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Chinese Encounter of Jewish Refugees in Shanghai

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CHINESE ENCOUNTER OF JEWISH REFUGEES IN SHANGHAI

by

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B. A, University of Macau, 2010

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Approved by:

Theodore Weeks, Chair

Graduate School
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CHINESE ENCOUNTER OF JEWISH REFUGEES IN SHANGHAI

INTRODUCTION

Hitler's persecution of European Jews opened a new round of Jewish diaspora. For Jews who were still trapped in Germany at the outbreak of the *Kristalnacht*, Shanghai was the only place in the world where they could enter without a visa.¹ The Japanese finally closed the gate in 1941, prohibiting further entrance of Jewish refugees. From the first wave of arrival of refugees until the end of the Second World War, Hongkew, a poor district in Shanghai, remains a temporary home for between 18,000 to 25,000 Jews.² Despite the help of local Jewish communities and various relief committees, these people continued to struggle for their lives in an alien world. When the war ended, most refugees left their temporary sanctuary with the first available opportunity, gradually spreading to the United States, Israel, Australia, or back to Europe; a few remained in China until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. The experience of this group has been studied extensively from a European perspective. This paper takes a Chinese perspective. Chinese perception of Shanghai Jewish Refugees in Shanghai changed over time as it was shaped by different forces and agendas.

¹ On the legal condition under which Jews were permitted to enter Shanghai, see Avraham Aleman and Irene Eber,, "Flight to Shanghai, 1938-1940: The Larger Setting," *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol.XXVIII, 2000. pp. 62-73.

² Historians made different conclusion of the number of refugees. On the general figures and conditions of refugees, see David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: the Jewish refugee community of Shanghai, 1938-1945*. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The experience of Jewish refugees in Shanghai has long been studied by historians.³ Most of them focus on Jewish experience. David Kranzler's *Japanese, Nazis & Jews : the Jewish refugee community of Shanghai, 1938-1945* is the first comprehensive work to trace the situation under which their entrance was permitted. It also presented Jews' life in Shanghai.⁴ Marcia Reynders Ristaino's *Port of Last Resort* argues that “[T]he Japanese [...] displayed a unique version of anti-Jewish expression, combining a desire to exploit the Jews with a sense of admiration for them.”⁵ Susanne Wiedemann studies how America became the imagined home for half from this group which eventually emigrated to the United States. She contends that “[T]he knowledge and ability to 'read' America through the narratives it produced allowed the German Jewish refugees to blend into American society after having been outsiders both in their native country and in exile in China.”⁶

While most works focus on the Jewish experience, Gao Bei, in her dissertation *China, Japan and the Flight of European Jewish Refugees to Shanghai, 1938-1945*, studies this community from an East Asian perspective. She tells the story of the Chinese Nationalist Government's unrealized plan for resettling Jews in Southwest China, as well as Japan's policy towards this refugee group. Japanese Colonel Yasue and Captain Inuzuca formed their “rational and original” anti-Semitic ideas; they attempted to “attract as many Jews as possible to Japanese-occupied China in order to exploit them

³ There was controversy on the definition of refugee. The consensus among scholars and contemporary Shanghai society is that the term “Jewish refugee” refers to Jews who entered Shanghai after the *kristallnacht* on November 9-10, 1938. In an letter to the editor of Shanghai Herald, a Jewish refugee criticizes the inappropriateness of this term. He argues that “the expression Jew only means his religion and not his nationality,” and since a Jewish nation did not exist this term was fallacious and was only an invention of Nazis. Moreover, a great many intends to stay and were independent to any relief organization. Thus, this term lost a great part of its validity, as argues by this refugee. “Refugees or What?” The Shanghai Herald, October 13, 1945.

⁴ David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis & Jews : the Jewish refugee community of Shanghai, 1938-1945*(New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976). 2-12.

⁵ Maria Restaino, *Port of Last Resort: the Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 2001), p4.

⁶ Susanne Wiedemann, *Transnational Encounters with “Amerika”: German Jewish Refugees' Identity Formation in Berlin and Shanghai, 1939-1949* (PhD diss., Brown University, 1999), 20.

ruthlessly.”⁷ She also maintains that the Chinese perception of Jewish refugees was notable for its lack of anti-Semitic sentiments.⁸ More interestingly, she traces the Nationalists' attitude towards Jews. For the Nationalists, Jewishness was most notable for its struggle for nationalism. In a tumultuous time when China was ravaged by the imperialists, Chinese developed deep identification with Jews.⁹

⁷ Gao Bei, *China, Japan and the Flight of European Jewish Refugees to Shanghai, 1938-1945* (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2007), 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

MAIN ARGUMENTS, SOURCES, AND METHODOLOGY

By scrutinizing Chinese' encountering of Jewish community, my study furthers Gao's work on Chinese perception of Jewish refugees. Chinese perception of Shanghai Jewish Refugees in Shanghai changed over time as it was shaped by different forces and agendas. As Gao pointed out in her dissertation, in the 1930s, the Chinese Nationalists was sympathetic to their shared fate of struggle for survival. From the end of 1930s to middle of 1940s, Chinese perception of Jews was more complicated as it was shaped by close contact with Jews and accessory of anti-Semitic literature. Jews gradually left China with the end of the Second World War, and for a long time the Communist Regime ignored this history. The establishment of China-Israel diplomatic relation in 1994 triggered a surge of memory of this community. The center of memory was located in physical space, thus allow a flexible interpretation of the past.

