, the odd millionaire apart, were not regarded as such on a social level.³⁶ For that part of the Eurasian community which had British protection, the same applied. There was also a large Indian community, mostly policemen or night-watchmen; they totalled 1,842 in 1930, but were counted as a separate group in the SMC's census.³⁷ Hong Kong Chinese, who were also British protégés, were excluded. This racially defined barrier was stronger in Shanghai than, for example, in Sumatra, and, as will be shown, was reinforced by social and sexual taboos.³⁸ Shanghailanders, moreover, were British in origin, not merely English. As in many settler societies there was a strong Scottish and Irish presence, expressed, for example, in the theatre of communal life (there was a kilted Scottish Company of the SVC and a busy St Andrew's Society); similarly, as in other settler communities, there is evidence of conflict among the British

³⁵ Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, 32.

³⁶ Maisie J. Meyer, 'The Sephardi Jewish Community of Shanghai, 1845–1939: The Question of Identity' (London School of Economics Ph.D. thesis, 1994). For details of British protégé Silas Aaron Hardoon's singularly close involvement in Shanghai and national Chinese affairs, see Chiara Betta, 'Silas Aaron Hardoon (1851–1931): Marginality and Adaptation in Shanghai' (School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1997).

³⁷ SMC, *Ann. Rept.*, 1935, 49. On the Indian community, see Claude Markovits, 'Indian Communities in China, c.1842–1949' (paper presented at the conference, 'Foreign Communities in East Asia', Lyons, 20–1 Mar. 1997).

³⁸ Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', 153.

TABLE 1
NUMBERS OF BRITISH RESIDENTS IN SHANGHAI*

	International Settlement	As % of total population of International Settlement	French Concession	Chinese Jurisdiction
1851	256	—	—	—
1871	894	1.16	—	—
1876	872	0.90	—	—
1880	1,057	0.96	—	—
1885	1,453	1.12	—	—
1890	1,574	0.92	—	—
1895	1,936	0.79	—	—
1900	2,691	0.76	—	—
1905	3,713	0.80	314	—
1910	4,465	0.89	681	—
1915	4,822	0.71	1,044	—
1920	5,341	0.68	2,312	—
1925	5,879	0.70	2,219	—
1930	6,221	0.62	2,630	891
1934	—	—	—	1,153
1935	6,595	0.57	—	—
1936	—	—	2,648	—

*Sources: *North China Herald*, 3 May 1851, 159; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Reports*, 1871–1935; H. G. W. Woodhead (ed.), *The China Year Book: 1931* (London, 1931), 694; Zou Yiren, *Jiu Shanghai renkou bianqian de yanjiu* [Research on Population Change in Old Shanghai] (Shanghai, 1980), 145–7.

national groups. There was, for instance, resentment at the Scottish presence in the SMP.³⁹

The growth of the community is indicated in Table 1. By 1935, at least 10,000 Britons lived in the various parts of the city, sharing the International Settlement along with some 20,000 Japanese, 3,000 White Russians (technically stateless refugees and often in the direst poverty),⁴⁰ 2,000 Americans, 1,000 Germans and 1,100,000 Chinese. Forming just over half of one per cent of the population of the International Settlement, the stridency of the Shanghailanders' articulation of their specific identity is not unexpected. Unless they made themselves heard, they would have been swamped. The Shanghaider identity was not exactly geographically coterminous with the International Settlement and

³⁹ R. M. Tinkler to Edith Tinkler, Shanghai, 10 Oct. 1923: Imperial War Museum, London (hereafter IWM), Department of Documents, Tinkler Papers.

⁴⁰ The only comprehensive survey of the community in any language is Wang Zhicheng, *Shanghai E'qiao shi* [History of the Russian Emigré Community in Shanghai] (Shanghai, 1993), but see the work in progress of Marcia R. Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort: The Russian Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* (forthcoming).

TABLE 2
SEX IMBALANCE IN THE SHANGHAILANDER COMMUNITY
(INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT) 1880–1935*

	Adult men	Adult women	Excess of men over women	% excess of 'single' men
1880	573	227	346	60.4
1885	751	321	430	57.3
1895	888	515	373	42.0
1900	1,182	721	461	39.0
1905	1,702	1,102	600	22.2
1910	2,069	1,302	767	37.0
1915	2,017	1,591	426	21.1
1920	2,398	1,768	630	26.3
1925	2,613	1,969	644	24.7
1930	2,794	2,123	671	24.0
1935	2,872	2,374	498	17.4

*Source: Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Reports*, 1871–1935; sex breakdowns of the numbers of Britons are unavailable for the years 1871, 1876 and 1890.

the Shanghai Municipal Council: Shanghai's business district grew to be located along the Bund in the International Settlement and the French Concession became a popular residential district for Shanghailanders. But the legally semi-autonomous International Settlement and its institutions remained the foundation of that identity.

By the early 1930s some families, such as the descendants of G. L. Skinner, had been in Shanghai for three generations. Skinner, who arrived in Shanghai around 1860 as a seaman, joined the SMP in 1866, summoned his betrothed from Somerset, and spawned descendants who remained in the city until 1949. Such continuities in the community's fabric grew stronger yearly. An impressionistic idea of the increase in the number of families can be gauged from ratios of men to women recorded by the censuses. If we assume, crudely, that all adult British women in the settlement were married (and, nurses and teachers apart, female employment — from which married women were conventionally barred — was the dramatic exception rather than the norm until the 1930s), and if we remain aware that a significant proportion of the men were forbidden from marrying during their first term's contract, then the decreasing percentage of excess men gives an indication of the shift towards more settled family life in the community in the twentieth century. This pattern was also typically the case in the European empires.⁴¹ Entries in surviving

⁴¹ Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', 148; Butcher, *British in Malaya*, 134–6.

Shanghai marriage registers also show that, whereas up to and around 1930, most men married women who had come out especially from Britain, in the 1930s many more married the daughters of local Shanghailanders families.⁴²

As in the Federated Malay States, the significant decrease in men living singly around the turn of the century probably arose from a variety of factors which made life for foreigners in Asia easier, more comfortable, and safer. Improvements in steamship transportation and other communications, including the telegraph; sanitation, disease prevention and medical treatment; the introduction of electricity, refrigeration, and so on; all made it easier and less risky for men to bring their wives out with them, to bring out women to marry, and to raise young children.⁴³ It became easier to reproduce British life in Shanghai. The 1900 Boxer Rising and its suppression, far from frightening off would-be migrants as might be expected, actually advertised to the world the opportunities for foreign employment offered in China, and the security of life there, devastatingly protected as it was by foreign armies.

III

SETTLERS

Shanghailanders were Britons, then, narrowly defined by race rather than passport; but not all Britons in Shanghai were Shanghailanders. First and foremost, the Shanghaileander was a settler, not a temporary sojourner in a foreign land. It was in these terms that Shanghailanders saw themselves, and were seen by their compatriots at the time.⁴⁴ They were usually loyal: first, to their local community; secondly, to the wider British presence in China. The primary identity was local, but British and imperialist identities persisted and came to the foreground in emergencies of the Shanghailanders' own devising (30 May 1925) or of those facing the British state. Hundreds returned to Britain to

⁴² Registers of various churches are in the Public Record Office, PRO, RG 33/12–32, and at Lambeth Palace Library, London, MSS 1564–73. Of course, these conclusions must be qualified by reference to the absence of the consular registers, which do not appear to have survived the turmoil of Chinese Cultural Revolution and its aftermath (1966–76).

⁴³ Butcher, *British in Malaya*, 134–5.

⁴⁴ G. Pelham, 'Memorandum Respecting the Changing Conditions for British Trade with China': PRO, FO 228/4297/2 67, Shanghai no. 41, 9 Jan. 1930.

join up in the First World War, for instance; among the dozens killed were thirty-seven members of the élite Shanghai Club alone.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Shanghailanders strutted their stage in costumes borrowed from the Raj, used its vocabulary, mimicked many of its rituals, and even decorated their parades and balls with Sikh policemen to 'add colour'.⁴⁶

Still, their situation was hardly the same as that of the non-official British in India;⁴⁷ it might be argued that comparisons could be made with the 28,000-strong British community in Argentina in 1914. The British there were certainly a powerful economic and cultural force, but theirs was textbook informal empire. The Shanghailanders, by contrast, had political and military control of their polity; they had military force, policing and legal structures, and an elected governing body. A distinctive Anglo-Argentine identity certainly developed (exhibited in language, accent, social habits, and so on), but it lacked the sharp focus of hegemonic political control. The autonomous claims of the Shanghaider were born directly out of the logic of their situation.⁴⁸ The British presence in China generally constituted informal empire, but Shanghai was another matter. Shanghailanders arguably had much more in common with what has been termed the 'colonial nationalism' of Australians, New Zealanders, Rhodesians, or other transplanted groups in the Edwardian British empire.⁴⁹ These settlers paid nominal allegiance to the empire and paraded their loyalty on ritual occasions, but the gulf between their ambitions and those of the empire for them grew wider year by year. This divergence occurred because those new societies grew confident with their own identities and

⁴⁵ *North China Herald*, 11 Feb. 1922, 378.

⁴⁶ H. D. Rodger to F. W. Gerrard, Commissioner of Police, Shanghai, 27 Nov. 1933; see also W. E. Sauer to F. W. Gerrard, Commissioner of Police, Shanghai, 25 May 1930; both in SMA, U 102-5-3/3.

⁴⁷ R. K. Renford, *The Non-Official British in India to 1920* (Oxford, 1987), 403; P. J. Marshall, 'The Whites of British-India, 1780-1830: A Failed Colonial Society', *Internat. Hist. Rev.*, xii (1990).

⁴⁸ On the Argentine case, see A. Thompson, 'Informal Empire — An Exploration in the History of Anglo-Argentine Relations, 1810-1914', *Jl Latin Amer. Studies*, xxiv (1992); but see also A. G. Hopkins, 'Informal Empire in Argentina: An Alternative View', *Jl Latin Amer. Studies*, xxvi (1994); for accounts of the community, see Alistair Hennessy and John King (eds.), *The Land that England Lost: Argentina and Britain, a Special Relationship* (London, 1992).

