5. Citizenship by Correspondence in the Shanghai International Settlement (1919-1943)

Robert Bickers
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In 1923 the Shanghai Municipal Council’s Commissioner of Revenue admitted to the Acting Secretary (its chief administrator) that it was impossible for him to compile a register of Chinese residents of the International Settlement. The Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) rates (property taxes) were levied not on individuals, but on buildings, which were classified as either ‘Chinese’ or ‘Foreign’ style. No record of Chinese householders was kept.\(^1\) So, in one sense, settler colonialism in Shanghai did not formally recognise that its Chinese residents had names or individual identities, regardless of its portrayal of their integration into the cosmopolitan settlement in its publicity or symbolic life.\(^2\) They were ‘the Chinese’. As they had no rights as ratepayers (suffrage, right to stand for election), so they were nameless. The records did note foreign names, however, because these were used in the compilation of an annually updated list of foreign electors.\(^3\) Chinese residents were counted in the five-yearly census, and enumerated in public health, crime and education statistics, but had no official life as individuals (unless official individuals) in 1923. By that same year, however, the settlement’s police force had amassed 146,809 sets of fingerprint records. As a matter of routine it fingerprinted those arrested in

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Abbreviations in text:
CRA Chinese Residents’ Association (Gonggong zujie nashui huarenhui 公共租界纳税华人会)
SMC Shanghai Municipal Council
SMP Shanghai Municipal Police
\(^1\) Shanghai Municipal Archives (hereafter SMA): U 1-3-1114, ‘Chinese Councillors (1920-1925)’, Commissioner of Revenue to Acting Secretary, SMC (September 11, 1923).
\(^2\) Contrast this official anonymising with the lengthy attention paid to ‘Prominent Chinese Residents’ in a volume like Wright, A. (1908), p. 525-572, or at the 1893 celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of Shanghai as a treaty port, Goodman (2000), p. 906.
\(^3\) The right to vote for foreigners was based on payment of rates, or rentals: the levels actually excluded most non-Chinese residents from voting as well.
the settlement (and exchanged prints with the French Concession police), chauffeurs seeking licences, and candidates for recruitment as constables, watchmen and firemen. The SMC knew little about property-owners, but it knew much more about property takers. At the same time, however, and throughout the last two decades of the settlement’s effectively one-hundred-year existence, those same Chinese inhabitants made themselves directly and personally known to the authorities through letters and petitions. They were never shy of engaging directly with the foreign-run council which administered the new streets north of the Yangjingbang. They wrote and they talked themselves into the International Settlement polity. However, it represented itself, and however it might be represented – most recently by Bryna Goodman as an institution with little power (except borrowed foreign military might), to which Chinese would increasingly find it impossible to identify in the twentieth century – the citizens of Shanghai would in fact, and with increasing fluency, appropriate its language, systems and services as their own.

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5 This is also, then, the major reason why the Chinese Ratepayers’ Association found it difficult to compile lists of qualified Chinese which it aimed to represent, cf. Goodman in Merle Goldman and Elisabeth Perry (eds.), (2002), p. 92.
This was hardly always welcome to the foreign-run administration. The exercise of power within China by foreign states was a form of what is known as either semi-colonialism (in China, mostly, and in North American writing on China) or informal empire (outside China, and in the literature on British empire). Its practitioners (diplomats, strategists, politicians, and local freelancers such as the men who administered and ran the Shanghai Municipal Council, and their journalistic publicists), and its contemporary and later theoreticians, might recognise its cardinal characteristic – flexibility – and its cardinal state – flux. But for most of the time these were in conflict with the reality of ossifying colonialisation: the agents of informal imperialism lived in a global empire world, which blurred boundaries between the formally colonial and the ‘informally’ so. Bound into imperial culture through metropolitan education, loyalties and ceremonies, they would often themselves lack flexibility, or be unable to accept flux. They would find it difficult to accept the increasing cosmopolitan reality of the Shanghai International Settlement. They would not know how to read these letters from the Chinese residents of Shanghai, about their growing assumption of a shared citizenship in the International Settlement. This essay offers some thoughts about this phenomenon, and what it might suggest about the nature of the Shanghai condominium.

In the exploration of the origins of modern Chinese political institutions and political practice the petty regimes which evolved in the Chinese treaty ports (and not only in the treaty ports) have not been entirely ignored. For example, Mark Elvin’s pioneering study of local government in Shanghai discussed the importance of the International Settlement as a template for the municipal structure created in 1905. Christian Henriot acknowledged the inspiration that the two foreign administrations gave to the setting up of the first administrative body in 1897, which grew out of the South City Roadworks Board, established to construct the Chinese Bund. Kristin Stapleton has taken these arguments inland with her study of Chengdu.

7 For the liveliest contribution to our understanding of this area in the Chinese case, see Osterhammel, in Mommsen W. J. and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), (1986).
8 The ‘Kuling Municipal Administration’ at Guling (Jiangxi province) grew out of the entrepreneurial efforts (in both senses) of Briton Edward Selby Little. Administration of the Peking Diplomatic Quarter was in the hands of the Diplomatic Body after the 1901 Boxer Protocol.
9 Henriot (1993), p. 10. This might have been taken further: a Bund was, of course, a quintessentially colonial engineering project, which tamed a new shore for maritime trade. In Shanghai, specifically, the original British settlement and then the French concession had bemed the Huangpu first. The ‘Chinese Bund’ literally developed from these constructions. See also: Taylor (2002), p. 125-142.
Intermittently, Chinese administrations and training institutes sought advice, and advisors, and placed trainees with the SMC and its agencies.\textsuperscript{11} So up to a point the proud self-description of the International Settlement as a ‘Model Settlement’ can be allowed to stand (but only up to a point, for the term arose from the fact that it was the model of settlement on which the second wave of concessions of 1861 based themselves). It was also a model threat, of course, and the need to organise effective local institutions to counter the SMC’s expansionist inclinations was also clear.\textsuperscript{12}

Under the new dispensation what had been treaty port China had good reason after 1949 to develop historical narratives showing sustained resistance to foreign rule. In her 1997 \textit{China Quarterly} article ‘Civil Society and Urban Change in Republican China’ Marie-Claire Bergère pointed out that Maoist approaches to Republican China were strongly anti-urban, and the treaty port cities were condemned for collaborating with imperialist foreign power, while foreign scholars labelled the cities as ‘outposts of foreign economic exploitation and political oppression, as citadels of cultural arrogance’.\textsuperscript{13} A narrative of resistance was required. Post-Mao political change, however, saw attention turn to new narratives in China itself, exploring the dynamics underpinning Sino-foreign exchange in what some recast as prototypes for the Deng-era Special Economic Zones.\textsuperscript{14} The foreign communities themselves have become a subject of interest, and are now routinely incorporated into most local histories.\textsuperscript{15} Revisionist work outside China has also taken to task a vision of Shanghai history predicated on resistance and confrontation (the Ningpo Guild riots, the Wheelbarrow disturbances, the Mixed Court riots). Ye Xiaoqing noted instead the sustained absence of significant tensions in the form of violent confrontation before the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16} Lucien Pye, somewhat more wildly, argued for a more harmonious view of Sino-foreign interaction in Shanghai than had been previously accepted and which was based on what he termed ‘stereotypes produced