My research utilizes English and Chinese archive sources, newspapers, magazines, and memoirs. Memoirs of Jewish refugees provide readers a glimpse the otherwise undocumented perception of Chinese neighbors on Jews. For these Chinese, there was a general unawareness of anti-Semitism in Europe. Thus, the presence of this group of foreigners in their poor community surprised them. As they got used to Jewish presence, these poor and generally uneducated Chinese became more aware of Jews' unique identity and struggle for life. Letters to the editors in English newspapers overlooked by historians provide another source to learn about Chinese perception of Jews. From these discussions, it is noticeable that the Jewish struggle for life is a recurrent theme. These discussions in English newspapers provide Chinese readers a concrete understanding of Jewish life struggle. The discussion on Chinese National Government's repatriation policy which was applied equally to German Jews and other Germans after the war reveals that the Nationalists prioritized political expediency over sympathy. Magazine articles reveals a complex set of attitudes and understanding of Jewish related matters. Articles written by Chinese author who witnessed Jewish suffering often express sympathy to

Jews, while those translated from foreign source often has anti-Semitic sentiments. Most Jews left China when the Communists took over Shanghai. Government documents, media and academy discourse reveals that the Shanghai Government defines the former Ohel Moshe Synagogue as the center locus of memory for Jewish Refugees in Shanghai.

This paper mainly analyzes discourses of Chinese source on perceptions of Jews. Foucault maintains that history has a discourse and it is a discourse, that history is words on the page, not people's life. The historians can only get closer to the historical truth yet cannot make a final seal to the story of the past. Historians can only analyses the language yet cannot take assert that language is the truth .This paper approaches various sources by analyzing their language to understand reasons for different mentalities and policies. By looking at various Chinese articles on Jews, this paper aims at analyzing the perception on Jews and the agendas as well as reasons for various discourses.

CHINESE PERCEPTION OF JEWS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF JEWISH REFUGEES

In general, Chinese knowledge about the Jews and their history was minimal before the 1930s. Jewish merchants first arrived in Chang'an, the capital of Tang Dynasty (618-907), at the end of this dynasty through the Silk Road.¹⁰ However, it took another 200 years for Jews to settle in China. In about 1120, Jews started to form a community in Kaifeng, the capital of Northern Song Dynasty (960-1126), also a city of communication and international trade. In the following centuries, the Jews adopted Chinese customs and gradually integrated into Chinese society. By the early nineteenth century, the Jewish community gradually stopped practicing their faith with the death of their last religious leader.¹¹ Despite the presence of the Jewish community in Kaifeng, Jews and their faith were “almost unknown to Chinese people” until the mid-nineteenth century. The Chinese confused the Kaifeng Jews with Muslims; sometimes, the Jews were simply viewed as “a small, mysterious and peculiar religious sect that survived from ancient times.”¹²

The Chinese elite gained more knowledge about Jews from the mid-nineteenth century. After the Opium War of 1839-41 waged by Britain crushed China's seclusion, the Chinese became more aware of the Jews and the “Jewish Problem” in Europe. From this point on, China began to send its own scholars and diplomats overseas. Thus, a small group of elite Chinese were able to gain first-hand knowledge of Jews and European Antisemitism.¹³ By the 1920s a group of Chinese nationalists, represented by Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, was deeply sympathetic to the Jews in light of their Zionist goal, which they equated with the Chinese's nationalistic movement.¹⁴ This sympathy was transformed into political activism. On May 13, 1930, Madame Sun Yat-sen headed a delegation, which

10 Jonathan Goldstein, ed., *The Jews of China: Volume One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), p. xii.

11 Irene Eber, “Kaifeng Jews: The Sinification of Identity,” in Jonathan Goldstein, ed., *The Jews of China: Volume One, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, pp. 23-24.

12 Xiao Xian, “An Overview of Chinese Impressions of and Attitudes Toward Jews Before 1949,” in Jonathan Goldstein, ed., *The Jews of China: Volume Two, A Sourcebook and Research Guide* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), p.34.

13 *Ibid.*, 35.

14 *Ibid.*, 36.

members included the foremost cultural elites at that time, such as Dr. Cai Yuan-Pei, Mr. Lo Shun, Dr. Lin Yu-tang, to lodge a strong protest against the Nazi atrocities in Germany with the German Consul in Shanghai, Mr. R.C.W Behrend.¹⁵ This political action did not change political situation. However, it demonstrated Chinese sympathy to Jews. This sympathetic attitude was well recognized by Dr. Albert Einstein and a number of intellectuals. A letter from Maurice William to John Dewey reports Albert Einstein's view on Chinese people and his proposal for potential cooperation between Jews and Chinese. As William reported, Einstein thinks that "[t]he Chinese are a grateful people; they know how to return kindness with kindness."¹⁶ Furthermore, he was assured by Dr. Sze that there was no racial prejudice in China, particularly that they were victims of racial prejudice.¹⁷ Einstein proposes to relocate Jews to China. He believes that this would create a favorable situation for both sides; the Chinese would be grateful for Jewish contribution, whose training and experience would be highly helpful for China's development.¹⁸ Due to unknown reasons, this plan was not realized.¹⁹

The story of Dr. Ho Feng-Shan well illustrated how involvement in European politics and personal contact with Jews shaped Chinese elites' understanding and perception of Jews. The Chinese ambassador in Austria from 1937-40, Dr. Ho Feng-shan, issued more than two thousand visas to Jews "in spite of orders from his superior to the contrary."²⁰ Dr. Ho witnessed fervent anti-Semitism in

15 "1938-1939, Jewish Refugees Flood into Shanghai," in Pan Guang, ed., *The Jews in Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai Pictorial Publishing House, 2005), 27.

16 Maurice William to John Dewey. Baruch Charney Vladeck Papers, Boax 3, John Dewey 1928-34, Film R-7235, Reel 3. Page 4. March 6, 1934.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 There were a similar proposal by one nationalists which is also not realized. See "The Chinese Nationalist Government's Policy towards European Jewish Refugees during World War Two." *Modern China*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Spring 2011, pp. 202-237.