⁴⁹ See, for example, the essays collected in John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder (eds.), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa First Assert their Nationalities, 1880-1914* (Sydney, 1988).

histories — as Australians, for example, rather than as Britons in Australia.⁵⁰ As Shanghailanders they also had, like Australians, regional and local priorities and problems of their own which conflicted sharply with those of the British state and British trading interests in China, although like most of the Dominions in the interwar period they ultimately relied on Britain for their defence.⁵¹ Shanghailanders, as we have seen, had no real prospect of carving out an independent domain for themselves, but they thought they did, and often acted as if they had. The implications for British policy were tangible, so the belief needs to be taken seriously.

Approached from another angle, the settler comparison is strengthened through a contrast with the Japanese community in Shanghai.⁵² The Japanese, the most aggressive of Shanghai's foreign communities in the 1930s, and the Shanghailanders' most direct competitor, were not autonomous settlers, but metropolitan-rooted colonialists. This Japanese community was by far the largest and by far the most comparable with the British presence in terms of social diversity and colonist ambition. As with other Japanese communities in China, it acted within limits established in specific legislation enacted by the metropolitan government. Although some of the Japanese Residents' Associations thus chartered were given 'a large degree of autonomy',⁵³ they remained ultimately under the direction of their consulates. Japanese settlement in Shanghai only began in earnest after 1895, but there were some 26,500 residents by 1935. Part of the International Settlement's Northern District was known as Little Tokyo; foremen worked in the Japanese-owned mills, overseeing Chinese labour, while shopkeepers supplied provisions for the community. The close proximity of Japan encouraged the migration of larger numbers and broader social groups than was usual for European colonial societies in East and South-East Asia, but it also meant

⁵⁰ A good examination of such tensions in the Canadian case can be found in Carman Miller, 'The Unhappy Warriors: Conflict and Nationality among the Canadian Troops during the South African War', *Jl Imperial and Commonwealth Hist.*, xxiii (1995).

⁵¹ John Darwin, 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars', *Hist. Jl*, xxiii (1980), 665–6.

⁵² This analysis is based largely on Mark R. Peattie, 'Japanese Treaty Port Settlements in China, 1895–1937', in P. Duus, R. H. Myers and M. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937* (Princeton, 1989). A fuller account in English awaits the works in progress of Joshua Fogel and Christian Henriot.

⁵³ Peattie, 'Japanese Treaty Port Settlements in China', 189.

that far fewer ties were severed, if any. The community even had supplies of produce shipped in daily from Japan.

As a community the Japanese felt themselves to be particularly vulnerable to Chinese nationalist activism. They lived in much closer proximity to the Chinese than did the Westerners, and often worked at closer quarters. Donald Jordan has recently shown how this cocktail proved lethal in late 1931 and early 1932. Motivated by fears for their economic survival, and by popular ultra-nationalist groups in the community who co-operated closely with elements of the Japanese military, Japanese civilians played key roles in the escalation of the Shanghai crisis into armed conflict at the end of January 1932. But unlike the Shanghailanders, these elements did not act thus to protect or enhance their own autonomy as a settler community: they aimed instead to trip the Japanese government into full colonial occupation — as was already the case in Taiwan and Korea.⁵⁴ Shanghailanders did not want London or its agents asserting authority over them in such manner. They wanted to maintain their autonomy.

IV

ECONOMICS

Shanghailanders were united economically in their common dependence upon the existence of a foreign-controlled society in the Chinese treaty ports. This dependence informed their responses to all issues involving reform of the fundamental treaties and served to foster a strong common identity out of their common predicament. They saw themselves, and were seen by observers, as a coherent group, sharing a coherent identity.

The three generations of the Skinner family active in Shanghai provide a good example of the range of Shanghaileader occupations, which fell into three employment categories. First, Shanghailanders worked for the treaty port service industries and the SMC or the SMP. G. L. Skinner's daughter Evelyn, for example, worked for the SMC as a typist, while her brother-in-law's sister married the future Secretary of the British Council in

⁵⁴ The reports of the *North China Herald* are replete with accounts of Japanese civilian activities: *North China Herald*, 2 Feb. 1932, 146–55; Donald Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's 'Revolutionary Diplomacy', 1931–32* (Ann Arbor, 1991).

Hankou. Foreign missionaries and mission workers in the city would also fit into this category, although missionaries are on the whole excluded from this analysis: Skinner's son-in-law's sister married the German missionary and sinologist, Paul Kranz. Some in this category worked for the expatriate China companies as locally recruited staff, or in non-managerial positions — as seamen, for example, such as another Skinner son-in-law, W. E. Kent, who worked for Swire's China Navigation Company before becoming a Shanghai harbour pilot. The bulk of the people in the treaty port service trades were working class or lower middle class. The personnel files of demobbed soldier Maurice Tinkler and his companions who went out in 1919 to join the police force show them to have been farm hands, labourers, porters and soldiers. Two only seem to have come from middle-class backgrounds.⁵⁵

Secondly, Shanghailanders were property owners and land speculators, such as those who controlled the Shanghai Land Investment Company, or Algar and Co., founded by Skinner's son-in-law, Albert Algar, and managed from 1928 to 1949 by Skinner's grandson, Noel Kent, a third generation Shanghaider.⁵⁶ Skinner's son Charles worked in shipbuilding and rose to become a director of the New Engineering and Shipbuilding Company.⁵⁷ Thirdly, Shanghailanders were small businessmen and women: shopkeepers, dairy owners, boarding-house keepers, piano tuners. None of these jobs or opportunities — or possibilities of access to them — would have existed without the treaty port system. Although actual occupational statistics are hard to obtain, it can be fairly confidently stated that, following the definition presented above, by far the greater proportion of the British community in the city at any one time was composed of Shanghailanders.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Forty-five of these files were examined among the papers of the Shanghai Municipal Police in the SMA, U 1–9₃ series, Shanghai Municipal Police personnel files.

⁵⁶ In 1933 some 76 per cent of the land in the International Settlement was registered in British names (in value, some 84 per cent of the total worth of land in the settlement). In fact, British ownership was often merely (but profitably) nominal; actual ownership lay in the hands of Chinese, who were forbidden to own land under the Land Regulations, but did so through British agents. I owe these calculations to Christian Henriot's unpublished analysis of the SMC's cadastral register for 1933.

⁵⁷ Information on Tinkler comes from his papers in the Imperial War Museum, and on the Skinners from family-held sources.

⁵⁸ The SMC census did break down occupational statistics for foreigners generally, but not by nationality, which makes their use problematic.

Shanghaiander society was in origin a British society. Not surprisingly, social differentiation and stratification was exported, if modified slightly to take into account such factors as the size of the population, the disparity between males and females (which made lower class G. L. Skinner's three daughters more socially acceptable), and the presence of the Chinese. The community's reputation for ruthless snobbery was perpetuated as much by those on the receiving end as by detached outsiders. Among the expatriate and Shanghaiander élites, with no governing colonial administration to snub them, there was a degree of meritocracy, but there was also an observable and observed hierarchy. Policeman Maurice Tinkler's letters, for example, are replete with his bitterness at the rigidity of British class-consciousness, emphasized still further for him by his contrasting experiences with American society in Shanghai and, above all, by the fact that he felt he was being treated little better than the Chinese. Other accounts also make it clear that the British members of the police were often treated as the servants of the Shanghaiander élites.⁵⁹ The police, the fire brigade, the outdoor Customs workers, the inspectors in the Public Works Department, these men and their families formed the bottom rung of Shanghaiander society; they lived and socialized apart from the Shanghaiander élites, although the patterns of sociability and socialization were very similar. The subtle gradations of domestic society functioned in Shanghai: Shanghaianders themselves formed a coherent socio-economic group, but in turn evidenced the intricate layers and fractures of a society that was British in origin. Elite Shanghaianders had more in common with élite expatriates than with their fellow settlers, and this too was evidenced in patterns of sociability, and in club, society and of course Council membership.⁶⁰

V

THE OTHER: EXPATRIATES AND CHINESE

The Shanghaiander identity emerges still more strongly in the course of a contrasting delineation of the expatriate 'China hand'. The large trading companies extracted loyalty from their staffs

⁵⁹ R. M. Tinkler to Edith Tinkler, Shanghai, 11 Feb. 1921, 11 Mar. 1925: IWM, Tinkler Papers; personal interview with F. P., 8 Mar. 1996.

⁶⁰ Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', ch. 3.

using as incentives the chances of reasonably quick promotion and job security. These men were young, fresh from Britain, forbidden to marry for their first term's contract, and initially sent to the lonelier spots on the interior trading circuits; they therefore provided prime fodder for thorough socialization into the company spirit. They were moved around from post to post, which prevented geographical loyalty, were discouraged from overt political activity, and worked hard. These men believed in Swires or BAT. They considered themselves socially superior to the Shanghailanders of all classes, who were often described by expatriate businessmen and consuls as 'low whites' or 'lesser Europeans'.⁶¹ They attended different clubs and different Masonic lodges, and often lived in different parts of town. Expatriates were more likely to enjoy (and more able to afford) the night-life that Shanghai was supposedly famous for, than was the 1930 letter-writer who signed himself: 'Clerk and family: 25 years and no home leave'.⁶² Even in death there were distinctions: Jardine Matheson's, for instance, had their own war memorial and Armistice Day ceremony.⁶³ Sometimes expatriates might 'go native'; so too might British Consuls. Sir Sydney Barton, Consul General in Shanghai from 1922–9, was notoriously pro-settler, and was banished thereafter to Addis Ababa for his pains.⁶⁴

The strongest delineation made, of course, was between Shanghailanders and the Chinese. Shanghailanders defined their identity against a range of others — Britons at home, China hands, their neighbours the French, missionaries — but in the broadest possible sense the Shanghaileander position, like the British position in China generally, was underpinned by prevailing notions of 'Orientals', and Chinese, as 'racially' different, and 'racially' unequal. These ideas were widely believed and propagated, and there was a large literature on such topics which sold well and was widely respected. In print, bar talk, letters and books, Britons exchanged their experiences and prejudices about

⁶¹ A revealing slice of this life is caught in Christopher Cook, *The Lion and the Dragon: British Voices from the China Coast* (London, 1985), and in the transcripts of the oral history project Cook undertook for Swires, stored in the John Swire and Sons Company Archive, London.