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11] In 1933, for example, six graduates of the Central Political Institute, Nanjing, undertook four-month placements in SMC departments; in 1937 the Canton Police sent three men to study firearms identification techniques, SMC, \textit{Annual Report 1933}, p. 33; \textit{North China Herald} (hereafter \textit{NCH}) (February 10, 1937), p. 240.
\item[12] Henriot (1993) p. 11; Wakeman Jr (1995), p. 60–77. Barbara Mittler has also shown how it was perceived at one and the same time as a model of progress and as a threatening model of foreign vice, see Mittler (2004), p. 337-340.
\end{footnotes}
by Leninist theories'. More recent discussions of the internal political life of the International Settlement and the French Concession – as opposed to their place and role in China’s foreign relations – usually revolve around the question of the representation of its Chinese inhabitants on the governing Council. Discussions of inclusion in the International Settlement polity generally have been approached through the issue of access to public gardens or through the settlement’s symbolic life. But overall the SMC itself has received little attention from scholars. This oversight has been partly ideological, imperialism being felt to have had its share of scholarly attention in a China-centred world, and partly practical, as its records were closed. As its archives begin to be opened in Shanghai we can begin to examine its actual daily workings, its internal contradictions, the limits to its power, and the accommodations it had to make to enable it to function effectively in a complex, evolving environment whose actual legal framework was, to say the very least, unclear.

The relationship between the International Settlement administration and its Chinese residents surely remains a key issue, and one greatly complicated by this new material. In the early twentieth century Shanghai’s developing Chinese-language press and its public organisations represented opinion and established a discursive relationship with foreign power in the city – one which was subject to

20 The only sustained examination of any aspect of its history is Kerrie L. MacPherson (1987).
21 The SMA has produced a Shanghai zujie zhi (Annals of the Shanghai Concessions), but this work is far from being definitive. International Settlement records presently open in Shanghai include at least the following series: U 1–3, SMC Secretariat files, 1920–1932 (over 6,000 items); U 1–4, SMC Secretariat files, 1932–1943 (4,558 items); U 1–10, Industrial and Social division files; U 1–14, Public Works Dept records; U 1–16, Public Health Dept records. The minutes of the SMC itself have now been published, see Shanghai shi danganguan (ed.), (2002). These are of limited use for later periods, as much of the real meat of discussion is to be found in the minutes of the Council’s committees (an overview is in Shanghai zujie zhi, p. 188–196). Materials presently not opened, but previously viewed by scholars include: SMP Headquarters papers (including personnel files); the U 1–1 series which includes the printed annual reports (open) and the manuscript Police Daily Reports (closed); committee minute books such as the Orchestra Committee and the Parks Committee. The extent of SMC Secretariat archives at the end of the settlement’s existence in 1943 can be garnered from documentation in SMA file U 1–4–966, ‘Rendition of Settlement’.
varying degrees of restriction as events unfolded. But at the same time Chinese residents privately wrote themselves into the city, blithely ignoring the colonial narrative that formed an integral part of Shanghailander self-ascription. They took cosmopolitanism at face value, and they took a local species of citizenship at face value in what were described by the Council’s exasperated Official Translator as ‘plaints and complaints, screeds […] anonymous letters and illiterate effusions sometimes very difficult to understand’. This essay examines this phenomenon through four strands. The first looks at the question of representation and the constitutional framework in the International Settlement and the limitations to citizenship this represented; the second looks at policing, and quotidian encounters between Chinese and the settlement’s Shanghai Municipal Police force. The third uses materials from the 1920s only now available in Shanghai to revisit the issue Jeffrey Wasserstrom and I first discussed in our 1995 *China Quarterly* article on Chinese exclusion from International Settlement parks. The last explores the activities and complaints of the SMC’s Translation Office, which worked in the 1930s to translate incoming Chinese correspondence into English, and the Press Office, which tried to explain the Council’s policies in Chinese (as well as Japanese and English). What emerges challenges the contention put forward by Bryna Goodman in her survey of the 1893 Jubilee celebrations in the settlement. Goodman concluded in particular that it was impossible in the twentieth century for Chinese residents to ‘simultaneously identify with the native-place group, the International Settlement, and the entity that would become the Chinese nation’. Nuance aside, the implication of the survey is an old one: the International Settlement was foreign, recognisably and at times violently so. Its leaders and rhetoricians might claim, and also feel the need to claim, that its ‘cosmopolitanism’ was inclusive, and fully representative, but that identification could not be reciprocated by Chinese residents: for them the International Settlement would become an increasingly foreign institution. This essay suggests otherwise, and that if organised celebration exposed the fault lines on which the Shanghai settlement might be based, quotidian life and work showed Chinese residents living out, or expecting to live out, a real transnational urban community.

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22 See Goodman (1995); Bergère 1.5; Judge (1996).
26 The argument is restricted to the Settlement and excludes the very differently run French Concession, which was formally incorporated into the French empire through a Consul-General subordinate to the Governor of French Indo-China. Differently run in more ways than one, of course, given the entanglement of French consular authority with Du Yuesheng
The Shanghai Municipal Council

The 1842 Nanjing treaty had not envisaged foreign settlements, but local Chinese hostility towards the (literal) accommodation of the foreign traders whose residence in the five ports was now sanctioned, meshed smoothly with the predisposition of foreign traders to construct new Macaos – that is, self-governing safe havens. The ‘British site’ or ‘English ground’, ‘settlement’, or ‘concession’ at Shanghai was the result. The initial Land Regulations of 1845, the settlement’s founding charter promulgated by Daotai Gong Mujiu 宫慕久, secured ‘general arrangements’ for British residence in Shanghai, reported the first Consul, George Balfour, while ‘those in detail are left to be carried out by the Mercantile community; and upon their own measures, and not those of Government, their comfort, convenience and security rest’. The British community, then, was held responsible by this Sino-British agreement for constructing and maintaining the infrastructure of settlement – at no cost to the British crown – and did so through a Committee on Roads and Jetties. Chinese residence in the settlement was initially forbidden. But the Taiping crisis brought an influx of Chinese refugees, and the growing complexity of what had become a settlement led to calls for sounder administrative oversight and the Municipal Council was formed in July 1854. Consuls worried about municipal innovation once its utility in the crisis year 1854 had passed, and recommended discontinuation as it was ‘open to legal or technical objection’, and had emerged, it was claimed, as an ‘afterthought’ designed to give some legal basis, however shaky, to the landing of foreign troops to protect the settlement during the Taiping crisis. By 1863, however, there was stout defence of the municipality, which alone could ‘perform hastily’ the works needed to help develop this ‘improvised city’, and so ‘the strict letter of the treaties should yield to the spirit’.

There was no official Chinese representation in the government of the settlement before 1928. The Land Regulations refer to the ‘Executive Committee or Council’.