20 "The Righteous Among the Nations: Chinese Visas in Vienna: Feng Shan-ho, China." <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/ho.asp>

The Republic of China ordered ambassadors to grant Jews visa whenever at request. The Minister of Finance, Kong Xianxi, even propose a plan to settle Jewish refugees to Hainan Island in South China. However, different consulates did not have consensus on this issue. The ambassador in Berlin, Chenjie, instructed Ho to restrict number of visas issued to Jews so as to cement a closer tie between China and Germany. Ho thought that the Foreign Ministry has issued new policy yet have not received order from it. Thus, the vice Consultant Zhou Qi-xiang ordered him to disregard Chen's instruction. Ho was awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nation" for his "his humanitarian courage in issuing Chinese visas to Jews in Vienna Visa in spite orders from his superior to the contrary" in 2000 for Ho's Ho Feng-shan, *40 Years of My Diplomatic Life* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990), 75-76; YADVASHEM.

Austria. He watched as Jewish shops were smashed by the Brown Shirts, their owners arrested and sent to concentration camps. He is was also aware of the desperation among Austrian Jews when the U.S. imposed strict immigration policy to them, closing the gate of the most desired immigration destination for these Jews.²¹ The suffering of his close Jewish acquaintances deepened his insight of Jewish suffering under Nazism. One of Dr. Ho's close friend, a Mrs. Baker, with whom and whose husband Dr. Ho exchanged many stimulating and pleasant conversations. Mrs. Baker was also deeply fond of Dr. Ho's son, to whom she introduced famous German thinkers, writes, and musicians, that who gave training in scientific inquiry. Ho commented that this one month's nourishment in humanitarian and scientific inquiry influenced an eleven year old's whole life.²² However, after the Anschluss, Mrs. Baker was categorized as Jewish since she had one -fourth Jewish blood. Her fate remains unknown, She was possibly being killed, as Dr. Ho suspected.²³ He also witnessed the ferociousness of Nazi Party Members to treat Jews. In 1939, when he visited his Jewish friend Rosenberg, Jews in Austria were under house arrest that day.²⁴ He was informed by Rosenberg's wife that he was under interrogation by the Nazis. In the meantime, two Nazi members intruded, inspected the house furiously and even interrogated Dr. Ho's identity. Ho commented that these Nazis were outwardly evil-looking and ill tempered. Rosenberg returned safely that night, and soon sought refuge in Shanghai. Later he wrote a memoirs, in which he praised Dr. Ho' "brave acts for a just cause."²⁵ Dr. Ho was awarded the title "Righteous among the nations" in 2000, primarily for his resistance to orders from his superior while in service for the consultant in Vienna.²⁶ However, for Ho, his rescue of Jews was more affiliated with church and charity organizations, with which he maintained frequent and intimate connection.²⁷

Chinese cultural intellectuals also changed their perceptions on Jews over time. Predominant

21 Ho Feng-Shan, *Forty Years of Diplomatic Life*, 75.

22 Ibid., 78-79.

23 Ibid, 79.

24 Ibid., 85. The cause for this is a Parish Jews assassination of a secretary in the German Consultant in Paris.

25 Rosenberg, Quoted in Ho Feng-shan, 86.

26 "Righteous Among the Nations: Ho Feng-Shan." Yad Vashem

<http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/ho.asp>. Retrieved April 10.

27 Ho Feng-shan, 84.

views about Jews showed that they were an intelligent and diligent group with remarkable contribution for society and civilization. They also demonstrated sympathy for Jewish suffering from discrimination and similar struggle for independence and freedom. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a group of Chinese intellectuals introduced and encountered more Jewish presence in *Dongfang Zazhi* (Tung-fang tsa-chih), the Eastern Miscellany. This magazine was published in Shanghai from 1904 to 1948. Aimed at urban readership, sales of this monthly, later fortnightly magazine ran as high as fifteen thousand copies.²⁸ The magazine aimed to enhance scholarly pursuit (*yanjiu xueli*), enlightened thinking (*qifa sixiang*), and correct customs and mores. Its real function, as commented by Lee, an eminent scholar on Shanghai's identity, was to provide diverse and mundane, and by no mean precious and valuable necessities.²⁹ An incomplete count indicates that fifty-three articles published in this magazines were related to Jews or Jewish matters, among which twenty-eight were exclusively on Jewish topics .³⁰ Many early articles were translations from Japanese and American journals, in which Jews were depicted as “abnormal, unusual, and even mysterious.”³¹ In one such article Jews were described as “a symbol of greediness, meanness, and shamelessness” and “an enigma.”³² In addition to published translations with anti-Semitic sentiments, the magazine also included articles which demonstrate Jewish intelligence, suffering, and economic power, sometimes in an exaggerated manner.³³

Articles originally written by Chinese on Jewish matters demonstrated deep sympathy to Jews. In 1933, one Chinese author informed his readers the ascendancy of anti-Semitism in Europe. Jews were described as a “unique” ethnicity: they preserved their tradition and refused to be Christianized; Jews had genius and intelligence; ordinary Jews were diligent and frugal; Jews as a group made

28 Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a new Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*, pp.47-48.

29 *Ibid.*, 48.

30 Xiao xian, 35.

31 *Ibid.*, 36.

32 Jun Shi, “The Future of Jewish People,” *Dongfang zazhi* (Shanghai), vol. 10, no. 12, and vol. 23, no. 17. cited fom Xiaoxian, 36. It is unclear whether this article was translated from American or Japanese source, neither the year when the original article was published.

