Shanghai Sojourners

EDITED BY
Frederic Wakeman, Jr.
and Wen-hsin Yeh

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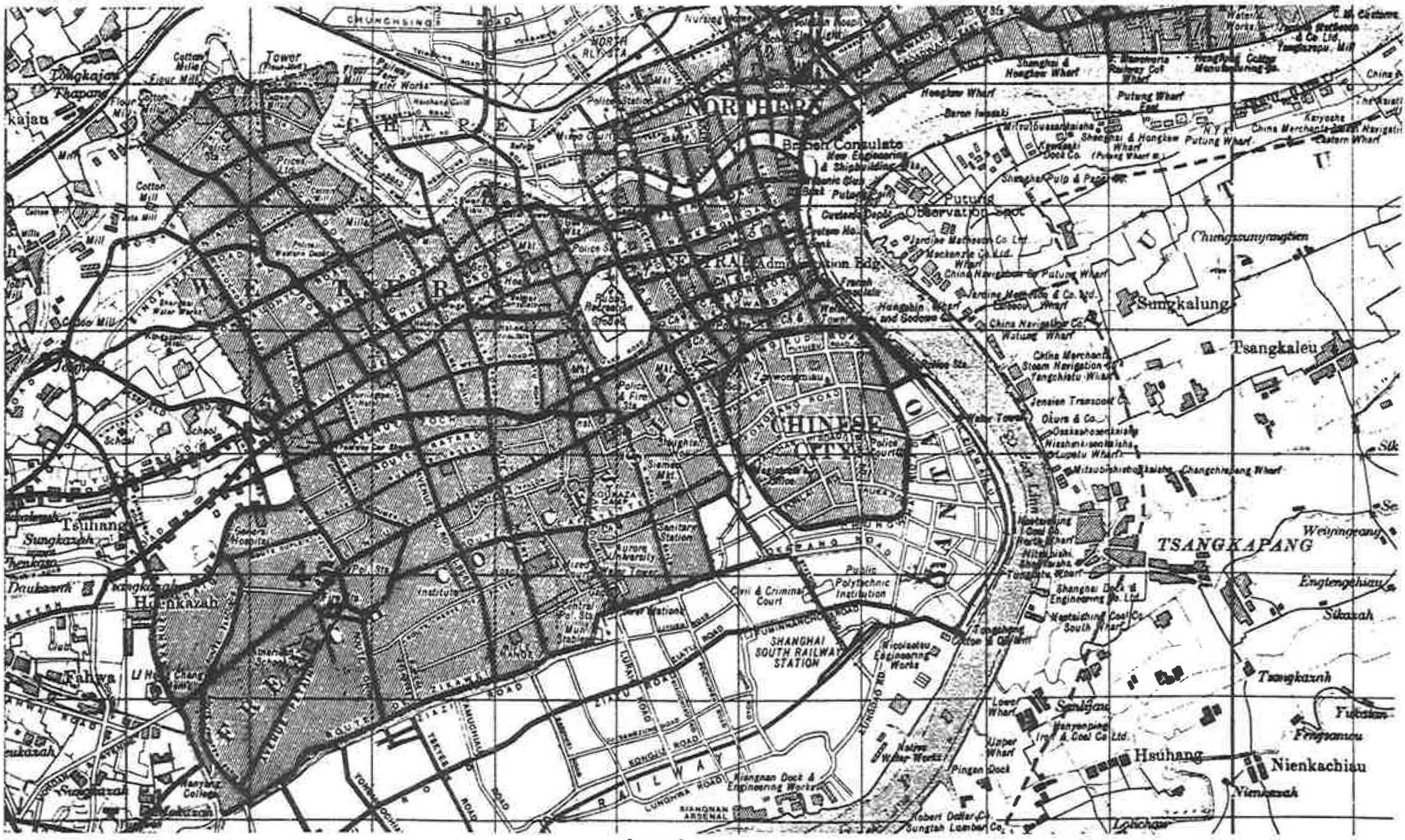