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28 Great Britain, The National Archives, Public Record Office (hereafter TNA: PRO): FO 228/64, Shanghai n°38 (April 28, 1845).
29 Enclosures in TNA: PRO: FO 228/64, Shanghai n° 38 (April 28, 1845). The original Chinese version, and the printed English translation are to be found here.
31 TNA: PRO: FO 228/348, Shanghai n° 83 (June 24, 1863).
The 1845 regulations enjoined British merchants ‘in concert together’ to develop the infrastructure of the settlement. The British consul was to bring them together for public consultation, where necessary, about the rate to be set for the raising of the necessary revenue. Consular control (and responsibility overall) was maintained, but the British state was spared with the costs.  

The internationalised Anglo-American revised regulations of 1854 provided for a formal annual meeting of settlement land renters to agree an assessment rate and appoint a three-member Committee to oversee various public works. The first such meeting upped the number to be chosen to seven.  

The articles evolved to lay out the process of nomination and election of Councillors, their duties and the limits to their responsibilities. The Council was elected on an annual basis by foreign land renters – and after 1869 ratepayers – (resident in the settlement) who qualified for suffrage on the basis of property value or rates payments as individuals and/or as representatives of business concerns. Each elector chose nine candidates (the number of seats) signing his or her name to the ballot paper. A higher property threshold restricted the number of those eligible to stand as councillors. A further qualification restricted any one firm to only one vote on the Council. An annual meeting of ratepayers was convened, which voted to accept the report on the previous year and the next year’s proposed budget, and also voted on any matter proposed to them. On the whole the Council controlled the agenda, and upsets were rare.  

Barring the role of the annual meeting (on which more below), this system was of a piece with English local government practice although that was still very much in flux in 1854 and was not brought into line with the British Parliamentary franchise until 1945. It is worth noting developments in England because of the contrast that has been made between the International Settlement system as it evolved and ‘standard Anglo-American patterns’. England’s 1835 Municipal Corporations Act was designed to reform local government as the Great Reform Act of 1832 had aimed to clear up the parliamentary franchise. Based on a combination of residency

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32 The pains of economy are a constant theme in P. D. Coates (1988).
33 NCH (August 27, 1853), p. 16; (July 8, 1854), p. 194–195; Johnstone Jr (1937), p. 28. Three would never have provided a quorum, and would have imposed an intolerable burden on those merchants holding office. After all, these men were in Shanghai to conduct trade, not create a colony.
34 The latter caveat significantly boosted the influence of British interests. In 1929, 971 British voters wielded 1,203 votes, see ‘Report of the Hon. Mr. Justice Feetham, C.M.G. to the Shanghai Municipal Council’, Feetham (1931), vol. II, p. 165.
35 The evolution of the system and changes introduced in the revised Land Regulations of 1869 and 1881 are laid out most clearly in Feetham vol. I, p. 74–83; see also A. M. Kotenov, (1925), p. 1–22. William Crane Johnstone Jr, op. cit., is a particularly lucid survey.
36 This paragraph is based on Keith-Lucas (1952).
and property qualifications, and on the payment of rates over at least a thirty-month period – with higher thresholds for those standing for office – it certainly did not enfranchise the working class (and disqualified ‘lunatics’ and paupers amongst others). It introduced annual elections of one third of council members, who held office for three years. The secret ballot was introduced in 1872; the 1882 Municipal Corporations Act abolished property qualifications for residents and enabled all those qualified to vote to stand for election. Only in 1918 was ratepaying dropped as a requirement, but property occupancy remained a requisite until 1945. The right to vote was not until then inherent in the individual, but in property. Whatever the precise genealogy of the International Settlement’s electoral system, then, it did not move with the (slowly moving) English times, but it was not wholly out of kilter with them until after 1918 – almost the precise moment when Chinese ratepayers began to demand representation. By 1930 there were more electors in the English city of Ipswich (42,000 out of a population of 87,000) than in the International Settlement (c. 2,700 with 2,900 votes out of around 1,040,000 residents), although – for what it was worth – there was probably a higher turnout in Shanghai (usually around two-thirds), and a greater number of contested elections.  

Between 1873 and 1940, competitive elections were held on at least 34 occasions when more than nine persons were nominated to the Council. 39 In later years some statements of policy (manifestos in the making) were actually issued. 40 Occasionally significant change was actually effected in International Settlement policy by the enforced change in leading personnel, notably in March 1930 when Chairman H. E. Arnhold lost his seat. 41 Too much competition was not usually welcomed by...
diplomats in the later 1920s and 1930s, who feared the potential for instability and tried to cut deals to restrict the number of men nominated, but this could not always be arranged, and also had the potential to inflame Shanghai feeling. A fairly tight circle of interests dominated the lists of those nominated, those proposing them for office, and those seconding the nominations in the 1920s and 1930s. Specific business interests were nearly always represented: Butterfield and Swire, Jardine Matheson, Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, Standard Oil. Pretty much run by Britons in the nineteenth century, the Council had either an American or German chair or vice-chair from 1903-1915, 1924-1929, and 1936-1938, and American representatives usually held one or two places from 1854 onwards. From 1915 there was a Japanese representation, with one seat (rising to two in 1927) informally reserved for Japanese representatives. Anglo-American voters were requested to ensure Japanese representation by placing them at the top of their lists.

While former Chairman Harry Arnhold lauded the ‘Anglo-Saxon democratic principle of governing through committees’ in 1937, claiming that this ‘ensured impartiality and equality of treatment to every resident of the settlement with no regard to nationality, political or religious creed’, the fact remained that Chinese had been excluded from participation until 1928. The holding of British-style elections on Chinese soil while the Qing still ruled is probably worthy of note – it was one element of that ‘unwitting social experiment’, as Rudolf Wagner has termed it, that Chinese residents participated in or could view in this case – although it was the efficiency of its administration and the regulatory function of council bye-laws, enforced by its personnel, which made the greatest impression on Chinese urban

loathed the British old guard, and fought successfully to get rid of such reactionary conservatives as 1925-1929 SMP Commissioner E. I. M. Barrett, see Bickers (2003), Chapter 7.

42 In 1931 the Joint Committee of Shanghai Women’s Organisations requested that a woman be appointed to all Municipal committees (Education and the Film censorship board already had women members). Three were subsequently appointed (including a Cornell University trained Chinese woman doctor). In 1935 the Council admitted internally that there was no formal bar to women acting as councillors either, but that in both cases prior professional experience would make male candidates more likely to be selected. For discussions, see SMA U 1-4-1068, ‘Women Members: Council’s Committees’.

43 See Bickers (1992), Changing Shanghai’s ‘Mind’, p. 11-12.

44 In 1926, for example, C. R. ‘Chuck’ Burkill, a pillar of the Shanghai Race Club – whose brother and business partner served on the SMC in 1903-1905, 1907-1909, and 1911-13 – nominated two of the British candidates and seconded the nominations of another two. This was not unrepresentative of the general pattern, cf. NCH (February 27, 1926), p. 379.