33 Xiao Xian, 36.

remarkable contribution in various realms. However, Jews were powerless. In Europe, they were bullied in Romania and Poland. The author commented that the prevalence of nationalism was the chief culprit for the strong anti-Semitic sentiment.³⁴ In 1930s, when China was ravaged by foreign imperialist powers, the lesson drawn by the author was that “it is difficult for a completely suppressed group to raise again.”³⁵

Chinese authors with first-hand contact with Jews were impressed by Jewish diligence, sympathetic for Jewish suffering, yet also had mixed feeling for their shrewdness. In September 1934, a Chinese visited the Jewish autonomous region of Biro-Bidzhan on the Chinese border. He was aware of both religious cause of anti-Semitism since the Crusades as well as more recent nationalistic anti-Semitism in both Czarist Russia and Germany.³⁶ At the invitation of Soviet Union, the Chinese Cultural Bureau dispatched him to join the ninth anniversary of the establishment of Jewish Autonomous Region. He was impressed by the fact that there was a piece of land in the world where Jews could cultivate freely and manage on their own. Realizing that there also lived Koreans, he commented that this group was not narrowly nationalistic; rather, they manifested an “international” characteristic.³⁷ Moreover, he observed that freedom was of special meaning for Jews since every office were granted two-days off to celebrate the anniversary of Jewish Autonomous Region. “Jews had suffered severely since the 'glorious' victory of the Crusades; that's why they value the memory of freedom.”³⁸ He also criticized the hypocrisy of Soviet Union, for it was not genuinely sympathetic to those repressed ethnic groups; rather, its major goal was to attract more supporters for their Bolshevik regime.³⁹ Qi was also aware that the Jews were considered as an inferior race in Europe; his interaction with Jews

34 Fu Sheng, “Zionism and anti-Semitism.” The name of magazine and page number is unknown. This source was obtained from Shanghai Municipal Files, reel D2-0-2414. 1933, 1.23.

35 Ibid.

36 Qi Chen, “Impression of Jewish Autonomous Region,” *Dongfang zazhi* 32, no. 15(1935), p.73.

37 Ibid., 74.

38 Ibid., 77.

39 Ibid., 77.

demonstrated the opposite. He was impressed by Jews' orderliness and cleanliness.⁴⁰ However, Chinese labors who worked for farms in the autonomous region had negative feelings toward their Jewish bosses. These “black *maozi*,”the Chinese workers complained, would trick Chinese workers in order to pay them less. This information reinforced anti-Semitic stereotype that was aware of, thus he commented “are Jews born greedy merchants?”⁴¹

40 Ibid., 75.

41 Ibid., 79. *Maozi* is a derogation term for Russians, which means hairy man.

CHINESE PERCEPTION OF JEWS DURING THE PRESENCE OF JEWISH REFUGEES IN SHANGHAI

What Chinese thought about Jews were influenced by Chinese struggle for nationalism. Jews, then, was reduced to a symbol. It was their presence in Shanghai that present a vivid image of Jewishness. The *Kristallnacht* brought Jewish suffering clearly visible for Chinese in Shanghai. For a long time, China remained a last resort for Jews seeking emigration.⁴² China, as Wiedemann concluded, “remained largely in the background for considerations and emerged only slowly as a potential emigration destination.”⁴³ The main reason for this was that most Jews were not familiar with this oriental country; also, China was in war at that time.

Peculiar circumstances brought these Jews to Shanghai. After the Evian conference, the gate of more desired destinations were closed to Jews. The only place they could emigrate to without a visa was Shanghai. Shanghai was controlled by foreign powers at that time. The Treaty of Nanking signed after the first Opium War in 1842 opened its doors to the western nations. By the time Jewish Refugees fled to Shanghai, this treaty port consisted of four different areas: the International Settlement was administered by a Municipal Council representing eleven countries; Hongkou, the eastern side of the International Settlement, was exclusively controlled by the Japanese since August 1937; the French Concession was governed by the French consul; the Chinese City was controlled by the Chinese Nationalist government. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government has been responsible for passport control until. After the Nationalists were defeated and driven out of the city in late 1937, no other country with a presence in Shanghai was given power to take charge of passport control.⁴⁴

The exile of Jewish refugees to China made their suffering visible to Chinese . For those less

42 Restaino, 115.

43 Susanne Wiedemann, 156.

44 Avraham Aleman and Irene Eber., “Flight to Shanghai, 1938-1940: The Larger Setting,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, 2000. pp. 62-73. Cited from Gaobei, 13.

educated Chinese, their awareness of Jewish suffering was limited and they were surprised to see the presence of poor foreigners in their desperate community. Most Chinese view Jewish refugees just as another group of foreigners. When refugees first arrived Shanghai, Chinese called them *nakuning*, or foreigners.⁴⁵ Although there was little anti-Semitism in China, Chinese in the past century was very xenophobic.⁴⁶ Most of the Chinese who suffered from foreign invasion hated all whites, including Jews, since they did not distinguish between an Englishmen, a Frenchmen, or a German. However, the Jews were unaware of these feelings.⁴⁷ The Chinese were also surprised to find these foreigners next to them in the poorest part of town. When they were more familiar with Jews in several month, they became aware of their different identity and called them *jutaning*, Jew, instead of *nakuning*, foreigners.⁴⁸ Beggars in the street were also aware of the difference between Jews and other groups. When refugees first arrived, Beggars cried loudly as they would do when any foreigners approached. Soon, they learned that refugees were different since they had little to give them.⁴⁹ European goods in pawn shops also reminded Chinese the desperateness of this different group of foreigners.⁵⁰