⁶² *North China Daily News*, 26 Jan. 1930, 4.

⁶³ *North China Herald*, 17 Nov. 1928, 253. A fuller analysis of British society in the treaty ports can be found in Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', ch. 3, 78–122.

⁶⁴ P. D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843–1943* (Hong Kong, 1988), 477.

the Chinese 'mind', Chinese society, politics, culture and government. And when the Chinese were not different and inferior, they were different and exotic.⁶⁵ This discourse provided reassuring justification for Shanghailanders' very presence in China, and for the pattern of their interactions (or otherwise) with Chinese. Closer to home, contrasts were usually made between the administration of the International Settlement and the state of the Chinese municipality of Shanghai to provide further fuel for self-justification, and even for extending foreign control in the city.⁶⁶

But first-generation Shanghailanders were also ill-equipped to engage with the Chinese world they found themselves in, and China was not a destination chosen by the most talented of Britons who chose to move overseas.⁶⁷ Shanghailanders had gone abroad to work, not to discover new cultures and peoples. The apparatus of theory and prejudice that characterized their attitudes towards the Chinese certainly helped Shanghailanders to justify their brusque insularity, but life abroad was also such a fundamentally normal and routine part of the British experience, that it should hardly surprise us that Shanghailanders made little effort to adopt any other attitude other than isolation and derision; there were always exceptions, but they tend to prove the rule. The clear contradiction here lay in the fact that in all aspects of their lives and work Shanghailanders relied absolutely on Chinese labour, talent, know-how and understanding. As servants, workers, business partners, financial backers, middlemen or managers, Chinese were vital to the Shanghaileander world.⁶⁸ The tenuousness of the social position of the lowest Shanghailanders, men such as Maurice Tinkler, quite possibly underlies the virulent and violent racism often evidenced by them. But the fundamental contradiction at the heart of Shanghaileander identity, the absolute necessity of the Chinese, dictated the constructs of China, and the Chinese, with which all Shanghailanders worked.

⁶⁵ Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', ch. 2, *passim*.

⁶⁶ The contrast was also made by Chinese: see Mark Elvin, 'The Administration of Shanghai, 1905-1914', in Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner (eds.), *The Chinese City between Two Worlds* (Stanford, 1974), 246-50.

⁶⁷ The novelist Stella Benson thought the Britons she met in China 'tenth-rate': University of Cambridge Library, Stella Benson Diaries, 19 Apr. 1930. The consular service found itself recruiting men from the 'bottom of the examination barrel': Coates, *China Consuls*, 432.

⁶⁸ The relationship as it affected trade is examined in Yen-p'ing Hao, *The Commercial Revolution in Nineteenth-Century China: The Rise of Sino-Western Capitalism* (Berkeley, 1986).

VI

SOCIALIZATION AND THE MAINTENANCE
OF 'RACIAL' AND SEXUAL BOUNDARIES

As family life became more the norm, settler children took more and more jobs in Shanghai.⁶⁹ Concerned to reproduce, or refresh, the underlying Britishness of Shanghailanders identity, at first parents often sent many of these children to schools in Britain, thereby removing them from the influence of Chinese servants, and of the non-British environment. There were also schools in the International Settlement with exclusionist policies. They faithfully reproduced British curricula and routines, and celebrated Empire Day and royal events, making no allowances for their geographical location (Chinese was rarely taught), or for Shanghai's international characteristics. So little was taught about China in Shanghai's foreign schools in 1930 that one contemporary critic saw the curriculum as a source of 'race' antipathy.⁷⁰ Shanghaier children became British before they were allowed to become Shanghailanders again.

Shanghailanders were not only born so, like Noel Kent, they were also made so, rather quickly and comprehensively. The community reproduced itself by effectively socializing newly arrived Britons. Maurice Tinkler's correspondence shows, for example, that through his police training, through informal talks in bars and canteens, through his club, through his Masonic lodge, and through his desire to become one — it was after all the location of the career he had chosen — he quickly adopted the mores and beliefs of a Shanghaier. The evidence was exhibited even in his first letter home. Tinkler quickly became a firm believer in what he termed the 'good old China'.⁷¹ During the crisis years, 1925–7, with the zeal of the converted, he did his best to defend what little of the 'good old China' was left in Shanghai. This pattern can be discerned in numerous memoirs, journals and letters. People learned because they wanted to, and because they needed to — having committed themselves to long periods abroad in a new community they certainly had to settle

⁶⁹ 'A Dimming Paradise', *North China Herald*, 19 May 1928, 307.

⁷⁰ For criticisms, see 'General Knowledge of China', *Oriental Affairs* (Jan. 1935), 26–7; Marguerite Ann Stewart, 'Race Antipathies and Children's Education', *China Critic*, 31 July 1930, 729–31.

⁷¹ R. M. Tinkler to Florence Tinkler, Shanghai, 22 Aug. 1919; R. M. Tinkler to Edith Tinkler, Shanghai, 16 Dec. 1925: IWM, Tinkler Papers.

in to it — but also because they were prompted to by the expectations, and exhortations, of peer pressure at work and play.⁷²

Socialization reinforced the 'racial'/national boundaries of the Shanghailanders identity. Maurice Tinkler, like all British members of the police, and indeed new recruits to Shanghailanders society, was issued with a Chinese servant the day he arrived, and also, thereby, a set of ideas about Sino-British interaction. As was often the case, issues of race were also informed by issues of class, and often confused with them.⁷³ Frequently, the only Chinese met by Britons, as by most other foreigners in China, were rickshaw-pullers, servants, compradores and staff, and sometimes interpreters.⁷⁴ Mixing with social equals was kept to formal occasions arranged by compradores or Chinese managers, usually dinners for business contacts or seasonal celebrations providing a ritual acknowledgement of fraternal relations.⁷⁵ Social isolation from the Chinese was a key value. Shanghai was a 'city in which a man is lost if he has not at least one club at his disposal',⁷⁶ and the Chinese were barred from most clubs, most sports clubs, most Masonic Lodges and treaty port schools. As clubs often formed the limits of the British community's social world, it was not surprising that 'one lived amongst one's own kind'.⁷⁷ This contrasts with the *Cercle sportif français*, to which access was much less restricted, or the American Club, which permitted Chinese to become members in 1929; and the German Club Concordia, which admitted Chinese members in 1917.⁷⁸ In fact, those national clubs which were more cosmopolitan and

⁷² Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', 85–94.

⁷³ Personal interview with F. G., 13 Sept. 1996; V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to the Outside World in the Imperial Age*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth, 1972), 30, xvi–xvii.

⁷⁴ In his *The Foreigner in China* (London, 1942), the only Chinese personally described by O. M. Green were his servants (127–34); see also Peattie, 'Japanese Treaty Port Settlements', 187, on similarities in that community.

⁷⁵ John Swire and Sons Company Archive, oral history project, respondent no. 10, p. 17. Access was granted to this archive on the understanding that all respondents remained anonymous.

⁷⁶ *North China Herald*, 18 Aug. 1928, 287.

⁷⁷ John Swire and Sons Company Archive, oral history project, respondent no. 3, p. 18.

⁷⁸ G. H. Gompertz, *China in Turmoil: Eye-Witness, 1924–1948* (London, 1967), 80; Huskey, 'Americans in Shanghai', 173; Françoise Kreissler, *L'Action culturelle allemande en Chine: De la fin du XIX^e siècle à la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris, 1989), 15–16.

which placed fewer restrictions on race or nationality, such as the *Cercle sportif français*, were widely disliked by Britons for their 'mixed and dubious' company.⁷⁹ Mixing races and nationalities offended and threatened the integrity of the Shanghailanders' notion of their identity.

More intimate relations were seen as transgressions. Taboos against marriage with Chinese, indeed, against open sexual contact with Chinese women or men, were strong. Such relationships certainly occurred, as they did throughout European empires in the twentieth century — in the nineteenth century élite men had very often established Chinese concubines, while at the other end of the social spectrum, Cantonese 'salt water sisters' specialized in servicing foreign sailors.⁸⁰ But pressure was exerted by relatives, colleagues and superiors to make sure that young men did not get involved with Chinese, Eurasians or even with Russians.⁸¹ The marriage registers of the Holy Trinity Cathedral contain no record of any mixed marriages between 1923 and 1941. It is to be assumed that weddings between British men and Chinese women were conducted instead in the privacy of the British Consulate-General (Plate 1).

This sensitivity was partly palliated by distinctions of class: some lower-class men can be found marrying Chinese, Japanese and Russian women. In 1934 the Shanghai *Gong'anju* (Public Security Bureau) gave licences to twenty-two Russian and six Chinese women who wanted to marry British men,⁸² but the public taboos against marriages with non-British women remained strong. 'Mixed marriages are not in the interest of the force', declared the Commissioner of Police in 1927 to the Council's Watch Committee, which broadly agreed with him.⁸³ Although the ban was formally lifted shortly thereafter, all con-

⁷⁹ Gompertz, *China in Turmoil*, 80.

⁸⁰ The most well known of these is probably Ayaou, mistress of the young Sir Robert Hart, with whom he had three children: Katherine F. Bruner, John K. Fairbank and Richard J. Smith (eds.), *Entering China's Service: Robert Hart's Journals, 1854–1863* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 153–4, 230–2; Christian Henriot, *Belles de Shanghai: prostitution et sexualité en Chine aux XIX^e–XX^e siècles* (Paris, 1997), 99.

⁸¹ Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, 27; F. H. H. King, *The History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1987–8), iii, 285–9.

⁸² *Shanghai shi gonganju 1934 nian ge zhong tongji tubiao* [Shanghai Public Security Bureau Statistical Tables for 1934], 18, 'Ben ju fa gei jiehun zhengshu jibiao' [table of marriage certificates issued by the Bureau]: SMA, Q-16–1–42.

⁸³ SMA, U 102–5–471/1, extracts from the Watch Committee Minutes, 11 Feb. 1927.