45 SMA: U 1-4-1103, ‘Council: Members’ Records’.


reformers. There is no need here to rehearse in detail the story of the evolution of Chinese representation before 1928. From then onwards (separately) elected Chinese representatives sat in a municipal administration on Chinese soil (initially three, from 1930 five), while other representatives were co-opted onto the Council’s committees. The presence of the Chinese changed the character of the SMC. They brought new concerns into the Council’s discussions, acted as advocates for all sorts of Chinese interests from SMC staff to the urban poor, and grounded Council activities much more strongly in the complex, polyglot reality of settlement life. But the SMC remained still a body effectively under Anglo-American control, its life-span extended not by the activities of its publicists and lobbyists, who were frantically busy after 1928, but by the abandonment of the National Government’s nationalist diplomacy vis-à-vis Britain and the US after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. As the drift to war gathered greater momentum, in fact, British diplomats and their allies imposed their will on the activities of the SMC and stripped settler, Shanghailander interests of their power.

Jeffrey Wasserstrom claims that the International Settlement system was both a distortion of ‘standard models of conceiving of modern citizenship’ as well as of ‘Anglo-American patterns’. But in fact it fitted squarely with fundamental notions underpinning the English local government franchise, even if it lagged behind changes to the franchise after 1918. The colonial contrast is also instructive. The Shanghai system was very much different to that of Hong Kong, which was rooted in the autocratic constitutional landscape of formal British empire. There was no elected component in the government of the Crown Colony, instead there were ‘unofficial’ appointees to the Governor’s Legislative and (from 1889) Executive

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50 Initially the Chinese representatives were government appointees; from 1931 onwards they were elected by the CRA: Feetham Report, vol. II, p. 16.
52 Bickers, in Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh (eds.) (2004a). At the same time, and this is less often noted, the SMC systematically surrendered a range of its once-cherished ‘rights’ to a newly assertive Chinese state and local party and government agencies – for example its monopoly of taxation (specifically acceptance of the new stamp tax), right to censor Chinese films, and its implementation of new social welfare legislation. There was little room for manoeuvre, as Sterling Fessenden noted in a February 1930 memorandum to Justice Feetham: ‘The position hitherto assumed by the foreign community would be most difficult to defend successfully’, based as it was largely on assumptions about the International Settlement having been set aside solely for foreign residence: SMA: U 1-3-3802, ‘Feetham Report’, Sterling Fessenden to Richard Feetham (February 7, 1930).
The Hong Kong administration also conformed to standard Colonial Office ideology by working to lay foundations for constitutional evolution, in due course, to self-government – until the establishment of the PRC. So the administration of the International Settlement at Shanghai was at once both modern (in relationship to English local government practice) and unmodern (in relation to colonial practice), while activists for *shimìn quàn* 市民 (citizens’ rights) in Shanghai demanded rights that many British electors did not yet fully have in the metropole. But the franchise was not wholly the point, and debates which focus on it likewise miss the point. If Chinese were disbarred from equal treatment as ratepayers in terms of the franchise, they expected equal treatment in many other ways, and in their demands for it, and assumptions about it, they demonstrated a confident Shanghai citizenship in their everyday life as Shanghai residents.

**Everyday life (I): Losing a Watch**

Bryna Goodman makes note of the ‘intrusive presence’ of the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) in the political life of the settlement. And notwithstanding, and not necessarily contradicting, Ye Xiaoqing’s assertion that ‘relations between Chinese and westerners in nineteenth-century Shanghai were harmonious’, the fact remains as I have elsewhere argued that in the same period a very high proportion of Shanghai Chinese were routinely accosted and arrested by the SMP for social order offences, such as public urination or defecation. But whilst we might project this scenario forward into the twentieth century, such intrusiveness did not stop Shanghai Chinese calling for and using the police. They expected equal treatment from men routinely caricatured as thugs and ‘imperialists’. The greater part of the SMP was fully concerned with the ordinary policing of the settlement and the myriad responsibilities which gravitate towards a police force. Take, for example, the story of Mr Voh’s missing watch. Voh Siao Tsiang lost his gold watch in the vicinity of the Yangshupu police station, in the SMC’s eastern district, on June 24, 1920. It was found by one Dzau Ah.

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54 The comparison is also explored in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, ‘The Politics of Exclusion in Old Shanghai and Colonial Hong Kong: Public Space, Municipal Governance, and Social Life’, paper prepared for the Hong Kong University Conference on ‘Repositioning Hong Kong and Shanghai in Modern Chinese History’, June 11-12, 2002.


56 Goodman, in Merle Goldman and Elizabeth Perry (2002).


59 SMA: U 1-9, 922, Arthur George Wadey, SMP personnel file, S.I. Crookdale to Commissioner of Police, July 4, 1920. As was often the case, the statements do not incorporate the characters for Chinese names.
Sung, who brought it to the station. The station gateman recorded Dzau’s visit, and its purpose in his logbook before allowing him into the compound. Dzau then handed the watch to the duty Charge Room Officer, Shanghai Municipal Police Constable Arthur Wadey. According to regulation procedures Wadey should have made a note in the station’s ‘Detained Property’ register and elicited a signature (or equivalent) from Dzau. Mr Voh turned up at the station on July 3 expecting to find his watch, but there was no such entry in the charge room register.\(^{60}\) As Dzau’s public-spiritedness was on record in the gateman’s logbook, and as he had been on duty at the time, Constable Wadey was roused from his bed and questioned. The watch was discovered in his barrack-room drawer. The groggy constable claimed to have accidentally broken it after Dzau handed it in, had taken it for repair and was waiting for a suitable opportunity to return the item. But he had already boasted to colleagues of having bought it for an $18 song. Wadey, a twenty-year old clergyman’s son with a poor record in his twelve months of service, was dismissed for ‘gross neglect and dishonesty’ on July 9.

This is a minor incident indeed, but it may serve to introduce a broad theme: the relationship between ordinary city residents and the foreign-run police force. The impression often given is that as an ‘intrusive’ presence such an ‘imperialist’ policing regime could not but be opposed and resisted. I would argue that, subject to caveat, the settlement’s Chinese residents accepted the policing of the settlement by the SMP. For a start we might ask why the watch was handed in. Dzau might simply have been an honest man. Or else a calculating one, who might have feared entanglement with the law if he had not handed in the watch. Perhaps his finding of it had been fairly public. (As Voh seems to have known the watch had been handed in, he may have been retracing his steps asking shop owners or such like if they had heard of one being found.) Perhaps Dzau was guessing that the watch would not be claimed, and that after a suitable period – three months according to police regulations – he could reasonably expect to claim ownership.\(^{61}\) But it seems to me that both Dzau and Voh demonstrated implicit faith in the mechanisms established for the routine public business of settlement life – such as reporting and reclaiming lost property. Quite apart from what the incident might suggest about the small town nature of Shanghai in 1920 – Voh actually thought it worth his while looking for the watch – it reinforces my own view that the policing regime was a widely accepted feature of everyday life in the settlement for its Chinese residents.\(^{62}\)

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60 It is not clear if, Voh already knew a watch had been handed in, but this is my assumption from a reading of the file.

61 This is the case according to the 1938 regulations, the only ones I have to hand, but it is unlikely to have been different earlier, cf. W. H. Widdowson (comp.), Police Guide and Regulations. 1938.