When refugees first arrived Shanghai, most of them lived in Hongkew and had little contact with other groups. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and took full control of Shanghai in 1943, 18,000 Jews were concentrated in a designated area with 100,000 Chinese as their neighbors. These two groups looked strange to each other. For the Jews, Chinese spoke a strange language, had different customs and practices. One refugee recalled his strange feeling when seeing Chinese women openly nursing their babies in front of neighbors.⁵¹ Also, the celebration of Chinese New Year, with all of its noise and colorfulness, appeared strange to some refugees. Chinese was [? THE CHINESE WERE ?] also curious

45 Ross, 42.

46 Faubaum, 24.

47 Ibid., 92.

48 Ross, 42.

49 Tobias, 14.

50 Ibid., 16.

51 Faubaum, 28..

about Jewish life.⁵² Although they did not communicate with each other, they had pleasant mutual perceptions. Jews viewed Chinese as an industrious people.⁵³ Chinese, years later, also remembered their neighbors fondly. Chinese who overcame language barriers understood the Jewish situation better. A Mr. Liu, who worked in a book shop owned by Chinese was very inquisitive and asked his refugee colleague about the “experience growing up in the industrious people.”⁵⁴ Wang Falian, who later worked as a guide for Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum for twelve years, recalled his Jewish refugee neighbors' contempt for industrious people.⁵⁵ Chinese were also grateful when Jewish doctors saved Chinese lives in the July 17, 1945 U.S. US bomb raid.⁵⁶

While Chinese generally harbored no anti-Semitic sentiment, the memory of rampant anti-Semitism still haunted refugees. Thus, certain misinterpretations generated between them, as indicated by two cases. George Wang, a Chinese reporter for the United Press, observed the Hongkew designated area for stateless refugees for a week. Though concerned by this disease-ridden place, ye Wong was impressed by various means by which Jews earned a living, one of which was to fake Americas fountain pens and cigarette lighters.⁵⁷ This attempt to help the refugees was interpreted differently as the refugee community was furious when reading his article. Several refugees protested in letters to the editor that “though the article is well meant no doubt, it conveys a totally wrong impression of us Jews to the readers.” These refugees further defended that “no beds in the camps are lice-ridden,” that trachoma was not prevalent among refugees, and that it was impossible for Jews to counterfeit since the material for counterfeit was expensive. Among the accusations these refugees brought out, one was not directly relevant to the current issue. This refugee reminded Wang that Jews saved Chinese, even Japanese in the July 17 bombing raid and suggested that “well-meaning journalists should first inform

52 Ibid., 63

53 Ibid, 141.

54 Ibid, 141.

55 Ibid, 141.

56 The Hongkew designated area for Jews was near Japanese military site; US accidentally bombed it when destroying it.

57 George Wang. As cited in his reply for refugee protest of “Jewish Refugee Here Found Expert Counterfeiters Of Us Pens and Cigarette Lighters.” Shanghai Herald, June 24, 1945.

themselves thoroughly from reliable sources before writing articles.”⁵⁸ More protests followed. In an letter to the editor days later, a refugee expressed his disgust for articles with such sentiment: “It seems almost incredible to read such accusations in a newspaper, now the war being over and the Democrats in charge all over the world.” This journalist also maintained that although this Mr. Wang was out of genuine wish to help Jews, “the whole tone of the article was extremely unfavorable for all the refugees.”⁵⁹

It is unclear out of what circumstances Mr. Wang wrote the article. However, it is evident of published correspondence that exchange, Jews demonstrated abhorrence to any sign of anti-Semitic sentiment. In contrast [] while Mr. Wang, who should be more discerning and objective since he was although a journalist for the United Press, exaggerated the desperateness of the refugee community. Jewish desperateness was a recurrent theme in the Open Forum, a letter to the editor column, of Shanghai Herald for months. It was very difficult for most of these about twenty thousand Jews to find jobs in war time Shanghai. In order to support family, Jewish women became bar girls. The Open Forum reflected mixed view on these women. A United Press journalist, Mr. Johnson, demonstrated sympathy for these girls in his article “miserable existence of Hongkew's Jewish bar girls.” A letter by E.K., obviously a refugee, corrected Johnson's that these girls were driven by starvation or poverty; rather, they were merely driven from “sheer craving for getting rich quick, by an ardent desire for luxury and an easy life which no other profession can offer them.”⁶⁰ The presence of Jewish bar girls was not secret. However, their motive were various. This reader with a pseudonym E.K. Claimed that these women were all pleasure seekers, which demonstrated a hatred of these women who ruined refugee reputation[.]

These discussions in English newspapers arguably also shaped Chinese perspective of Jews since Shanghai had a large English speaking Chinese population. Besides English-language

58 Han Josef Eberstarr, “*Refugee Reply*.” The Shanghai Herald June 28, 1945.

59 Thompson, “More Protests.” Shanghai Herald, June 30, 1945.

60 E.K., “Jewish Bar Girls,” Shanghai Herald, July 27, 1945.

newspapers, Chinese media also reported their presence. The pattern of these articles was also similar to reports in previous era. Those originally written by Chinese authors expressed sympathy for Jews, while those articles translated from foreign sources reflected anti-Semitic sentiment.