1. Sexual barriers begin to shift.
 (Shanghai Municipal Police force Christmas card, mid-to-late 1930s)
(Courtesy of Pete Robins)

stables were then forbidden to marry during their first contract in the hope that they would 'explore the marriage market at home' during their first long leave.⁸⁴ For his part, Maurice Tinkler saw keeping 'clear of the Asiatic ones' as a question of 'self-respect', but he had a string of Russian lovers.⁸⁵

The taboo was also highly gendered. Taboos against women marrying Chinese men were much stronger than those against British men marrying Chinese women. 'If you went out with an Asiatic [man] in Shanghai you would never live it down', wrote Tinkler to his sister.⁸⁶ In the mid-1930s, British women who intended to travel to China to marry Chinese men were interviewed by the Far East Department of the Foreign Office in an endeavour 'to persuade [them] to give up the idea of such a marriage'. An official leaflet pointed out that the consequent loss of British nationality meant that British law could not 'protect [them] in China from a treatment which does not conform with the rules applicable in Christian countries in regard to marriage'.⁸⁷ Those marriages that did take place seem to have done so outside China between overseas Chinese students and local women.⁸⁸

French journalist Henri Champly's salacious reportage, popular in the interwar years, was predicated on a sexual undermining of 'white' racial superiority and purity through European prostitution in Shanghai; such themes had a strong presence in other popular writing and attitudes.⁸⁹ Chinese men were excluded from close physical proximity with foreign women for this reason: for example, in swimming clubs. The Shanghai Rowing Club refused to allow Chinese to join the club in 1930, as it provided 'facilities for mixed bathing to which the Chinese would not be welcome'.⁹⁰ Chinese were kept out of European brothels, massage parlours and cabarets until the 1930s. The influx of Russian refugee

⁸⁴ R. M. J. Martin to T. I. Vaughan, Shanghai, 18 Aug. 1930: SMA, U 102-5-406.

⁸⁵ R. M. Tinkler to Edith Tinkler, Shanghai, 10 Oct. 1923: IWM, Tinkler Papers.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 Dec. 1927.

⁸⁷ If they could not make the journey to London, they were interviewed at home by a woman representative from the Overseas Settlement Department (Women) at the Passport Office: E. S. Harris, minute, 4 Sept. 1935, on Cadogan to Foreign Office, no. 1231, 31 July 1935: PRO, FO 372/3139, T10589/10589/378.

⁸⁸ This was a familiar colonial pattern: see Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire*, 51; Butcher, *British in Malaya*, 185-6.

⁸⁹ See his *The Road to Shanghai: White Slave Traffic in Asia* (London, 1934); Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', 57-8.

⁹⁰ J. F. Brennan to M. W. Lampson, Shanghai, 6 June 1930: PRO, FO 228/4285/469z, Shanghai no. 50.

women in the 1920s, very many of whom found employment in prostitution, largely brought about this shift in established patterns. The SMP fought to suppress the distribution of photographic images of white women and appearances by Russian women in Chinese 'sing-song' houses.⁹¹ For related reasons, missionaries and others decried the effect of the portrayal of European women in Western films as corrosive and dangerous; the dress and dancing of European women in China also came in for such criticism.⁹² As Ann Stoler has shown, this taboo was characteristic of European colonial societies.⁹³

The possible intimacy of language was also fraught with tension. Language stands out more as a self-conscious marker than a tool for communication: Shanghailanders spoke English, but they added to it a self-consciously imperial jargon compounded of Anglo-Indian terms spiced with pidgin-English argot. In this way they marked themselves off from other Britons and Westerners, and demonstrated their distance from Chinese. But the treaty port world was ever and at all levels Sino-foreign, and acting in that world required constant exchange and interaction between Britons and Chinese, exchange which required understanding of language and social custom. The need for distance and the linguistic limitations of the average Shanghaider forced direct communication with Chinese to be largely undertaken from the opening of Shanghai onwards in pidgin-English, at once a language of demand and command, but also quickly a vehicle for ridicule. For that reason, later guidebooks stressed that visitors should always try English first when they spoke with Chinese, so as not to offend.⁹⁴ In fact, English later grew so to dominate that

⁹¹ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 217; *North China Herald*, 6 Oct. 1928, 36; on censorship, see Special Branch Reorganisation Circular no. 4: Duties of Special Branch no. 5, 23 June 1930: United States, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 263, Records of the Shanghai Municipal Police Special Branch, D8/7; see also the file from 1926 in SMA, U 102-5-471/2.

⁹² W. G. Sewell, *Land and Life of China* (London, 1933), 130.

⁹³ Ann Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures', in Jan Breman (ed.), *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice* (Amsterdam, 1990), 46-8. On the Malayan case, see J. Brownfoot, 'Sisters under the Skin: Imperialism and the Emancipation of Women in Malaya, c.1891-1941', in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990), 48.

⁹⁴ Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 13; Green, *Foreigner in China*, 134-41; Revd C. E. Darwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents* (Shanghai, 1920), ii. As late as 1928, the *North China Herald* began a humorous column in pidgin English: *North China Herald*, 2 June 1928, 401.

even treaty port German was heavily affected in diction and vocabulary.⁹⁵ For the Chinese that Shanghailanders mostly interacted with there was pidgin, while the new Chinese political and business élites of the 1920s and 1930s often spoke English. Spoken Chinese still had to be learnt by many Shanghailanders, such as employees of the SMC and, in particular, the SMP, but this was more often honoured in the breach, and the written language was rarely studied. Learning and speaking Chinese was unpopular, partly because it was difficult, but most importantly because it was considered demeaning or deracinating. The need to communicate so intimately with Chinese labelled the speaker as either a 'poor white' or else as the lowest in Shanghaileander status (foremen or those in supervisory roles). Only missionaries, consuls and cranks learned Chinese willingly. As was common in colonial societies, pidgin, gesture, and a limited vocabulary of loud imperatives, summed up the communication skills of many, and distance was effectively maintained.⁹⁶

This social, linguistic and sexual gerrymandering and ordering was vital. Relationships with Chinese, and with other proscribed groups, undermined and diluted Shanghailanders' self-ascribed identity. Moreover, acknowledging that those who married into the group were also part of the group (as was sometimes the case in Sumatra) would have meant dismantling the social barriers which maintained the Shanghaileander identity.⁹⁷ More practically, losing that identity would have threatened the British military and diplomatic support which underpinned the Shanghailanders' presence in Shanghai. Given the strength of racist attitudes in metropolitan society, British diplomats in China were hardly likely to have bestirred themselves to support a community which had lost all trace of its British identity. Shanghailanders could not afford to mix if they wished to preserve themselves, especially given their numbers: there were over 300 Chinese Shanghai residents to each Shanghaileander.

For similar reasons, expatriates and Shanghailanders of all classes shared an interest in keeping the city free of the poorest Britons, who were felt to undermine the 'prestige' of the 'white race' in the city in the eyes of the Chinese, and the character of

⁹⁵ Kreissler, *L'Action culturelle allemande en Chine*, 20.

⁹⁶ Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 155–60; Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870–1979*, 2nd edn (Ann Arbor, 1995), 49.

⁹⁷ Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', 153.

the community in the eyes of the diplomats. The accommodations poor foreigners had to make to tailor their poverty to Shanghai's high costs meant transgressing the norms of the community: marrying or cohabiting with Asian, Eurasian or Russian women; living in Chinese housing; and working with or for Chinese. In contrast to British India, for example, Shanghailanders and the SMC were unable to deal with all such foreigners. 'Distressed British Subjects' could be shipped home, criminals could be deported to Hong Kong after serving their time and dismissed policemen could be refused their superannuation unless they took it back to Britain, but Russian poverty and destitution could not be hidden.⁹⁸

Reality, for Shanghailanders, was thus far removed from the images of a rapacious and hedonistic colonial élite that inform many accounts of the Shanghai foreign community. They were ordinary people, who — like Tinkler — had found employment in the 'Situations Vacant' columns of national newspapers in Britain. Expatriate managers may well have joked that the advice 'traditionally given in London to new recruits departing for China' was 'to keep the Sabbath and anything you can lay your hands on', but this attitude had not, as one historian put it, 'characterised much of the century-long Western economic presence in China'.⁹⁹ Shanghailanders earned a living and mostly had a better lifestyle than was possible for them in Britain, but while Shanghai was and is the subject of a great deal of retrospective exoticism, it was actually a pedestrian community, with pedestrian lifestyles and values. Shanghailanders lived in a grimy, polluted, congested city, which was for many Britons about as exotic and mysterious as Slough. Maintaining their identities also meant that Shanghailanders had imported their far from exotic British lifestyles, cuisine and domestic habits. Few concessions were made to either China or cosmopolitanism: the heightened and insular Britishness of Shanghaider society was a rejection of the Chinese world which otherwise swamped them, physically as much as metaphorically. But if their culture was British, their self-image was intentionally *sui generis*.

⁹⁸ There were usually around ten 'Distressed British Subjects' in the spaces available for use of the Shanghai Consulate-General: H. Phillips, 'Inspection of Shanghai Consulate-General', 25 Mar. 1928: PRO, FO 369/2018, K6379/6379/210.

⁹⁹ Beverley Hooper, *China Stands Up: Ending the Western Presence, 1948–50* (Sydney, 1986), v, 7.