62 See Bickers (2003) and (2004b). It might also be noted that the lost property procedures were
We might develop this argument further in two ways: first by looking at an earlier case of corruption involving Wadey, and second by looking at the statistical record of the engagement of the Shanghai populace with the SMP. Wadey had been transferred to Yangshupu station in February 1920 after being found to have committed 'gross misconduct' on the night of 6 February while on duty near Weihaiwei Road. The duties of SMP Foreign Constables pivoted on their supervision of Asian members of the force. On night patrol Wadey was supposed to walk a fixed beat, meeting Chinese constables at fixed intervals to check that they were walking their own beats properly. In turn he would meet up with a Foreign Sergeant. Wadey walked his beat quite improperly on February 6, Acting Chinese Police Sergeant No.990 in tow. At 12.50 a.m. they heard the sound of mahjong being played in 1388 Avenue Edward VII on the settlement’s border with the French Concession. The players were obviously gambling. The Sergeant told Wadey that they should report it to the station, but had no authority to enter. Chinese Police Sergeant Wong Tuk Kwei summed up power relations in a very similar case in 1928: ‘As I am a Chinese – he is a foreigner, when he wants to go away I cannot prevent him’. One of the house’s inhabitants reported what happened next:

The door was closed but not barred. A foreign policeman with [an automatic] pistol in his hand pushed open the door and entered. Grasping the pistol, he put his hand on the table and a Chinese policeman outside the door told us to put the [mahjong tiles] away. The foreign policeman struck me on the knuckles with the pistol, then laid it on the table, collected all the money together and separated the silver from the coppers.

Wadey pocketed the proceeds and left. Nearby, Kyoong Tsang Z, a carpenter, was playing mahjong with four servants. Wadey stole $5 and 30 coppers from them. Mr Wang, whose tailor’s shop was located at 278-9 Yates Road, suffered the same fate twenty-five minutes later. At 2 o’clock, ‘Yi Siang Ki’, a shoemaker, gambling with his servant and two apprentices was relieved of a $5 note and 80 cents in cash. The victims were more than happy to make formal complaints later that same day. You might expect armed extortion to lead to immediate dismissal, if not a court of law. But Wadey was docked six months seniority, barred

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64 SMA: U 1-9,-922, Arthur George Wadey, SMP personnel file, various statements.
65 SMA: U 1-3-3590 ‘Arthur Benstead’.
from going on duty armed and transferred. Perhaps his background, youth, and references saved him.  

Perhaps he spun a good, evasive yarn which left everything slightly ambiguous (his file lacks his own statement), perhaps the force did not want any bad publicity. But it seems to me telling that these middling men – a carpenter, shoemaker, tailor and cigarette shop owner – felt no hesitation and reported the incidents, even though they were themselves breaking the law (this latter fact may also have saved Wadey). Even though a policeman had robbed them at gunpoint, they expected redress from the SMP. They were frightened of a rogue policeman with a pistol who accosted them at night, but they were not frightened of the police.  

If what they got was not full redress, it was a thorough investigation and a response. Local political activism in the form of the rates strike led by the Federation of Street Unions in January 1920 may have made the SMP more sensitive, and may have made the shopkeepers more assertive, but I rather think their predisposition to call on the SMP for redress was more strongly rooted.

We do not have broader statistics about lost property reports, but we can look at reported property theft between 1920 and 1929 as an indication of the willingness of settlement residents to voluntarily engage with the police (see Table 1). In 1920, 4,084 reports were made, with 5,274 in 1929. The rise in reports, when population is factored in, was in fact quite minimal: there were 521 reports per 100,000 settlement residents in 1920, and 523 in 1929. So there is no increase in the willingness of residents to report theft. The link between political upheaval and crime in the settlement is pretty clear from these, as in all other, SMP statistics. The surge in successful investigations between 1927 and 1928 resulted from the reorganisation of the Criminal Investigation Department that year, and a great increase in its staff. The level of unreported theft is not guessed at in the SMC reports. But what this shows to me is that settlement residents were quite willing, like Mr Voh, to make their way to the local station, negotiating the gateman and making a report to the charge room sergeant, usually with the help of a Chinese Station Interpreter. Otherwise they accosted a Chinese constable on his beat. At all stages there was potential for unnecessary trouble. The gateman might seek a small bribe for allowing entry; the foreign

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66 The SMP was desperately short of trained foreign personnel by the end of the war, and could ill-afford to lose too many of the 74 men recruited in 1919, see Bickers (2000).

67 Of course, they might not have reported such extortion if carried out by Chinese officers. One theme pervading SMP regulations is the need to supervise Chinese detectives in particular, and to restrict as far as was not prejudicial to their ability to work, their ability to abuse their positions: Bickers (2003), Chapter 4.


69 Bickers (2003), op. cit., Chapter 7.
desk sergeant might be brusque if not downright rude. Language might prove an
insurmountable barrier to an accurate exchange of information. With more serious
crime the SMP constantly reported that such willingness to engage the police was
not forthcoming, in particular in cases of armed robbery – which increased from 57
in 1920 to 1,458 in 1927 – and kidnapping. The political dimension to much of the
latter, and the often extreme violence of the former, provided good reason for victims
to avoid too much aiding or involving the police. But in the case of run of the mill
property offences – a picked pocket, a snatched purse, a missing bicycle, a stolen
sewing machine – Shanghai Chinese called a policeman, regardless.

Table 1: Reports of Property Theft Received and Successfully Investigated
by the Shanghai Municipal Police, 1920-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Successful investigations</th>
<th>% Successful</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Successful investigations</th>
<th>% Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4,084</td>
<td>1,512</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>5,382</td>
<td>1,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>4,254</td>
<td>1,512#</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>5,937</td>
<td>1,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>4,154</td>
<td>1,541</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>6,470</td>
<td>1,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>5,274</td>
<td>1,760</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>5,321</td>
<td>2,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>5,140</td>
<td>1,673</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>5,274</td>
<td>2,980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SMC, Annual Report, 1920-1929
* In 1930 the system of collating police statistics was comprehensively revised, making comparison
difficult.
# The repeated figure might be a clerical error.

Obviously, it might be argued, settlement residents could not but act as if they
accepted the de facto legitimacy of the SMP. No other body policed the settlement,
and until after the establishment of the National Government the SMP acted at all
times to protect its policing sovereignty. So the SMP was the police. But this point
needs emphasising because of two strains in the literature on modern Shanghai.
First, that which assumes that settlement policing was corrupt, or/and that the
SMP was merely an agency of imperialist control. On the latter score, the fact that
only the archives of the force’s Special Branch – which was greatly but not wholly
concerned with political policing – are readily available to scholars has reinforced
the misapprehension. But Special Branch had a small staff, 25 foreign officers at
most in the 1930s, with a modest cadre of Chinese officers and agents. Although the SMP as a whole worked with information distribution systems which fed into Special Branch work, its business was mostly ordinary policing. The SMP was not a political police.