Shanghai, 1934

Introduction

FREDERIC WAKEMAN, JR., and WEN-HSIN YEH

Shanghai was formally opened to foreign trade on November 17, 1843. When the first party of English traders arrived, they saw the future International Settlement—a strip of land to the north of the Chinese city bordering the riverine area where Suzhou Creek ran into the Huangpu before entering the sea—"in the shape of sundry reed-beds, swamps, ponds and other malarious constituents."[1] These Englishmen were soon joined by an ever increasing number of Western traders and missionaries, of whom many were French and American. After the turn of the century other foreign sojourners arrived: Japanese, White Russians, Indians, Vietnamese, Prussians, Portuguese, Italians, Spanish, Poles, Greeks, and so forth. Shanghai's foreign community in its heyday was said to represent no fewer than fifty-eight nationalities. But the size of this foreign community never seemed to have exceeded a total of 150,000 people.[2]

The tenfold increase of Shanghai's population between 1842 and 1945 was largely a result of Chinese immigration from the countryside into the city, especially into the International Settlement (which doubled in numbers between 1895 and 1910 and doubled again between 1910 and 1930) and the French Concession (which almost tripled between 1895 and 1915 and more than tripled again between 1915 and 1930). From the 1850s on, each new social disturbance in the interior sent tens of thousands of Chinese refugees to Shanghai, seeking protection under the English and French flags. In the late 1850s the rebel troops of the Kingdom of Heavenly Peace (the Taipings), which ravaged eighteen provinces in fourteen years (1850–1864), swept through the lower Yangzi Valley, capturing such major cities as Nanjing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou.

[1] Shanghai Mercury, *Shanghai by Night and Day* (Shanghai, 1902), p. 4.

[2] Zou Yiren, *Jiu Shanghai renkou bianqian de yanjiu* [A study of the changes in population of old Shanghai] (Shanghai, 1980), pp. 68, 81.

The Taipings did not take Shanghai, but the Chinese part of the city was occupied by the Cantonese and Fukienese dock workers and by sailors of the Small Swords Society. Between 1855 and 1865, the population of the International Settlement swelled from approximately 20,000 to 90,000. The French Concession at the same time gained about 40,000. The foreign consuls and residents viewed this influx of Chinese with alarm and set up the first Municipal Council of the International Settlement on July 22, 1854, in part to deal with the emergency.[3]

The newcomers to Shanghai in the 1860s included a large number of gentrymen from such leading Jiangnan cities as Suzhou, Nanjing, Songjiang, and Hangzhou—all elite refugees from areas that had fallen to the Taipings. When these men fled to Shanghai, they brought their wealth and cultural tastes with them. New styles of cultured life began to appear in Shanghai's concessions, and by the time the Taipings were put down, many of the newcomers had come to regard Shanghai as a new home. Movements of this sort, along with the changing patterns of trade and transportation after the opening of the treaty ports, were largely responsible for the long-term shifts in Jiangnan's regional geography. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Shanghai had emerged to become the leading metropolis of the lower Yangzi Valley. Traditional Jiangnan cities lost their preeminence as traders went elsewhere, artisans emigrated, and the gentry were attracted to the new cosmopolitanism of Shanghai.

Commerce expanded and light industry developed in Shanghai at the turn of the twentieth century. Along the Bund stood the imposing high-rise offices of major Western banking corporations and trading houses. In the early stage of modern urban development many firms on Nanjing Road and the cotton mills along Yangshupu were financed mainly with foreign capital. Although the first Chinese-owned machine-powered rice-grinding concern was founded in 1863, indigenous industrial capitalism was repeatedly hampered by structural weaknesses in the investment environment that led to major recessions such as the one engendered by the credit crisis of 1883.[4] Between 1915 and 1919, when the European powers were engaged in war, however, Shanghai's light industry enjoyed a major boom. The benefits were shared primarily by Japanese and Chinese investors. Flour mills, shipping concerns, textile mills, silk

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[3] Shanghai Mercury, *Shanghai by Night and Day*, p. 15. Crowding and poor accommodations apparently led to an outbreak of cholera and other epidemic diseases.