VII

SHANGHAILANDER SELF-IMAGERY

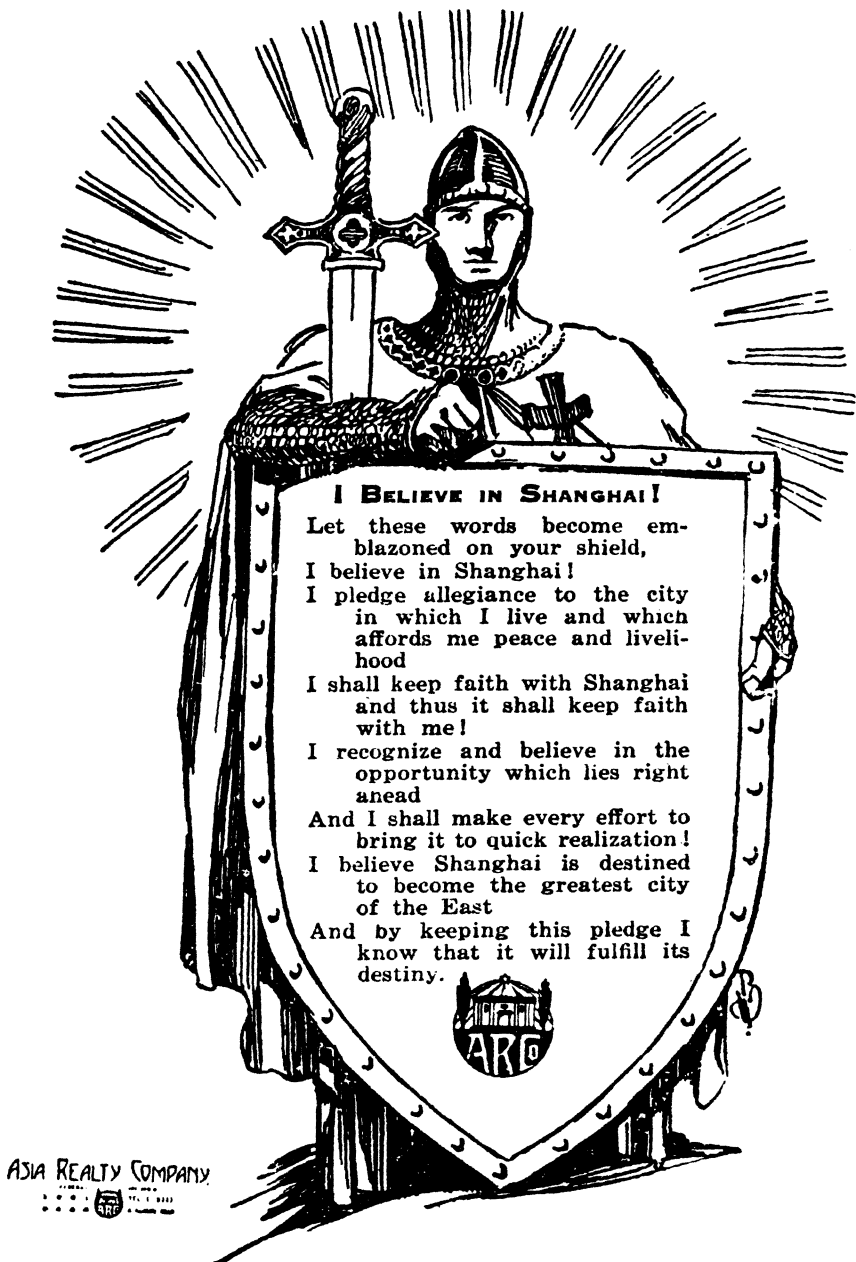
Settlers and expatriates alike who searched for property in Shanghai in 1928 might well have read the poem 'I Believe in Shanghai' that featured in a real estate brochure issued by the city's Asia Realty Company (Plate 2).¹⁰⁰ The sentiments expressed in the poem were typical of the self-serving self-mythologization of the foreign community in Shanghai. Masking self-interest as mission, and die-hard conservatism as destiny, it also testifies to the dominance of British influence in the city. Asia Realty was in fact an American company which had borrowed the very English image of the crusader, upon whose shield the 'pledge' was inscribed, and upon whose chest was the flag of St George. Recent works on the politics of Shanghai's foreigners in the 1920s have tended to portray the British as the villains of the piece, corrupting decent Americans like the employees of Asia Realty with their imperial ways.¹⁰¹ While decent Americans in Shanghai seem to have been quite corruptible, this was intentionally a British image, and in the propaganda and puffery published by Shanghailanders even more florid appeals to self-belief and to history were often to be heard. These settlers recast themselves as crusaders; they were the righteous protectors of an ideal that they had realized in stone and tarmac alongside the Huangpu river.

Shanghailander self-image was also firmly Christian. The Christian imperialism of the wilder fringes of British resistance to reform in India has received some attention; a similar fringe was certainly active in Shanghai in the form of individuals who were given much publicity in the mainstream press.¹⁰² We fail to understand even the less extreme treaty port conservatives, however, unless we accept the dominant influence of the Christianity of the British. Such was the strength of popular Anglo-American Protestantism that a grass-roots movement, the Moral Welfare League, succeeded in forcing the *laissez-faire* Shanghai Municipal Council to close down the brothels in the International Settlement

¹⁰⁰ *Asia Realty Co.*, iii (May 1928), no. 5, frontispiece.

¹⁰¹ See, *passim*, Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*; Huskey, 'Americans in Shanghai'.

¹⁰² Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, 'The Christian Imperialism of the Die-Hard Defenders of the Raj, 1926-1935', *Jl Imperial and Commonwealth Hist.*, xviii (1990). The *North China Daily News* gave much publicity to the activities of the strident anti-Communism of the fundamentalist Protestant missionary Edgar E. Strother; see his *A Bolshevised China: The World's Greatest Peril* (Shanghai, 1927).



2. Settler Crusader.

(Shanghailanders self-imagery from the frontispiece,
Asia Realty Co., iii, May 1928)

by the end of 1924.¹⁰³ The Shanghailanders polity was threatened by both the non-Christian, and therefore 'heathen', Chinese, and by actively anti-religious Communism. Contrary to received wisdom, the British laity in China were usually opposed to the missionary enterprise, fearing that its active confrontation with Chinese society would endanger all foreigners, and that mission-educated Chinese were leading the nationalist movement.¹⁰⁴ Most Shanghailanders were still Christians though, and their sense of identity and values were as strongly influenced by Christian values and preconceptions in the 1920s as they had been in 1847 when the small community first proposed constructing a church.¹⁰⁵ The nationalist revolution of 1923–8 was preceded and accompanied by mass anti-Christian propaganda and activism; foreign missionaries were ordered by the governments to leave the interior of China in late 1926 and many fled to Shanghai.¹⁰⁶ Protecting 'Shanghai' meant protecting a Christian identity too.

This self-image was also consciously masculine, and violent. Shanghailanders formed a society that was proud of its military past — such as the Battle of the Muddy Flat in 1854, when armed foreign merchants in the nascent Shanghai Volunteer Corps fought beside British troops to defeat Qing soldiers — and its military present. Although formally instituted only in July 1870, the SVC dated its foundation to this battle.¹⁰⁷ One-third of eligible British men were estimated to be members in 1928.¹⁰⁸ Other national companies (German, American, Italian, and so on) were formed over the succeeding decades, but control of the force always remained in British hands: after 1903, a regular British army officer was even seconded by the War Office to command the men.¹⁰⁹ The SVC enabled a large proportion of foreign men to be directly involved in the protection of the settlement and

¹⁰³ Henriot, *Belles de Shanghai*, 319–39.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, the writings of British treaty port journalists: J. O. P. Bland, *China: The Pity of It* (London, 1932), 69–112. Such hostility was hardly confined to writers: see R. M. Tinkler to Edith Tinkler, Shanghai, 26 June 1925: IWM, Tinkler Papers.

¹⁰⁵ PRO, FO 228/76, Shanghai no. 27, 13 Apr. 1847.

¹⁰⁶ See Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920–28* (Notre Dame, 1988).

¹⁰⁷ SMC, *Ann. Rept.*, 1870–1, 37–8; see also *Programme of the Celebrations in Honour of the Raising of the SVC and the Laying of the Commemoration Stone of a New Drill Hall* (Shanghai, 1914); I. I. Kounin (comp.), *Eighty-Five Years of the SVC* (Shanghai, 1938).

¹⁰⁸ *North China Herald*, 16 June 1928, 467.

¹⁰⁹ Kounin (comp.), *Eighty-Five Years of the SVC*, 55–9.

was called out on many occasions in the 1920s and 1930s. The marching of army units through the settlement as they left or arrived at Shanghai became a regular feature of life. The volunteer forces were also prominent in these displays. The twenty-eighth anniversary of the Battle of the Muddy Flat in 1882 saw the first of what became the annual inspections of the SVC by the assembled council members. In a pattern to be followed for the next six decades, the force marched from the Central Police Station near the Bund to the racecourse.¹¹⁰ The annual Church Parade of the corps also involved route marches through the settlement, as did the ostentatious funerals with full military honours often given to SVC members. The Police Specials also did their share of marching.¹¹¹ These were public shows for the benefit of the participants, for the Shanghailanders spectators, but perhaps most of all for the Chinese in the settlement, to remind them where military power lay. The spectacle of armed British merchants on the march could hardly have appeased those Chinese who doubted British protestations of fraternity and desires only for mutually beneficial trade.

The SVC was a key element in the theatrical colonial posturing of the Shanghailanders: Noel Kent was a member of the self-styled 'élite' Light Horse, which had a membership application procedure akin to a social club.¹¹² The SVC served as a socializing tool that instilled the required version of Shanghaider history and identified the Chinese in and outside the settlement as the main threat to Shanghaider life.¹¹³ Furthermore, the SVC arguably contributed to the aggressive insularity of the British community itself and encouraged both the strain of paramilitarism that lay beneath the SVC and SMP uniforms and the belief in seeking solutions through action as opposed to diplomacy. British civilians not under SVC control took an active part in the fighting that took place in Shanghai in the days after 30 May 1925.¹¹⁴ This militarism was also manifested in the Shanghai Fascisti, a short-lived 'anti-Communist' organization of 1927–8, whose immediate programme included the formation of units to help

¹¹⁰ SMC, *Ann. Rept.*, 1882, 3.

¹¹¹ *North China Herald*, 21 Apr. 1929, 104; 5 May 1928, 241; 14 July 1928, 61; 22 Dec. 1928, 485.

¹¹² J. E. March was 'introduced' to the Light Horse by his business partners on arrival in Shanghai: IWM, 89/21/1, March Papers, memoir, 94.

¹¹³ SMA, U 102–5–2–/5, SVC Mobilisation Scheme, 1937, 82.