The second strand in the literature emphasises the techniques through which Chinese city folk constructed urban lives independent of and unconnected with the foreign settlement. Hanchao Lu asserts that ‘the state’ – by which he means all local power holders – ‘had little presence in neighbourhood life’ in Shanghai before the Communist era. Although he notes the extent of SMC building regulations which were imposed on new developments, even these are dismissed as forming any kind of meaningful intervention.\footnote{Lu (1999), Beyond the Neon Lights, p. 222.} Policing is notable by its near absence from this book, which is odd when the SMP policed every street, the SMC fixed number plates to the door of every household, and the revenue collectors knocked on those doors, sometimes accompanied by the police, to collect the rates. And when neighbourly stratagems for resolving disputes failed, or when crime was committed, the police were brought in. Meanwhile sanitation workers searched for and dismantled ordure kangs, demolished illegal latrines, and pig pens, removed illegal squatter huts, inspected restaurants, shops, stalls and lodging houses, disinfected the rooms of those with notified communicable diseases (9,756 rooms in 1933), filled in unsanitary wells, lime-washed and cleansed unsanitary houses (8,653 in 1933), and systematically imposed the Council’s ever-developing mesh of regulations and bye-laws on the growing and ever more complex urban (and ever more urban) environment. The SMP backed up such work when required: the removal of illegal dwellings for example, or – to give an example of the attention to detail of the regulatory regime in a city often thought to have been gleefully unregulated – aiding in 1933 the suppression of the trade of ‘itinerant manure dealers who mix collections of ordure with cotton debris to increase the bulk’.\footnote{Kristin Stapleton has shown how Chengdu residents broadly and quickly accepted the new police established in 1902-1903, despite some friction over the raising of taxes to pay for it.\footnote{Stapleton (2000), p. 109-110.} This force intruded into and ordered the streets of the city in ways which received the support of its residents. The SMP performed the same, on the whole uncontested, function, and did so in the broad context of a regulatory regime that had an impact on all facets of foreign and Chinese life in the settlement. And criticisms made of the force often}

\footnote{Stapleton (2000), p. 109-110.} 

\footnote{SMC, Annual Report 1933, ‘Sanitation’, p. 190-197, quotation from p. 94.} 

\footnote{Lu (1999), Beyond the Neon Lights, p. 222.}
focused on the failure in specific instances of the force or individual men to deliver equal treatment to Chinese and foreigners alike.

**Everyday life (II): Going for a Walk in the Park**

A second area of encounters between city residents and the SMC further supports the contention made here that these Chinese residents saw themselves as fully entitled participants in the International Settlement polity, whatever the SMC and British and other foreign residents thought, in ways which cannot be related to any specific nationalist agenda. Successive police manuals make it clear that a man was always on duty at the entrance to the Public Gardens on the Bund. While his duties involved making sure that the regulations were obeyed (and included preventing ‘any indecent conduct by half-drunken men towards children’) he was also there to prevent the entry of those excluded.73 Chinese nationals were excluded until 1928, but there were exceptions to this general rule, and this section looks at the debates such exceptions led to. In November 1925 a list was drawn up in the SMC Secretariat office of ‘Applications from Chinese or for Chinese to use parks’.74 There had been 18 since 1920 concerning a range of individuals and groups: delegates to the national Sunday School Convention (1920, request refused); SMC Health Department trainee nurses (1920, refused); 16 Chinese schoolgirls from St Mary’s Hall to study ‘Civic Beauty’ (1921, refused); the Chinese wives of various foreign residents (1923, issued passes); ‘Lord’ Li Jingmai 李经迈 (1921, issued pass); various local officials and members of the SMC’s ‘Chinese Advisory Committee’ (1922-1923, some 400 passes issued); Hong Kong Eurasian tycoon Sir Robert Hotung (1923, pass issued with alacrity); Mr ‘Hong Nien Sung’, ‘said to be the owner of four large grave mounds on the south side of the Recreation Ground’ (1925, agreed, as had been the case since 1896); two Chinese teams in the Shanghai Football Association league and their spectators (1925, no, then yes75); a Chinese Boy Scouts’ ‘Troop (1925, refused) and others.

This is an eclectic list, and the responses (and the hypocrisies involved) elicit little surprise. The SMC made exceptions to its exclusionary policy for local officials, and prominent local and visiting notables. Li Jingmai, for example, wished to visit the new Jessfield Park – his sponsor, A. E. Algar reported –, ‘and is frightened he may

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73 *Rules and Regulations for the Guidance and Instruction of the Shanghai Municipal Police Force* (Shanghai: North China Herald, 1884), p. 36.

74 SMA: U 1–3–868, ‘Admission of Chinese to Parks (1920-1925)’.

75 Given that Shanghai football supporters were early pioneers of the Chinese stadium riot, this might have turned out badly. There were notable disturbances at various matches. A 1941 incident saw spectators attempting to burn down the stadium. The SMP Reserve Unit (riot squad) was needed to restore order: *NCH* (March 19, 1941), p. 445.
be refused entrance. There was little point in needlessly antagonising local power holders (or in having them humiliated in public by their social inferiors) and there had been a long history of sweetening the local elite. ‘Race’ was of course, but could not be seen to be, the issue. But nationality and extraterritoriality left race thinking in tangled knots – ‘presumably [he] is a foreigner’ was the internal comment on one such letter – in which case his [Chinese] wife would doubtless take his nationality – and of course many Chinese residents or visitors would have been able to claim British status (or Japanese for example): ‘I am born in British territory and registered as such’, reported ‘Tong Kung Lam’. Nationality punctured race. Again, colonial practice did not in fact help this quasi-colonial outpost. In May 1926 the SMC realised, having secured copies of the regulations for the Hong Kong Public Gardens and Singapore Botanical Gardens, that ‘no special restrictions were imposed on natives in these two parks’. As in other areas the SMC appeared to be more colonial than the formally colonial dared, or even thought necessary. French practice subverted SMC policy as well (again, as in other areas), the concession’s Koukaza Park was open ‘to all who were correctly dressed and of good behaviour’. Not surprisingly Shanghai urbanites assumed that the same principle ought to apply north of Avenue Edward VII.

In those letters written by Chinese residents themselves, various arguments were put forward as to why they considered themselves entitled to gain access. The thrust of such arguments, it seems to me, is that these correspondents considered themselves to have passed a test of their eligibility, indeed of their citizenship, and were therefore entitled to claim membership of the International Settlement polity. Agnes Lee wrote that she was a ‘Chinese lady of high class family connections’. Buen E. Lee (unrelated) protested Chinese Police Constable No.473’s refusal to allow him to enter Hongkew Park. Lee understood that Chinese in foreign clothes were allowed entrance, and there were many Chinese of ‘high cultural and educational standing

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76 SMA: U 1-3-868, A. E. Algar to E. S. Benbow-Rowe (October 13, 1921). Algar was formerly chair of the Parks Committee.


78 SMA: U 1-3-868, Minute on C. G. Lubeck to Secretary, SMC (June 25, 1923).

79 SMA: U 1-3-868, Tong Kung Lam to Commissioner of Police (September 30, 1924); Brooks (2000).

80 SMA: U 1-3-870. Of course, in Hong Kong, instead, Chinese were barred wholesale from residence on the upper levels of the Peak until 1941, so what was a public garden here or there.