[4] Yen-p'ing Hao, *The Commercial Revolution of Nineteenth-Century China: The Rise of Sino-Western Mercantile Competition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 329, 331–334.

CHAPTER ONE

The Shanghai Bankers' Association, 1915–1927

Modernization and the Institutionalization of Local Solidarities

MARIE-CLAIRE BERGÈRE

From 1917 to 1927 the Shanghai Bankers' Association (SBA) was one of the most assertive organizations of the Shanghai business class. It represented the interests and promoted the views of a remarkable group of young bankers who struggled for the development of banking and the adoption of various financial and monetary reforms. In a more general way, they also advocated the modernization of the economic system and political institutions.

The SBA was one of the professional associations (*fatuan*) established in the early twentieth century under a series of laws promulgated by the government between 1903 and 1915 requiring the regulation of certain infant professions, including industry, law, and banking. Moreover, the associations were charged with various official functions, and consequently, they came to be considered to have a legitimate voice in public affairs.[1]

The chambers of commerce were established in 1903 and the lawyers' associations in 1912. Although traditional banks (*qianzhuang*) had already organized themselves into the Native Bankers' Guild (Qianye gonghui) in 1911, it was not until August 1915 that the Beijing government required banking associations (*yinhang gonghui*) to be established in each important financial center for the self-regulation of modern banks.[2]

The creation of the Shanghai banking association took some time. The association began as an informal group of young managers—Zhang

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[1] See Andrew Nathan, *Peking Politics, 1918–1923* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 13–14.

[2] See *Shanghai qianzhuang shiliao* [Materials on the history of Shanghai native banks] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1960), p. 645.

CHAPTER TWO

Three Roads into Shanghai's Market

Japanese, Western, and Chinese Companies in the Match Trade, 1895–1937

SHERMAN COCHRAN

Between 1895 and 1937, Shanghai attracted sojourning capitalists from abroad and from all regions of China, and it served as headquarters for almost all China's foreign-owned long-distance trading firms as well as many Chinese-owned ones. The aim of this chapter is to characterize these sojourning big businesses and analyze their approaches to Shanghai's market. To achieve this aim, it focuses on firms marketing one commodity, matches, and in particular on three such businesses, all of them commercial giants: Japan's largest marketing firm, Mitsui Trading Company (Mitsui Bussan Kaisha); the West's and the world's largest match manufacturer, Swedish Match Company (Svenska Tändsticks Aktiebolaget); and China's leading match producer and distributor, China Match Company (Da Zhonghua huochai gongsi).

These three large corporations were alike in that they all set up headquarters for China in Shanghai and used Shanghai as a base for long-distance trade in the early twentieth century, but each adopted a different strategy to control the market in Shanghai and other Chinese cities. Was the approach used by each one illustrative of a national or cultural style of business behavior? That is, did Mitsui Bussan conform to a "Japanese model," Swedish Match to a "Western model," and China Match to a "Chinese model" of business organization and strategy? Or did these three companies depart from the usual patterns and behave in a manner reflecting the special character of Shanghai? Of the three, why did the Chinese firm have greater success in Shanghai than its larger and more internationally influential foreign rivals? This chapter explores these questions by characterizing each of the three businesses in relation to a different model.

CHAPTER THREE

New Culture, Old Habits

Native-Place Organization and the May Fourth Movement

BRYNA GOODMAN

Studies of the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai have not stressed native-place organization, and it would be surprising if they did, since the period is celebrated for its themes of iconoclasm, enlightenment, nationalism, and modernity, themes that are understood to constitute a rupture with old, "particularistic" social ties. The nationalism of the May Fourth Movement and the self-proclaimed cultural radicalism of the associated New Culture Movement have led the sympathetic historian to seek out expressions of new cultural and political forms and to relegate cultural continuities to the status of remnants. In the process, we have lost track of some of the social networks and organizations that underlay and facilitated the movement.[1] In examining the relation between native-place associations in Shanghai and the May Fourth Movement, this chapter seeks to regain a balance.