¹¹⁴ *North China Daily News*, 3 June 1925, 11.

the SMC defend the settlement.¹¹⁵ And for good measure the SMC formed the SVC's Russian Regiment in 1927. This was a professional force of refugee troops, which usually numbered about 300 officers and men.¹¹⁶ The SMC had long wanted its own standing force of non-Chinese professional soldiers.¹¹⁷ C. A. Bayly has reminded us about the place and presence of violence in British and imperial history; it was never far from the surface in Shanghai.¹¹⁸

VIII

IMAGINING SHANGHAILANDER COMMUNITY

So far I have described an identity constructed largely in terms of class, race and nationality. However, Shanghailanders identity was also given cohesion in other ways. As the Asia Realty pledge indicates, Shanghailanders were expected to *believe* in this identity, and they were certainly prepared to actively defend it when threatened. In lieu of the city-state denied them by the diplomats, they wrote and declaimed about their 'republic', which they 'imagined' — in Benedict Anderson's term — as meritocratic, egalitarian and democratic.¹¹⁹

In the press, in books and pamphlets, in bad verse and worse prose, Shanghailanders circulated a constructed version of their history and society. The writers were activists as well, and their political agenda was quite transparent. J. O. P. Bland, SMC Secretary 1896–1906, was one such literary advocate, but was also a ruthless defender and extender of the settlement's gains when he held that position.¹²⁰ The former *North China Daily News* editor, O. M. Green, diluted his own hard-line opinions with visions of Shanghaider society in his journalism.¹²¹ Arthur de C. Sowerby, editor of *China Journal* and author of many books, was a replacement leader of the Shanghai Fascisti and became a committee member of the British Residents' Association, formed

¹¹⁵ *North China Herald*, 21 July 1928, 104; 14 Jan. 1928, 53; 28 June 1928, 518.

¹¹⁶ SMC, *Ann. Rept.*, 1935, 384.

¹¹⁷ See the discussions on the issue in 1906: PRO, FO 228/2518, 'Shanghai Municipal Police — increase of' (file).

¹¹⁸ Bayly, 'Returning the British to South Asian History', 12.

¹¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn (London, 1991).

¹²⁰ J. O. P. Bland, *Verse and Worse* (Shanghai, 1902); *Houseboat Days in China* (London, 1909); *Something Lighter* (London, 1924).

¹²¹ Green, *Foreigner in China*, 14.

in 1931 to represent Shanghailanders interests against the SMC, and to lobby against reform of extraterritoriality. He even stood on this platform in the 1932 SMC election.¹²² Others, of course, wrote with less didactic intent, but they still served to communicate the certainties and clichés of the mental world of the Shanghaileander. Bland, Green and Sowerby, it could certainly be argued, were activists and publicists and therefore unrepresentative of ordinary opinion, but in fact many of the themes they explored and the interpretations they employed can be found in the letters, diaries and memoirs of ordinary residents.¹²³

Shanghailanders appropriated 'Shanghai' for themselves. The phenomenal growth of the port and later its industries was portrayed as solely their creation. Nothing was there before them, and no one else helped them develop the city. Like the Boers in South Africa or the Deliaan planters in Sumatra, they saw themselves as having moved into 'empty' land.¹²⁴ They had their founding legend — the mud-flats of the Huangpu river had turned to mercantile gold at their touch — and like many aspiring nations they had a founding victory, the Battle of the Muddy Flat. In this way they asserted their independence, self-reliance and communal spirit.¹²⁵ Their public monuments on the Bund, the Margary Memorial, the monuments to Sir Robert Hart and to General Gordon's Ever-Victorious Army, all marked different facets of triumph over the Chinese, and celebrated distance from them. Shanghailanders heralded their fiftieth anniversary with a triumphant Jubilee celebration in November 1893: processions, parades and fireworks marked the event, and hymns to the city's cosmopolitanism were sung.¹²⁶ The SMC even commissioned its own history which the author, George Lanning, turned into a *History of Shanghai* (1921), thereby appropriating the pre-treaty history of the area and the non-settlement part of the city into the tale.¹²⁷ Mythologization had begun as early as 1859, when the

¹²² *North China Herald*, 14 Jan. 1928, 53; 15 Mar. 1932, 403; 28 Dec. 1932, 498.

¹²³ Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', 71–4.

¹²⁴ Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', 150.

¹²⁵ This subject is dealt with at greater length in my 'History, Legend, and Treaty Port Ideology, 1925–1931', in Robert Bickers (ed.), *Ritual and Diplomacy: The Macartney Mission to China, 1792–1794* (London, 1993).

¹²⁶ See Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Imagining Community in the International Settlement: The Shanghai Jubilee as an Invented Tradition' (unpubl paper, presented at the University of California, Berkeley, Centre for Chinese Studies, 2 Dec. 1994).

¹²⁷ The realities of the city's pre-treaty era importance are best analysed in Johnson, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074–1858*.

phrase 'Model Settlement' was already being used and, by 1863, there was public pride in the pace of developments in the cosmopolitan 'improvised city'.¹²⁸

Through private or municipal efforts, Shanghailanders established churches, libraries, schools, a branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and a brass band. By the twentieth century, the band had grown into a symphony orchestra and had become a key symbol in the struggle to maintain an identity as a 'civilized community', in the face of the financial and other problems facing the SMC in the 1930s.¹²⁹ The band playing on summer's evenings in the Public Garden has often been the subject of florid reminiscence, but the ceremony of attendance — in 1919 often by over 2,000 residents — was symbolic of the wholesomeness of the community and also of its civilized nature. This summer evening ritual was a statement that Shanghailanders did not live in the 'sink of iniquity' that they had been accused of running as early as 1869 (by the duke of Somerset),¹³⁰ and that there was more to life in Shanghai than making money: theirs was a community that really existed; one in which the full range of human behaviour was present, and appreciated; a community with an integrity of its own. Shanghai was not a larger version of the smaller treaty port enclaves, or of Shameen island at Canton, replete with the privations of life in the old traders' Factories. The musical ritual was of course exclusive; Chinese were barred from the Public Garden, and even amahs in charge of foreign children were banned from using the free seats provided near the bandstand. The Public Garden was the Shanghaileander's world, achievements and contradictions, in miniature.

Outsiders imagined Shanghai in far less flattering terms. Negative, critical or merely salacious portrayals were common, from the duke of Somerset down to the popular reportage of the 1930s and 1940s, when *White Man's Folly* (1943) followed in the genre of *Shanghai: City for Sale* (1940), *Shanghai: Paradise of Adventurers* (1937), *Cities of Sin* (1934) and *The Road to Shanghai: White Slave Traffic in Asia* (1934). The city had a colourful reputation and Shanghailanders bore the brunt of it. Shanghai

¹²⁸ Lanning and Couling, *History of Shanghai*; *North China Herald*, 25 June 1859, 187; Committee of Land Renters to Sir Frederick Bruce, 12 June 1863, PRO, FO 228/348, Shanghai no. 83, 24 June 1863.

¹²⁹ Chairman A. Howard, 9 Mar. 1923, Orchestra and Band Committee Minutes: SMA, U 1-1-130.

¹³⁰ *Shanghai Evening Courier*, 23 Aug. 1869, 1095.

was a port and, like all ports, provided sex, alcohol and other entertainments for sailors, but it was also more generally notorious for its prostitution, gambling and drug trade. Its night-life was celebrated and the very name of the city still carries great resonance (not least with publishers). In the end, Shanghai's sleazy reputation could be laughed off (or even put to good use by the nascent tourist industry),¹³¹ but foreign attacks upon the International Settlement's handling of political and socio-economic issues had to be taken more seriously. The SMC followed a policy of non-intervention with regard to social and industrial matters long after this was politically acceptable. The corollary of the low taxation all residents of the settlement enjoyed was that the Council provided few services, and those few were mostly geared to its foreign residents until well into the early twentieth century. Arguing that it would be exceeding its power to interfere with Chinese social problems or the economic *status quo*, and claiming that measures of reform were likely to prompt civil or political disturbances,¹³² the SMC usually opted to do little.

The crisis of the mid-1920s forced the Council for the first time to treat its Chinese residents and ratepayers as proper residents and ratepayers. It promised to employ more of them and fewer Europeans, and to begin providing municipal education and health facilities. Moreover, the Council began to involve itself in issues of industrial health and safety.¹³³ In May 1925, the SMC's image in the world press was hardly positive: it practised racially discriminatory policies affecting its parks and municipal employment; it failed to implement measures to counter widely publicized abuse of child labour; and it ineptly countered unarmed demonstrations with excessive armed force. Shanghailanders ratepayers made things worse: they voted against the child labour by-laws and postponed measures to open the parks and council membership to Chinese.¹³⁴

Shanghailanders resented this reputation and tried to fight it.

¹³¹ See *All About Shanghai: A Standard Guidebook* (Shanghai, 1934), 43–4.

¹³² They had a point: see Tim Wright, 'Shanghai Imperialists versus Rickshaw Racketeers: The Defeat of the 1934 Rickshaw Reforms', *Mod. China*, xvii (Jan. 1991).

¹³³ On the SMC's social affairs work, see E. M. Hinder, *Life and Labour in Shanghai: A Decade of Labour and Social Administration* (New York, 1944); Robin Porter, *Industrial Reformers in Republican China* (Armonk, NY, 1994), 98–129.

¹³⁴ See my *Changing Shanghai's 'Mind': Publicity, Reform and the British in Shanghai, 1927–1931* (China Soc. Occas. Papers, xxvi, London, 1992).

They waged publicity campaigns, set up committees to counter ignorant accusations in the foreign press, established in 1927 a Shanghai Publicity Bureau to put their case to the world, and laughed among themselves at the world's ignorance.¹³⁵ Meanwhile and more practically, although often with great reluctance, the SMC cracked down on the legal opium trade (1912–19), closed the International Settlement's brothels (1920–4), reformed a police force widely perceived as corrupt (1929–31), and half-heartedly countered ever-innovative gambling ventures. Much of this was only partially successful. The jurisdictional loopholes offered by extraterritoriality, by the tripartite division of the city, and by the ingenuity of the Shanghai legal profession, meant that activity suppressed in one part of the city resurfaced in another. Drugs and gambling also provided healthy supplies of revenue for the Nationalist regime after 1927 and for the Japanese and their puppets after 1937.¹³⁶ One reason Shanghailanders proclaimed their identity and their values so stridently was the din of these alternative voices, damning their city and their achievements.