81 Bickers (2004); Wasserstrom (2002).

82 SMA: U 1-3-870. In 1926 it seems that the Concession authorities restricted access to 800 Chinese ticket-holders, too few considering the number of Chinese ratepayers, cf. SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book n°2 (September 20, 1926).
living in the settlement’ who paid their taxes and deserved equal treatment. (Lee was also quite probably insulted by the fact of being refused entrance in public by a man of such inferior standing). Thomas Y. Wood (who used this assumed and Anglicised name in his letter) asserted his right to a pass in 1926: ‘Being a ratepayer of the International Settlement and a well educated Chinese subject’. His and similar applications from merchants, clerks, and others stemmed from an incident in mid-August when a party of 20 Chinese entered Quinsan Gardens. They refused to leave until a foreign Police Constable appeared and told them that unless they had a pass they could not use the park. As reported in the *Shenbao* it appeared that passes were available to all who passed muster as, effectively, citizens of the International Settlement. Citizenship was not, in this idea, a matter of nationality, but of attainment of a set of criteria (education, tax paying, clothing) which indicated that the individual was responsible, inoffensive in appearance (pass applicants were sometimes asked to attend a brief interview in person, presumably to check dress and appearance), and able to act in the proper way in a public place. Such behaviour required adherence to a specific set of explicit rules – the park regulations on the sign boards – and implicit rules and modes of behaviour: that is, what people know they should not do in (Western) parks.

Obviously, one response might be that these individuals had merely internalised the colonial rules of the game, and were unable to see themselves and their rights except refracted through a colonial mirror. They were mostly articulating themselves in the language of the coloniser as well. (Another vocabulary might use terms such as ‘collaborator’, ‘running dog’, even ‘traitor’, for those who too closely aped the ‘imperialist’). Foreign sponsors of individual Chinese, or proponents of unrestricted (but ticketed) entry of Chinese, often structured their arguments in ways which conveyed a patronising, colonialist, paternalism. F. S. Bridges, Honorary Secretary of the Shanghai Football Association, asserted that Chinese members of the Union Football

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83 SMA: U 1–3–868, Agnes Lee to SMC (July 21, 1925), Buen S. Lee to Sterling Fessenden (July 30, 1924).
84 SMA: U 1–3–870, ‘Thomas Y. Wood to Parks Committee (August 18, 1926)’. This and similar applications from merchants, clerks and others arrived singularly promptly.
85 SMA: U 1–3–870, translation of item from *Shenbao* (August 18, 1926).
86 A case in point was provided by the park bandstands. Once the parks were open to all (or rather who could afford a small – but for the poor significant – fee) many Chinese mistook the bandstands for *pailou* (pavilions), and tensions arose when park-keepers asked visitors to keep out or leave them. Agrieved but apologetic visitors suggested that signs be attached to the bandstands identifying them as such: SMA: U 1–3–871, Chinese Ratepayers’ Association to Secretary, SMC (June 17, 1929) includes cutting from *Minguo shibao* June 15, 1929); Lü Zhiwan to Secretary, SMC (August 21, 1931).
Club were mostly students or ex-students and a ‘good type of Chinese’. (Although unnamed in the municipal record, Chinese could still be slotted into typologies). American company manager L. Parkhurst complained about the barring of three Chinese friends. They were ratepayers, he pointed out (and ‘this is China’) and ‘on account of the advance made by the Chinese population of Shanghai regarding cleanliness’ entry should be allowed to all ‘who by their natural appearance show culture and cleanliness’ – or who could afford to turn up at the gates of Jessfield Park ‘in Automobiles’. However, Henrietta Harrison has also shown how Western clothes, amongst other symbols, ‘came to mark members of a group who defined themselves as Republican citizens’. And Agnes Lee wrote that she was a ‘Chinese lady’ and Thomas Wood asserted directly that he was a ‘Chinese subject’. Neither evaded the issue of nationality, nor attempted to claim an extraterritorial right – as many of their compatriots did with great enthusiasm in Shanghai and elsewhere.

The question of the ‘pass’ [p. 226] is an interesting one. The question of admission took on new life with the settlement’s new parks: Jessfield (now Zhongshan gongyuan 中山公园) in 1914, and Hongkew (now the Lu Xun Memorial Park) in 1909. In 1916 the Parks Committee proposed – on the prompting of one member, Mr. Peebles – that ‘Chinese of good standing be admitted on application and by ticket’ to Jessfield. The full Council unanimously opposed the idea. Peebles remained a positive voice on the issue in committee deliberations. In November 1922 the Parks Committee revisited the question at the request of the Council. It proposed that admission of Chinese should be allowed to the new parks, but should be restricted to pass holders who should be Chinese ratepayers, those resident in the settlement. Passes would only be available for six months or one year, and there

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87 SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book No.2 (October 5, 1925).
91 Passing muster was probably part of the game anyway, or rather passing Japanese. The de facto practice of allowing in Chinese in Western dress largely stemmed from the difficulty of distinguishing between Chinese and Japanese or Japanese-protected subjects (Taiwanese, Koreans), and the risk of causing insult by challenging the wrong individuals.
92 SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book n°1 (July 16, 1915); SMA: U 1–3–870, Memorandum on ‘Admission of Chinese to Parks and Open Spaces’ (September 14, 1926).
would be no admission on Sundays. The scheme would be worked through the newly appointed Chinese Advisory Committee (CAC), but this Committee declined to be involved. One member, Cambridge-educated barrister Xie Yongsen (who was married to an Englishwoman), noted simply in February 1923 that the question for Chinese was not use of the park, but ‘equality of treatment with the foreign community.’ Systematic use of a pass system seems to have commenced already. At an SMC meeting on August 9, 1922 it was decided to issue ‘complimentary passes’ for a ‘limited number of Chinese officials’ – as well as to CAC members as a ‘courtesy’, and without setting a precedent. From the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Bureau in March 1923 came a list of such officials: Governor He Fenglin, his Chief of Staff, the Superintendent of Customs, police and public works officials, magistrates and others. Four hundred passes were issued. As power holders changed so new passes were issued – ‘Quite in order to grant these permits and politic to do so’ – and specimens circulated to settlement police stations so that personnel would recognise them. This pass system operated only for local officials and such great and good as could not be rebuffed (such as Sir Robert Hotung). (Running through many of the debates is a set of familiar assumptions about ‘face’, about avoiding Chinese ‘loss of face’ for some – Hotung – or ‘giving face’ to others, such as local officials). Requests from foreign residents sponsoring business colleagues or associates were routinely rejected. But the council’s Chinese correspondents saw the pass as a ticket denoting the citizenship that they had already acquired through their individual attainments. The SMC saw them as ‘politic’ concessions to local power holders.

The issue of exclusion was well rehearsed in settlement newspapers during the years 1921-1927. But what came closest to what might be termed an “official dialogue” on the topic took place in private during three meetings in 1926-1927 between the Parks Committee and representatives from the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce: Feng Pingnan, Liu Hongsheng, and Wu Zaizhang.