While May Fourth historiography has not stressed the role native-place associations played in providing organizational forms for the patriotic activities of students, businessmen, and workers, some notice of several of the most influential of such organizations—the Ningbo, Shandong, and Guangzhao *huiguan;* associations of Zhejiang and Shandong students; and seamen's associations of Ningbo and Guangdong, for instance—has been unavoidable.[2] Moreover, the persistence and

This chapter is based on a larger study of native-place sentiment and organization in Shanghai, "The Native-Place and the City: Immigrant Consciousness and Social Organization in Shanghai, 1853–1927" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, June 1990). For critical comments and suggestions on this paper or on issues discussed here, I would like to thank Andrew Char, Prasenjit Duara, Harold Kahn, Michael Meranze, Elizabeth Perry, David Sacks, Ernst Schwintzer, Lyman Van Slyke, Jeffrey Wasserstrom, and Zhang Jishun.

[1] See, for example, issues raised in Arif Dirlik, "Ideology and Organization in the May Fourth Movement: Some Problems in the Intellectual Historiography of the May Fourth Period," *Republican China* 12:1 (November 1986): 5.

[2] See, for example, Joseph Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai* (Leiden, 1971).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Evolution of the Shanghai Student Protest Repertoire; or, Where Do Correct Tactics Come From?

JEFFREY N. WASSERSTROM

Student protests involving educated youths were a central feature of Shanghai life during the Republican era, particularly after the events of 1919 (discussed in the previous chapter) convinced foreign and domestic elites (as well as students themselves) of the potency such actions could have. Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, educated youths continually took to the streets to protest new foreign threats to their nation's sovereignty, the continuing lack of political freedom at home, and abuses of power by Chinese officials. With the exception of the years of the Japanese occupation, in fact, a year never went by in which Shanghai students did not stage some kind of demonstration or rally. At least once a decade, moreover, educated youths played central roles in a multiclass struggle that, like the May Fourth Movement, brought the city's ordinary economic and political life to a virtual standstill. Sometimes, as in the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925 and the Three Workers' Uprisings of 1927, students either played a secondary role to or at least had to share the vanguard position with workers during these new struggles. More often, however, they took the lead in staging demonstrations and

For reading and commenting upon earlier versions of this chapter, I would like to thank Tom Gold, David Keightley, Frederic Wakeman, Elizabeth Perry, John Israel, the Chinese and Western participants in the Shanghai symposium, the members of the Berkeley dissertation group, Dan Letwin, Tim Weston, and David Johnson. Finally, I am grateful to Joseph Esherick and Liu Xinyong, collaborators on related projects whose views on student protest have influenced my own for the better. I would also like to thank Stanford University Press for allowing me to use material from my book *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991) here; the chapter here is adapted from chapter 3 of that work.

CHAPTER FIVE

Regulating Sex in Shanghai

The Reform of Prostitution in 1920 and 1951

GAIL HERSHATTER

In Shanghai, the sale of female sexual services was big business in the first half of the twentieth century. Contemporary estimates of the number of women involved ranged as high as a hundred thousand, which would make prostitution the largest single employer of female labor, outnumbering even cotton spinners in China's largest industrial city.[1] If the