Dongfang zazhi reported on the Jewish refugee concerns in Shanghai when refugee arrivals were at their peak:

5,000 to 6,000 German Jewish refugees have arrived in Shanghai and some 4,000 to 5,000 more are on their way. They were in a very wretched plight when they came ashore. The Japanese, as an ally of Germany, took an anti-Jewish position in Shanghai and in occupied Tianjin, saying: "The chosen people have invaded Shanghai, be prepared to resist the Jewish economic invasion." We fully understand the terrible situation of these Jewish refugees and are very sympathetic to them. Although it is difficult for us even to support our own 100,000 refugees here in Shanghai, we must try our best to help these Jewish refugees. We should stand together in the united front of small and weak nations, and fight against our common enemies.⁶¹

This writer expressed sympathy for refugees and expressed the willingness to help them. In contrast, an article translated from Japanese source was permeated with anti-Semitism. In *Shanghai Local Administration*, a magazine most likely to be published by the puppet regime, Shanghai's Jewish refugees were described as the vanguard of a large plan for Jews to control China. The real purpose for the international Jewish organization to send Jews to Shanghai, this author contended, was for Jews to spread and control all of China from Shanghai.⁶² The author also realized the ungrounded nature of his argument, and later compromised slightly, arguing that these refugees were [NEED SOMETHING HERE] out of desperation, yet the organization which sent them to China was of sinuous [WRONG WORD] intention.⁶³

The Jews were concentrated in the Hongkew Designated Area for about two years until the war ended in 1945. The policy towards German Jews started an outcry from Jewish refugees when the Nationalistic Government reclaimed Shanghai. In December 1945, Mr. Chen Kuo-Lien, Director of the Shanghai Office of the ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "All Jews who entered Shanghai without

61 He Yiwen, "The Jewish National Problem," *Dongfang zazhi* 36, no. 12(1939), p. 12. cited from Xiaoxian, 40.

62 Zhen yan, translated from guisikangfu. *Shanghai Local Administration*, August 1944, p35.

63 *Ibid.*, 36.

the permission of the Chinese National government will be repatriated.”⁶⁴ Chen explained that Jews were “smuggled into Shanghai” when the National Government lost control of Shanghai. Since Nazis had already been wiped out by the Allies, there seemed no reason why the Jews cannot return now to the countries where they originally came from.”⁶⁵ In addition to Jews who entered without the permission of the Nationalistic Government, those Germans without a passport might also be repatriated. The Nationalists declared that Germans need permission in order to be stay in Shanghai, and German Jews were not exempted, since “German Jews, like all persons of German nationality, were from the legal viewpoint 'enemy aliens' and had to be treated as such.” Germans without visas or passports would have less chance to receive permission to stay, which would affect about 20,000 German Jews in Shanghai since they have been deprived their citizenship.⁶⁶ Since the time of the Nationalist movement under Sun Yat-Sen, Jews were a unique foreign race sharing the Chinese agenda to fight for independence. However, by the end of 1945, political expediency and the need to assert power was nationalists' primary concern.

Jews protested fervently against this polity. In North China Daily News, an influential newspaper published by British, some refugees' reasoning, ironically, internalized anti-Semitic bias. He warned that China was in dire need of funds to rebuild the country, and that

China should remember before kicking out that mere handful of Refugee Jews, that their relatives, all over the world and especially in the U.S.A and Britain, will think twice before extending their hand to a country which initiates its era of “Democracy” by such an act of wanton arbitrariness.⁶⁷

The author further urges Chinese to remember Jewish suffering, Jewish sacrifice, and Jewish contribution to Chinese. Another refugee commented that the Nationalist Government's policy “marks the beginning of a new wave of persecution. “The gas chambers of Hitlerite Germany may prove a

64 “Jews Who Entered Shanghai Without Permission of Chinese Gov't Will Be Repatriated, Official Says.” Shanghai Herald, December 28, 1945.

65 Ibid.

66 “Germans, Austrians to be Interned, Shipped, say Govt. Spokesman,” Shanghai Herald, December 24, 1945.

67 Bert Seldon, “Correspondence: the Jews.” North China Daily News, December 29, 1945.

more human solution of the problem than being chased around the world like criminals.”⁶⁸ The Jews' response indicate that their interpretation of this policy was permeated with the memory of anti-Semitism, yet the Nationalist government drafted their policy based only on present needs. An anonymous spokesman also expressed “surprise at the consternation caused in Shanghai by the regulations and again emphasized it is the government's intention to accord 'generous treatment'.”⁶⁹

Chinese intellectuals drew different lessons from Jewish-related matters. In Chinese Newspaper, some articles written by Chinese authors introduced anti-Semitism in the post-World War United States. One such article commented that Jews, along with African Americans, were discriminated against in the society despite the fact that they have “devoted their talent and labor to build a modern civilization, contributed for a prosperous society” and contributed their music, scientific, as well as literary talents to America.⁷⁰ Americans leaders conducted similar anti-Semitic propaganda as the Nazis conservative fascist agenda. They claimed to the upper middle class that the Jews were all Communists; to the working class, the asserted that Jews were all big bankers. That Americans were so credulous was due to the fact that they “lack education in democracy and truth.” The author commented that in order to eliminate anti-Semitism, America needed to amend its capitalistic system, grant education to all and provide full employment.⁷¹ This profile of this author is unknown, thus it is unclear why would this author had such an attitude towards the Americans. Nevertheless, it is clear that Chinese intellectuals drew various lessons from Jewish experience.

When the Communists took over Shanghai, Jews were not encouraged to stay in Shanghai since they would “not contribute to the socialistic construction.”⁷² In any case, most Jews has left when opportunity was available. Half of them went to the United State, six thousands went to Israel, two thousand to Australia, and even 295 returned to Europe, while only a handful remained until the

68 A.E., “Ghost of Hitler on the Run again.” The Shanghai Herald, December 28, 1945.

69 "Germans, Austrians to be Interned, Governed, Says Government spokemen."

70 Liu Xunqi, “Jews in America.” pp.8-9. The date of publication and name of magazine name is unknown. This is obtained from Shanghai Municipal Files, reel D2-0-999.

71 Ibid., 9.

72 Tobias, 29.

Cultural Revolution.⁷³ With China's opening in the 1980s, more and more Jewish refugees returned to Shanghai. With the exception of several buildings, almost all the landscape has changed. The Hong Kou Government renovated the Old Moshel Synagogue as a Jewish Refugee Museum. The site of memory was located in space. Shanghai, as a harbor for 18,000 Jews in hard time, was remembered as a sanctuary.