Like many nationalisms, then, there was much for this community — and those who wished to join it — to learn to remember with pride. But there was also much to learn conveniently to forget: the role of Chinese enterprise in the growth of the settlement; the British fortunes made from jerry-built housing for refugees during the Taiping era and after; the steady *rentier* income derived from these buildings; and the fact that Chinese residents paid by far the largest proportion of the SMC's revenues through municipal rates and license fees. So successfully mastered was the habit of forgetting the importance of the Chinese community, and so distanced were Shanghailanders from social intercourse with their host community, that Chinese complaints about their lack of representation on the Council, and other discriminatory practices, were routinely countered with injunctions to 'like it or leave it'. The settlement was set aside for Western residence, ran the argument, and the Chinese had ultimately no right to be there, and certainly could not expect other rights and privileges.

With Shanghaider history, real and 'imagined', came a birthright. This term is used as early as 1886, when births were

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ See, *passim*, Wakeman, *Shanghai Badlands*; Brian G. Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organised Crime, 1919–1937* (Berkeley, 1996).

still relatively few, and is still to be found in impassioned use in 1930.¹³⁷ The use of the term also hinted at the exclusive privileges of race in the settlement. Birthrights are usually resorted to by bellicose rhetoricians in search of something to defend. Attack being the best form of defence, Shanghailanders history, as we have seen, was one of expansion of the settlement's boundaries and ambition for even more growth, even in as late as 1929.¹³⁸

For all their bellicose, particularist insularity, Shanghailanders could still show an awareness of imperial mission, of Shanghai and its achievements as part of the wider British empire. There was no contradiction in this. If the empire stood for anything immediately tangible to the Shanghaileander, then it stood for the expansion of British influence, culture and trade. 'How better to promote trade with China, than through the creation of a city run by institutions created on British lines and staffed by Britons?', was the Shanghailanders' view. The point of what has been termed the Shanghai bridgehead, for most Shanghailanders, was Shanghai itself. Seen as a proconsular spearhead, Shanghailanders might indeed be seen to have demonstrated 'sloth and timidity' in their perceived failure to expand British influence in China, but the pattern of British imperialism in China was variegated. It was the nature of Shanghaileander community, more than the problem of penetrating the China market or consular control through extraterritoriality, which kept Shanghailanders in Hankou, Jiujiang or Tianjin 'bound to their bunds'.¹³⁹

They believed that their very autonomy and their imagined identity served imperial interests. Empire day, coronations and jubilees were celebrated with all the pomp the community could muster. Meetings were held to compose congratulatory telegrams on British victories from the Crimean War onwards. Volunteers from Shanghai flocked home to fight in the First World War; many also left to fight in the Second, or stayed at their posts in the SMC after explicit instructions to do so from the Foreign Office. They saw themselves as forming a front line protecting the British empire's possessions in South-East and South Asia from Soviet Communism. The latter was typical: Shanghai

¹³⁷ *North China Herald*, 24 Feb. 1886, 210; SMC, *Municipal Gaz.*, 17 Apr. 1930.

¹³⁸ Bickers, *Changing Shanghai's 'Mind'*, 14–16.

¹³⁹ John Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cxii (1997), 624, 626.

certainly was a focal point for Soviet activities,¹⁴⁰ but Shanghailanders were motivated more by a continuing need to justify their position in China. They were happy to accept British military defence, and frequently demanded diplomatic intervention, but they were tardy in admitting that the *quid pro quo* was the better ordering of their affairs so as not to bring trouble on themselves, or expose themselves to attack.

IX

REASSERTING DIPLOMATIC CONTROL

Shanghailanders' sense of autonomy was strongly ingrained and strongly maintained, and the community and the SMC which governed the International Settlement employed their 'pretty free hand' to devastating effect in 1925 when the SMP killed or mortally wounded eleven demonstrators on 30 May. This was a defining moment for the Shanghaileander community, one in which they articulated their sense of unity, purpose and particularist identity, but also one in which they advertised that they had grown into a signal problem for British diplomats. In the ensuing diplomatic crisis, the SMC refused to accept that it was facing a political problem. This, and the Council's mishandling of the subsequent outrage, provoked fierce attacks from Chinese nationalists, many of whom were radicalized for the first time by the affair.¹⁴¹ Shanghailanders also, crucially, lost much foreign sympathy through their bellicosity and overt racism. The May 30th Incident was their Amritsar, and the comparison was widely made both by their opponents and by their supporters, for General Dyer's handling of the affair in India had widespread British colonial and domestic approval.¹⁴² From 1925 through to 1928, the foreign presence was subject to strong attacks from Chinese nationalists, Communists, the domestic press in Britain and in the United States, and, most importantly, from many of the Shanghailanders' British diplomatic and political defenders. The British government sent in the 20,000-strong Shanghai Defence Force (SDF) at the height of the Nationalist revolution

¹⁴⁰ For an account of Soviet activities in the city in 1931, see Frederick S. Litten, 'The Noulens Affair', *China Quart.*, no. 138 (1995).

¹⁴¹ Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, *passim*; Rigby, *May 30 Movement*.

¹⁴² On comparisons with Amritsar, see Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, 105; on Dyer, see Derek Sayer, 'British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919–1920', *Past and Present*, no. 131 (May 1991).

when it was feared that the *Guomindang* forces would attempt to seize the International Settlement, but this was the last British military fling in China. Shanghailanders had lost the propaganda war by the end of 1927. The strictures of the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent, Arthur Ransome, on the 'Shanghai Mind' and the 'Ulster of the East' won the day. These widely held contemporary beliefs were captured in the self-caricature of one of the Council members, who described Shanghailanders as 'Die-hards of the most virulent and bloodthirsty type; . . . all suffering from a chronic species of Brain fever known as the 'Shanghai Mind' . . . we spend our time deliberately insulting our Chinese friends and our money on the up-keep of huge orchestras to which no one ever listens'.¹⁴³ The imaginary 'no dogs and Chinese' sign, alleged to have been placed by the Council at the entrance to the Public Gardens on the Bund, finished off Ransome's work, a myth still officially perpetuated today in mainland China, despite the evidence collated even by its own historians, and widely believed elsewhere.¹⁴⁴

Shanghailanders had much to fear by 1928: the timing of the Asia Realty Company's pledge of belief is important. British diplomats feared that the Council's pugnacity would provoke another May 30th Incident and undermine everything once and for all; and it was not interested in risking the gunboat brinkmanship of sending another SDF. When it judged that the new Nanjing regime was secure enough to negotiate with, and when it could no longer ignore Nationalist demands for discussions on treaty revision, the Foreign Office began to re-examine the treaties and conventions that underpinned Shanghai life. Many in Whitehall and also in business felt that the modernizing regime in Nanjing could deliver the right conditions for Sino-British trade that would make the formal structures of the treaty port system unnecessary. Others realized the strength — some even the justice — of the Nationalist case against the system, and the force and permanence of nationalist feeling. Better an early compromise, they felt, than the perils of unilateralism and conflict.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ SMC, *Municipal Gaz.*, 19 Apr. 1928, 159c; Ransome's articles were published as *The Chinese Puzzle* (London, 1927).

¹⁴⁴ See Bickers and Wasserstrom, 'Shanghai's "Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted" Sign'.

¹⁴⁵ These issues are dealt with at length in Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*; D. C. Wilson, 'Britain and the Kuomintang, 1924–28: A Study of the Interaction of Official Policies and Perceptions in Britain and China' (School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1973).

Negotiations on ending extraterritoriality undertaken in 1931 between the British and the Chinese governments were greatly concerned with the future administration of Shanghai. The proposal discussed was that the SMC and the International Settlement were to be incorporated into the Chinese Municipality of Greater Shanghai (*Da Shanghai shizhengfu*) after a period of ten years or so; and extraterritoriality was to be abolished.¹⁴⁶ The end of the treaty port system became the official definition of going forward. Shanghailanders' opposition to their own destruction was thereafter perceived as a desire to go 'backwards'. But the Japanese invasion of Manchuria that September stymied the diplomatic process.

Diplomatic intervention was also made in more quotidian areas. As has been shown, pressure was placed on the SMC to end the racial exclusivity of the municipal parks and gardens (1928), to allow Chinese members on to the Council (1928) and into the higher levels of the administration (1931).¹⁴⁷ British firms were encouraged to push more liberal figures onto the SMC and into managerial positions in Shanghai (often, as we have seen, the same thing).¹⁴⁸ O. M. Green was engineered out of his editorship of the *North China Daily News* and replaced by a former India Office Information Officer.¹⁴⁹ The diplomats also hectored the community's leaders on the smaller details of Shanghai public life which so outraged Chinese opinion. Sporting and social clubs were encouraged to admit élite Chinese residents and to strengthen social ties with them. Many of these moves involved confronting the rawest areas of the racial prejudice of the Shanghailanders and key aspects of their self-ascribed identity.¹⁵⁰

Economic threats certainly faced Shanghailanders in the 1930s. White Russians underpriced them for the lower-grade jobs in the

¹⁴⁶ The process of negotiations in 1931 can be seen in PRO, FO 371/15453-65, F34/34/10 1931.

¹⁴⁷ The details of this campaign can be found in the Peking Legation Correspondence files for 1927 to 1930: PRO, FO 228/3677, 3883, 4045-7, 4283-5.

¹⁴⁸ Swire's Hong Kong Manager, N. S. Brown was transferred from the colony and 'purposefully sent to Shanghai by his firm in order to get on to the Council and try to get a real move on *progressively*': PRO, FO 228/4283/7 69b, Minister's Tour Series no. 49, 6 Feb. 1930. See also Sir Miles Lampson's talks with the Keswick brothers at Jardines: Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, Killearn Papers, Lampson diaries, 21 Feb., 27 Mar. 1931.