[1] The fragmentary statistics available indicate the secular growth of prostitution. A 1920 report of the Special Vice Commission counted 4,522 Chinese prostitutes in the International Settlement alone, or one out of every 147 Chinese residents of the Settlement. If the greater population of Shanghai was taken as 1.5 million, the report added, and if prostitutes in the French Concession were figured in, then 1 in 300 Chinese residents of Shanghai sold her sexual services for a living. Special Vice Committee, "Vice Conditions in Shanghai," *Municipal Gazette* 13:681 (March 19, 1920): 84. These figures did not include what the report referred to as "sly" prostitutes, and in fact another set of statistics collected at around the same time found more than 60,000 prostitutes at work in the two foreign areas, most of them streetwalkers known as "pheasants." James Hundley Wiley, "A Study of Chinese Prostitution" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1929), p. 45; Yi Feng, "Changji wenti yanjiu" [Research on the problem of prostitution], *Funü gongming yuekan*, February 1933, p. 39. By 1935, combined estimates of licensed and unlicensed prostitutes ran to 100,000, with much of the increase attributed to rural disaster and Depression-related factory closings. Luo Qiong, "Changji zai Zhongguo" [Prostitution in China], *Funü shenghuo* 1:6 (December 1935): 37. A postwar study put the number of full-time prostitutes at 50,000, but suggested that the figure should be doubled to take account of women "whose activities approach those of prostitutes." Yu Wei, "Shanghai changji wubaige an diaocha" [An investigation of five hundred cases of prostitution in Shanghai], *Shizeng pinglun* 10:9/10 (October 15, 1948): 10. If the Shanghai population at that time is taken as 4.2 million, then one in every 42 city residents was directly involved in prostitution. Compare the highest estimates of 100,000 prostitutes to the number of female industrial workers in Shanghai: 173,432 women. The largest subgroup of these, about 84,000, were in cotton spinning. So there were arguably more prostitutes than cotton spinners in Shanghai, China's largest industrial city. (Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986] pp. 24–25, gives the total number of female industrial workers in Shanghai as 173,432 in 1929. Of these, the largest number [84,270] were em-

CHAPTER SIX

Progressive Journalism and Shanghai's Petty Urbanites

Zou Taofen and the Shenghuo Enterprise, 1926–1945

WEN-HSIN YEH

In his last words, addressed to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Yan'an in summer 1944 as he lay stricken with cancer, Zou Taofen (1895–1944), the publisher of Shanghai's Shenghuo Bookstore, briefly recounted his lifelong struggle to help gain China's national liberation and political democratization. Reaffirming his commitment to progressive cultural mobilization, he respectfully tendered a deathbed request that he be accepted, posthumously, as a member of the Communist Party.[1] The Central Committee of the Party replied that it was deeply honored and solemnly accepted the request, grieved as it was by the news of Zou's demise.[2]

Zou Taofen's death at 7:20 A.M. on July 24 marked the beginning of the Central Committee's thorough incorporation of his life into the Party's history. The wording of Zou's last request lent itself readily to such political use, although, tellingly enough, controversies later arose over the authorship and, by implication, the authenticity of Zou Taofen's will.[3] Numerous commemorative ceremonies were held in Communist

[1] Mu Xin, *Zou Taofen* (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1959), p. 331. As this chapter goes to press, Zou Taofen's oldest son, Zou Jiahua, is widely rumored to be the top candidate likely to become China's next premier.

[2] See the Central Committee's telegram to Zou's family on September 28, 1944. Ibid., pp. 332–333.

[3] Most accounts suggest that Zou Taofen's last words were written by Xu Xuehan, a Party member and a New Fourth Route Army liaison officer who had been instructed by the Party's command in northern Jiangsu to look after the ailing Zou Taofen in Shanghai. Xu Xuehan himself states that he prepared a draft will upon Zou Taofen's request when the latter's health was rapidly deteriorating under the attack of cancer. Xu insists, however, that Zou Taofen himself wrote the version that was later carried to Subei and Yan'an. See Xu Xuehan, "Linzhong qian de Taofen xiansheng," in Zou Jiali, ed., *Yi Taofen* (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 388–389.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Migrant Culture in Shanghai

In Search of a Subei Identity

EMILY HONIG

Pre-Liberation Shanghai was a city of immigrants where social groups were often defined by native-place identity.[1] From the mid-nineteenth century, when the city's development as a large commercial and industrial metropolis began, laborers, merchants, and entrepreneurs came mostly from three areas: Guangdong, Jiangnan (the Ningbo-Shaoxing region of Zhejiang and the Wuxi-Changzhou area of Jiangsu), and Subei (roughly, the area of Jiangsu north of the Yangzi River). Which of these areas one hailed from was critical in shaping work opportunities, residential patterns, cultural activities, and social status. Hierarchy was structured largely according to local origins: the elite was composed primarily of people from Guangdong and Jiangnan, the unskilled service sector staffed mostly by migrants from Subei. Identity as a Ningbo native connoted wealth and urbanity as certainly as a Subei identity was associated with poverty and ignorance (even though not all migrants from Ningbo were wealthy nor all from Subei poor).