73 Ibid., 152.

DISCOURSE OF MEMORY IN THE PRC

Political expediency also shaped the Chinese memory of Jewish refugees in Shanghai. The discourses of Shanghai government, scholars, and the media emphasized the friendship between Chinese and Jews established in Wartime Shanghai. In the 1930s and 1940S, discourses of the Chinese Nationalists and intellectuals expressed sympathy to Jews who also struggled for survive; in the new era, Chinese discourse stressed Shanghai's unique contribution for accepting desperate refugees.

The establishment of China-Israel diplomatic relations inaugurated the official Chinese memory of Jewish refugees in Shanghai. The symbolic memorial center for the Jewish Refugees in Shanghai, the tablet for the Memory of the Designated Area for Stateless Refugees in Huoshan Garden located at the center of the Hongkew Ghetto, was established at the request of Pan Guang, the prominent Chinese scholar in Shanghai Jews.⁷⁴ Pan's research experience demonstrates that political influence is strong in the academy and culture in contemporary China. Pan's research in Jews started at the end of the 1970s. In 1988, he established the Shanghai Jewish Research Center. For a long time, their research was discouraged by Chinese officials since China had not established diplomatic relations with Israel yet. He received neither research grants nor office place from the government. An officer in the diplomatic bureau even warned him “to be careful”.⁷⁵ However, dramatic change began when China established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994. The tablet for the memory of Shanghai Jewish Refugees was finally erected in 1994 with the permission of the Foreign Bureau, after eight years of Pan's active advocacy to the government.⁷⁶ The memorial tablet remembers the experience of Jewish Refugees who were confined in Hongkew from 1941 to 1945 by the Japanese who controlled Shanghai

74 Lin Ying, “A life of research on Jews-an interview with Pan Guang, the dean of Shanghai Jewish Research Center.” Shanghai & Hongkong Economy. January, 2008, p.76.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., 77.

during this period.⁷⁷

The Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum was also established under the influence of the China-Israel diplomatic relations. While the tablet is more of a symbolic memorial center, the Refugee Museum is where historical documents of Jewish refugees are located. The museum was located on Ward Road on the border of the Designated Area for Stateless Refugees established by the Japanese.⁷⁸ In 1928, prominent Russian Jews established the Ohel Moshe Synagogue. Located in the middle of the Ghetto, the Synagogue served as a religious center for Jewish Refugees during much of World War II.⁷⁹ Most Jews left after the war, and the government used the Synagogue as a psychiatric hospital for a while. It later belonged to the fire control department. In 1994, with the establishment of China-Israel diplomatic relations, this former Jewish cultural center revived its historical role as a Jewish cultural and religious center. In this year, the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited China. He visited this former synagogue. During this visit, Rabin remarked on the guest book gratefully “to the people of Shanghai for unique humanitarian act of saving thousands of Jews during the Second World War, thanks in the name of the government of Israel”⁸⁰ This event did not brought instant change. However, ten years later, the synagogue gradually became a significant site for historical memory. In 2004, the synagogue was selected as one of the fourth set architectural heritage treasures of Shanghai.⁸¹ In 2005, the government further issued a plan to protect the whole designated area as one of the twelve historical sites in Shanghai. The plan emphasized the importance of the Ohel Roshe synagogue as a “historical architecture with special significance.”⁸² With its newly gained significance, the synagogue receives one millions US dollars for restoration and five million US dollars for renovation from the government in 2007. The Hongkew government restored the old layout of the synagogue based on the original

77 Memorial Tablet for the Stateless Refugees in Designated Area in Hongkou

78 “Introduction: Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum.” Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum. <http://www/shanghaijews.org/> Accessed April 10, 2012.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 “The Protection Plan for Shanghai Tilanqiao historical site.” Shanghai Government: June 14, 2005. <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node19828/node76465/>. Accessed April 10, 2012.

blueprint discovered in archive. Furthermore, it built two exhibition halls..⁸³

The exhibitions of the museum highlighted physical space as the central site of memory. Exhibition in the museum demonstrates the plight of Jewish refugees. Artifacts such as documents, household utensils, and photos demonstrates daily life of Jewish refugees in wartime Shanghai. Documents exhibited remind visitors the deteriorating living space for Jews in the 1930s. Visas issued by Dr. Ho Fengshan revealed the desperateness of Jews since Shanghai was the only place Jews could possibly enter when most countries have closed their gate to Jews. In one of the exhibition halls also displays a contract to purchase tickets aboard a Lloyd Triestino ship from Genoa to Shanghai. Nazis required proof of leaving Germany to secure the release of imprisoned Jews after Kristallnacht.⁸⁴ Such documents would possibly remind visitors the narrowing living space for Central European Jews Household utensils and old furniture on display in the second floor of the former synagogue including a sewing machine, a round stool, a western table clock, and nineteen other artifacts.⁸⁵ Visitors and former refugees alike would probably imagine or recall the interior physical space of daily life. Photos also remind visitors the narrowness of living space for most refugees. One photo on display is the interior of a Heim, which was a dormitory for 200 refugees. Pictures of showers in the Heim, luggage of new arrivals, and the Embankment building all reminded visitors the daily life of refugees.⁸⁶

The artifacts display life of refugees before and after they enter Shanghai, while the explanatory notes emphasize Shanghai's unique contribution for accepting Jews.. The official website of the museum highlights the fact that Shanghai was the only place in the world where Jews could enter freely.⁸⁷ This remark is simplifies a complicated story. This simplification attributes the saving of Jewish life to the physical space of Shanghai, reduces a complex power structure in wartime Shanghai

83 "Tourguide commentary of the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum." Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum.