¹⁴⁹ *North China Herald*, 25 Mar. 1930, 464; *India Office List*, 1929; Thomas Ming-Heng Chao, *The Foreign Press in China* (Shanghai, 1931), 50.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Consul-General Brenan to Sir Miles Lampson (Semi-Official), 30 Oct. 1930: PRO, FO 228/4134/40 3. These activities are discussed in more depth in Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese', 148-58.

police and utilities, or as labour supervisors. Western-educated Chinese formed a larger pool of talented, linguistically able competitors for service and professional jobs. The American community was more diplomatically favoured by the Nationalist regime, the Germans were less Edwardian in their business methods, and the Japanese presence and Japanese power hugely overshadowed them all. But treaty revision remained the biggest threat. Shanghailanders depended upon the treaty port for any livelihood at all. Either their capital was invested there or their jobs depended on the continuation of the *status quo*. Shanghailanders formed a society specific to local conditions; whether they were first generation, like Tinkler, or third, such as Noel Kent, was largely irrelevant. Fearful of the betrayal of all they believed that they had built and maintained since the 1840s, Shanghailanders voiced their opposition to treaty reform in the China coast and domestic press, and organized themselves in various noisy interest groups, articulating their identity with force and clarity, not just in their words, but in their very capacity for organization.¹⁵¹

The British Residents' Association (BRA), formed in 1931, seriously worried the diplomats. Its supporters were numerous and were largely drawn from the small treaty port people. Among its initial leadership were familiar names from the Shanghaileader élite, but also from the more extreme community activists. The BRA was the logical result of the development and sophistication of the Shanghaileader community. Its concerns did not extend to the broader issues of Sino-British relations. It articulated the fears of an independent society, British in origin, but rooted in Shanghai, in extraterritoriality, in the SMC and in the International Settlement. As the SMC fell back under the control of the diplomats, this community was left officially unrepresented in the face of its own extinction.¹⁵²

The wind was taken from the BRA's sails by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, which prompted Britain and China to allow their treaty negotiations to quietly lapse. The war came

¹⁵¹ For more details, see Bickers, *Changing Shanghai's 'Mind'*; also my 'Death of a Young Shanghaileader: The Thorburn Case and the Defence of the British Treaty Ports in China in 1931', *Mod. Asian Studies*, xxx (1996). For an analysis of the expatriate / diplomatic view of the British Residents' Association, see Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise*, 28–32.

¹⁵² Robert Bickers, 'Settlers and Diplomats: The End of British Hegemony in the International Settlement' (paper presented at the conference 'Wartime Shanghai, 1937–45', Institut d'Asie Orientale, Lyons, 15–17 Oct. 1997).

home to Shanghai in the bloody Sino-Japanese conflict of 28 January–3 March 1932. The BRA was co-opted by the diplomats and the expatriate élite within two years, and became the main vehicle through which they mobilized British votes for the SMC in what became a complicated gerrymandering game with the Japanese from the mid-1930s onwards. Shanghailanders–diplomat tensions were tempered by the growing need to present a united front in the British community. After 1937, and during the Pacific War, the BRA became a community support organization.¹⁵³ Settlers and expatriates subsumed their specific identities within a broader British, and imperial, identity. Unlike previous threats to their polity (in 1925 and 1927), Japanese aggression directly threatened Shanghailanders as well as wider British interests in China, and in East and South-East Asia. Shanghailanders moved their British and imperial identities into the foreground, in the confident belief that, even though they were expediently downgrading their local identity and kow-towing to the directions of the British diplomatic establishment, their identity was strong and coherent enough to survive this temporary alliance with the British state. They expected that their rights and privileges would be retained after the conflict, and continued to argue that their anomalous political position was actually their chief utility to the British empire.

The Foreign Office failed to appreciate the niceties of this arrangement and the Shanghaileader gamble backfired. In the preparations for the East Asian war in summer and autumn 1941, it became clear that the diplomats and British imperial planners placed Shanghai outside the sphere of the empire that they were preparing to defend,¹⁵⁴ and in the Sino-British treaty of 11 January 1943, the props which made Shanghaileader existence possible were abolished.¹⁵⁵ Shanghailanders themselves were living under Japanese occupation, which conveniently rendered the diplomatic job of rendition rather easier than it might otherwise have been.

¹⁵³ *North China Herald*, 25 Mar. 1936, 527–8; Hugh Collar, *Captive in Shanghai: A Story of Internment in World War Two* (Hong Kong, 1990); 'British Residents' Association of China, Dec. 1941–June 1943' (typed manuscript, c.1944): School of Oriental and African Studies Library, PP MS. 47, Papers of A. G. N. Ogden, box 5, file 32.

¹⁵⁴ Sir Archibald Clark Kerr to Shanghai Foreign Office: PRO, FO 371/27707, F534/130/10, Shanghai no. 63, 6 Feb. 1941.

¹⁵⁵ Bickers, 'Settlers and Diplomats', *passim*.



This article's focus on the sharply defined Shanghailanders community has served to identify many of the thematic strands which must be examined in order to understand the complexities of British settler societies in general. The British empire and the British diaspora were not necessarily coterminous, and both the mechanisms and the implications of the latter have been underappreciated. At once a distinctive community, the Shanghaider example also reminds us more generally of the ways in which new identities were constructed and formally and informally maintained by Britons who settled overseas: of the role of violence and of economics, and of the centrality of issues of race, gender, nationality and class. Shanghailanders' settled, self-governing and politically explosive presence in a region outside the formal empire indicates the necessity of ignoring the geographical and disciplinary restrictions we impose on ourselves when looking at settler societies. And delineating Shanghaider identity and its problematic role in British relations with China reinforces the fact that the story of the men of finance, so prominent in recent historiography, is but one strand of the imperial experience.

In the institutions of the International Settlement, in their society's framework of taboos and conventions, and in media ranging from real estate leaflets to books of verse for children ('Oh, I LOVE Shanghai, don't you', finishes one rhyme accusingly),¹⁵⁶ Shanghailanders invoked their imagined but economically and socially tangible community. Many of them felt that they belonged there as much as did the Jiangsu and Zhejiang peasants who flocked to the city around the turn of the century. In organizations such as the BRA, Shanghailanders mobilized themselves to defend their position against the diplomats who by the late 1920s regretted their previous inaction, or who felt that Shanghailanders no longer served a useful purpose for Sino-British trade. Shanghailanders also struggled against public opinion, foreign and Chinese, which believed they had no right to be where they were. Shanghailanders had no desire to go 'backwards', as Warren Swire so dismissively opined. Quite the opposite: they saw themselves as progressive realists resisting attempts to send Sino-British relations back to the bad old pre-treaty port

¹⁵⁶ 'Shanghai by Night', in Patricia Allan, *Shanghai Picture-Verse* (Shanghai, 1939), 61.

days. That was the era when no extraterritoriality protected British subjects — and their Chinese colleagues, friends, tenants, workers and servants — from what Shanghailanders always regarded as arbitrary and cruel Chinese justice, from corruption, from militarists, from the expected relentless decline of the institutions they had created and the standards they believed they had established. In moments of violent crisis, such as in summer 1925, they retreated into violent defensiveness. It is easy to be retrospectively flippant about these ‘bizarre’¹⁵⁷ or ‘exotic’ activities, but it is clear that they had repercussions important in the modern history of Shanghai in particular, and in the history of Sino-Foreign relations in general. If Shanghailanders had merely been expatriates, or ‘spoilt children of empire’, the British state and its agents would have found it much easier to deal with them; after all, it had no problem in dealing with the ‘un-official’ British in India. But this was a settler community, squatting on rented land, and it had much more in common with other settler societies in the British empire than has previously been allowed, including the knack of causing a great deal of trouble.

After 1937, Shanghailanders began to lose their autonomy and became embroiled in the struggle between the Japanese invaders and the British for control of Shanghai and Tianjin. Economic boycotts, blockades, harassment, strikes, political gerrymandering, terrorism and attempted assassination were followed by the Japanese military occupation of the International Settlement on 8 December 1941. Shanghai was then hardly the city of the Asia Realty Company pledge: it guaranteed neither peace nor livelihood. Maurice Tinkler was murdered by Japanese marines during one such political strike in 1939. Noel Kent left the city in 1941 to join the Royal Indian Air Force. The Japanese allowed the structure of the SMC to continue functioning until August 1943. Senior British officials were removed in early 1942 and the bulk of the SMC’s British staff in August that year, but there were still British policemen working for the Council, at least nominally, in March 1943. Internment, when it came, certainly reinforced a sense of community, but it was a very different one.¹⁵⁸ On their release, some Britons did indeed stay on and

¹⁵⁷ Thus Clifford on the Shanghai Fascisti, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, 261.

¹⁵⁸ Bickers, ‘Settlers and Diplomats’; for further accounts of this period, see the memoir of the then chairman of the BRA: Collar, *Captive in Shanghai*; also Bernard Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai* (London, forthcoming 1998).

attempt to recreate their world, but the abolition of extraterritoriality and the rendition of all settlements and concessions in China which took place while they were impotently under Japanese control had created a different Shanghai. There were over 4,500 Britons still in the city by 1948, but the Communist victory and the Korean war blockade led to foreign firms and personnel being frozen out.¹⁵⁹ Noel Kent was one of those who returned, but in 1949 he left for South Africa, closer to home in its attitudes than the England he had barely ever seen. The British Chamber of Commerce wound itself up in late 1952. The remaining Britons lived 'very comfortably', but stressfully: by 1953, some had been forced to wait two years for their exit visas. The last British firm was closed down in 1957.¹⁶⁰ Although diminishing numbers of Shanghai Britons can still be found at dinners and reunions in London and elsewhere, the Shanghailanders community died in December 1941. It survives now only in the imagination.

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¹⁵⁹ The figures are from SMA, Q 1–18–310 24; there is little of value on the ending of the foreign presence; for the mechanics of the withdrawal, see Shao Wenguang, *China, Britain and Businessmen: Political and Commercial Relations, 1949–1957* (Basingstoke, 1991); T. N. Thompson, *China's Nationalization of Foreign Firms: The Politics of Hostage Capitalism, 1949–57* (School of Law, Univ. of Maryland, Occas. Papers/Reprints Ser., vi, Baltimore, 1979). For the flavour of defeat, see Noel Barber, *The Fall of Shanghai* (London, 1979).

¹⁶⁰ Tang, *Britain's Encounter with Revolutionary China*, 157; Humphrey Trevelyan to W. D. Allen, Shanghai, 1 Dec. 1953: PRO, FO 371/105315; F. W. H. London to J. S. H. Shattock, Shanghai, 17 Aug. 1953: PRO, FO 371/105317; Osterhammel, 'British Business in China, 1860s–1950s', 212–14.