The belief in the existence of a despised group called *Subei ren* (or, in more popular and slightly more derogatory parlance, *Jiangbei ren*) has been central throughout Shanghai's development as a modern industrial center. From the early twentieth century, calling someone a *Jiangbei ren* or, even worse, a "Jiangbei swine," has been one of the most common curses in Shanghai dialect. *Jiangbei ren* was one of the most frequent identities ascribed to individuals in daily newspapers, and almost all Shanghai residents could identify the so-called Subei villages, the shack settlements or slums where many Subei natives lived. If a single group of

[1] From 1885 to 1935, Shanghai natives accounted for an average of only 19 percent of the population of the International Concession and 26 percent of the Chinese-owned parts of the city. Zou Yiren, *Jiu Shanghai renkou bianqian de yanjiu* [Research on changes in the population of old Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), 112–13.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"The Pact with the Devil"

The Relationship between the Green Gang and the Shanghai French Concession Authorities, 1925–1935

BRIAN G. MARTIN

This chapter analyzes the relationship that developed in the late 1920s and early 1930s between the Green Gang bosses, in particular Du Yuesheng, and the Shanghai French Concession authorities. In doing so, it seeks to address one of the major questions in the social and political history of Shanghai in the early twentieth century: that is, what was the nature of the relationship between gangster organizations and the foreign administrations, and what did this mean for the character of foreign rule in Shanghai? In a partial answer to this question, the chapter argues that in the French Concession, at least, there did exist a significant community of interests between the French authorities and Du Yuesheng's gangster organization that reflected institutional and administrative imperatives and not merely transient arrangements between corrupt individuals. However, this relationship was not unchanging over time. The balance of forces within it reflected the degree to which the gangsters could translate their "comprador" functions (assisting in the control of the Chinese population and the maintenance of social order) into the exercise of actual power within the Concession and the degree to which the French authorities could resist or control this phenomenon. At the same time, it also reflected the influence on these internal developments of such external factors as changes in the Chinese and French political environments. It was precisely because of its fluid nature that this cooperative relationship played such an important role in the emergence of a system of organized crime in Shanghai.

CHAPTER NINE

Strikes among Shanghai Silk Weavers, 1927–1937

The Awakening of a Labor Aristocracy

ELIZABETH J. PERRY

Studies of the Chinese labor movement generally end their story in the spring of 1927, when Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-shek's) bloody Shanghai massacre drove a shattered Communist Party out of the cities and into the countryside. From that point on, we are led to believe, the urban proletariat was politically insignificant. The Chinese revolution became a peasant war, fought and won in the rural hinterland.

The focus of Communist activities did indeed shift away from the urban workers after April 1927. But the history of the Chinese labor movement is not identical with Party history. Just as Chinese workers had been active well before the founding of the Communist Party, so they continued their struggles well after the mass executions and forced exodus of Communist labor organizers in 1927. Indeed, certain sectors of the work force grew much more feisty during the Nanjing decade (1927–1937) than they had ever been under Communist inspiration. One such group was the Shanghai silk weavers.

The silk weavers of Shanghai were known in the 1920s as China's "labor aristocrats" (*guizu gongren*). Occupying skilled jobs that paid well, these fortunate laborers were notably absent from the massive workers' strikes that swept through most of the city's factories in that period. While workers in other Shanghai industries responded actively to the spirit of the May Fourth (1919) and May Thirtieth (1925) movements, silk weavers remained quietly at their jobs. By the turn of the decade, however, the situation had changed. As producers of a luxury commodity tailored toward an international market, silk weavers were especially vulnerable to fluctuations in the world economy. That economy brought them prosperity in the 1920s, but a few years later—in the wake of the Great Depression, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the

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