84 Ibid., 6.

85 Ibid., 3.

86 Ibid., 6

87 " Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum." [Http://www.shanghaijews.org.cn](http://www.shanghaijews.org.cn). Accessed April 10, 2012.

into a simple story of the power of physical space.⁸⁸

Chinese government transforms neutral power of space into soft power. The power of physical space can be transmitted from one regime to the other. Political power changes; Shanghai is now ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. The communist government attributes the acceptance of Jewish refugees in wartime Shanghai to the power of space. This power is neutral thus open to various interpretations. The Shanghai government attribute to this acceptance to traditional Chinese culture. The official guideline for tourists prepared by the museum explains that China did not have anti-Semitism and treated people with equal footing. Moreover, Chinese and Jewish culture are similar in many aspects. This culture similarity helped these two groups to get along well. Furthermore, similar "national experience and calamities" cultivated mutual understanding.⁸⁹ It is clear from this language that the government aimed at facilitating Chinese and Jewish relations. The museum further defines the historical significance of Jewish refugees in Shanghai as "symbolized the profound feelings between the Chinese and Chinese people"; the restoration of the former synagogue in China reflecting "the willingness of Chinese people to preserve Jewish history in China and to promote a broader culture [and] historical understanding for all."⁹⁰ This discourse is part of Chinese struggle to strengthen soft power. According to Joseph Nye, soft power is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies."⁹¹ Professor Shambaugh points out that China's Cultural Bureau heavily subsidized various programs to maintain China's soft power.⁹² The museum is solely funded by the government of Hongkou.⁹³ To emphasis on Shanghai's contribution for humanitarian cause enhanced China's soft power.

88 On the legal parameters for Jewish entrance to Shanghai, see the Avraham Aleman and Irene Eber article.

89 Ibid., 14.

90 Ibid., 15.

91 Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics* (Cambridge: Public Group, 2004), X.

92 David Shambaugh, "Accessing China's Global Image and Soft Power." Talk at University of South California U.S.-China institute. January 27, 2011.

93 Ibid., 15.

Media reports and academy also emphasize the importance of Shanghai as a sanctuary for refugees. The language of media and academy is consistent with the message of the government. Shanghai as a physical space takes a central role in Chinese media reports on former Jewish refugees. Many such reports are structured around the former Ohel Moshe Synagogue, now the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum. As journalists describes the artifacts on display, Jewish daily life in Shanghai was revived. As a site of memory, this site reminds visitors Shanghai' generous contribution for Jewish refugees. One journalist comments that this site of remembrance reminds her history of China's acceptance of Jewish refugees.⁹⁴ In an article in *Wenhui Reader's Weekly*, a top Chinese magazine with an intellectual readership, the narration is also centered around space. The report emphasizes that Shanghai is the only city in the world where Jews can enter freely at that time; the synagogue is also the center of narrative.⁹⁵ Physical space also occupies a central place in a documentary. In the documentary "return to former sanctuary: story of former Jewish refugees revisiting Shanghai", the fact that Shanghai was the only place in the world accepting Jews were highlighted. The narrator comments:" while barbed net decimated the hope for Jews to escape, thousands of miles away an oriental city offered them hope for life."⁹⁶ The documentary further shows former refugees returned to their old quarter to trace their life there; physical space as a site of memory is important for the narrative of the documentary.

While space and memory is significant in the discourse of media, they are also important in Chinese academic discourse. In 2005, the Jewish Refugees in Shanghai Internal Seminar is an important part of activities commemorating the victory of the sixtieth anniversary of anti-Fascism.⁹⁷ This history became part of the discourse of victory over fascism. Pan Guang, a prominent scholar in Shanghai Jews, also emphasized the importance of Shanghai as a space for Jews. He commented taht

94 He Lidan, "Shanghai Jewish Synagogues: a spiritual sanctuary in Ghetto." *The Bund Pictorial*, November 23, 2003.

95 Jing Xianghua, "Twenty Thousand Jewish Refugees find Sanctuary in Shanghai during World War II." *Wenhui Reader's Weekly*, December 23, 2001.

96 "Return to Former Sanctuary: Story of Former Jewish Refugees Revisiting Shanghai." Documentary, 2005.

97 Ibid.

"Jewish experience in Shanghai facilitates mutual understanding and became an important part of Shanghai's history of anti-fascism."⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Pan Guang, "Condemn Nazi Atrocity and grateful for Shanghai people----President of Germany Visited Hongkou." Xinming Night News: December 08, 2003, p 14.

CONCLUSION

Chinese Nationalists were sympathetic to Jews who as they understood had similar struggle for national autonomy. Jewish suffering also started to be a part of intellectual discourse in printing culture. Discussion of Jewish suffering emphasize Jewish struggle for survive. A mixed image of Jews emerged in various articles as people had more access to anti-Semitic literature. The physical presence of Jewish refugees in Shanghai brought out dialogue on Jewish life in newspapers. Jewish poverty and struggle for life become more concrete. Daily contact with Jews also shaped the perception of Jews of a group of poor Chinese. They started to understand Jewish identity and circumstance. When the Nationalists took control of Shanghai after World War II ends, their policy of expatriating stateless refugees provoked a surge of protest; this action demonstrates the concern of political expediency over genuine understanding and sympathy.

In the new era, political expediency revived this history that had been dormant for a long time. This period of history was ignored by Chinese for a long time after the Communist Party take over China. When China establishes foreign relations with Israel in 1994, this memory was retrieved and revived as part of Chinese government's effort to strengthen soft power. The discourse of memory focus on the importance of space. Hongkou, Shanghai was the prominent site of memory. Moreover, this history was interpreted as an important contribution to Chinese and Jewish friendship.

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