93 SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book no.2 (November 25, 1922) and SMA: U 1-3-870, Memorandum on ‘Admission of Chinese to Parks and Open Spaces’ (September 14, 1926).
94 The rise and fall of this committee can be followed in Kotenov (1925), p. 41-3; and in SMA: U 1-3-1114, ‘Chinese Councillors (1920-1925)’. It terminated with the resignation of all members on June 6, 1925 in protest at the May Thirtieth incident.
95 SMA: U 1-3-870, Memorandum on ‘Admission of Chinese to Parks and Open Spaces’ (September 14, 1926).
96 SMA: U 1-868, S. K. Chen to N. O. Liddell (March 1, 1923); U 1-3-870, N. T. Yang to SMC (July 12, 1926); Request from Shanghai Provisional Court judges (December 6, 1927) and S. M. Edwards to Hilton-Johnson (December 7, 1927) commenting on same.
97 The meetings took place on September 20, 1926, February 10, 1927, and February 17, 1927, SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book No.2. Obviously, there was much else on everybody’s
issue had acquired international prominence, and was doing the SMC’s reputation no good whatsoever.  

Here the Chinese argument was much simpler. At the opening meeting Feng Pingnan outlined the position: public parks should be opened to all members of the public ‘subject to observance of such reasonable restrictions as are imposed in respect of Public Parks in other parts of the world’. Feng further asserted that ‘proper behaviour should be the only qualification necessary for admission to Public Parks’. 

It mattered not whether users came from Zhabei or whether they were ratepayers. He also pointed out that Article VI of the Land Regulations allowed for the purchase of land in and outside the International Settlement for ‘roads or public gardens and places of recreation and amusement’, ‘provided always that such roads and gardens should be dedicated to the public use, and for the health and amusement and recreation of all persons residing within the Settlement’. 

By the second meeting, the foreign representatives had abandoned their superficially legalistic arguments about the definition of ‘public’. Instead they suggested that unrestricted Chinese entry would cause ‘considerable damage’ to the parks because of the ‘impossibility of educating a large proportion of the Chinese community to the amenities of park life’, and appropriate behaviour. Employ more keepers, suggested Feng, and place educational articles in the Chinese press. By the third meeting, it only remained to be decided, opined committee member H. Lipson-Ward, which parks the concession should be made for. But there was no question of a concession being made or sought, Feng and his colleagues noted, merely ‘acceptance that, under Article VI, they have a right of admission’. The exclusionists caved in (but a couple of small playgrounds and more importantly the Public Recreation Ground in the centre of the racecourse were exempted from the change in the rules). Foreign anti-nationalist hysteria in 1927 prevented the reform from being implemented until 1928, when access to all was allowed on a ticketed basis. The cause of equal treatment triumphed. 

So change was effected through dialogue between the representatives of the Chinese ratepayers and the SMC, itself hectored on the issue by British diplomats in particular, and harried by foreign press opinion. But it took place in the context of individual minds in these months, but the holding of these meetings at this time further demonstrates the extraordinary politicisation of this issue, for more on which see Bickers and Wasserstrom (1995). 

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99 SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book n°2 (September 20, 1926). 

100 The Chinese term used was gongzhong (public): Land Regulations and Bye-laws for the Foreign Settlements of Shanghai together with Chinese Translation, Shanghai, 1929, p. 7. 

101 SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book n°2 (February 10, 1927). 

102 SMA: Parks Committee Minute Book n°2 (February 17, 1927).
applications for entry and statements of eligibility. Very many more Shanghai residents and visitors would also have stated their eligibility directly, instead of seeking permits or passes, by striding, dressed in western clothes, with confident steps into the parks. Once in they did not draw attention to themselves as they had mastered the formal and informal codes of park behaviour, and perhaps English to boot. They felt themselves citizens and assumed the right to enter, and they exercised it.

Everyday life (III): Complaining

They also assumed the right to complain and make suggestions. The SMC had from the start adopted the practice of placing on public record notable exchanges of correspondence with the public or officials (local, consular, etc.). Council and committee meetings were closed to the public (which was not the case in Britain), but summaries of Council minutes were published and a great deal of correspondence took up the pages of the Municipal Gazette, the Annual Report and municipal news items in the press. Those writing about the parks represented just one strand in the marvellous multiplicity of messages received.

Until 1926 all of the SMC material published was in English. A translation office was only established in 1930.\(^{103}\) Previously, the Secretariat had relied on one translator and one writer. A systematic requirement for foreign employees to learn Chinese was itself a relatively recent innovation.\(^{104}\) The machinery for instructing foreign employees in Chinese was itself acknowledged to be inadequate and was subject to systematic reform in the early 1930s, but the new office stemmed from the acceptance that the SMC itself, not just its personnel, now had a real need to make itself understood by the majority Chinese population of the settlement. This partly stemmed from the acceptance of Chinese councillors onto the SMC and its committees, but was in fact prophylactic in intent. In 1922 Acting Police Commissioner (and later Secretary General) Alan Hilton-Johnson had urged upon the Council the ‘futility of bombastic utterances in official proclamations and documents’ as ‘the days of “tremble and obey” among the Chinese masses have gone for good’.\(^{105}\) The SMC had copied Chinese practice in its public communications to Chinese inhabitants. But it still resorted to such ‘ridiculous’ phraseology during the tumultuous years that followed Hilton-Johnson’s report, even though it embarked upon exten-

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104 In the police force it dated to 1899: SMC, Annual Report 1899, p. 34.
105 SMA: U 1-3-1718, ‘Strikes in Settlement’, A. H. Hilton-Johnson to Secretary and Commissioner General (March 26, 1922).
sive Chinese-language propaganda activity during such local emergencies as the May Thirtieth Movement.\footnote{SMA: U 1-3-2896, ‘State of Emergency 1925’ includes a note outlining ‘Council’s Publicity Work’, (June–August 1925): 1,136,200 pamphlets on 27 topics (‘The Soviet: China’s Enemy’, ‘What Happens under Bolshevism’, ‘To the Peaceable Chinese of Shanghai’, ‘Death of Koo Cheng Hung’), which were distributed to the press, through the post, as well as being posted on tramcars, telephone poles and hoardings. There were also slides for cinemas, and radio broadcasts.}

What was needed, it was felt, when the time came for readjustment in the face of the establishment of the National government, was a systematic and routine programme opening up the record of Council activities to a Chinese audience. From May 1926 selected items from the weekly Municipal Gazette had been translated and sent to Chinese newspapers, which made good use of such free copy. But from October 8, 1930 onwards the whole journal was published in Chinese, the greater part of the print-run being handed to the Chinese Ratepayers’ Association (CRA) for distribution.\footnote{SMC, Annual Report 1926, p. 81. The Municipal Gazette began publication in 1908, and included calls for tender, details of personnel appointments, monthly departmental reports, notifications and changes to rules and regulations etc.} That year’s Annual Report and Budget was the first to be translated, although only in part. The Chinese readership demanded more. By 1933 about 80 per cent of the latter was being translated, and by 1935 the whole of this bulky publication was being translated. It was – and one wonders how and by whom this phrase was translated – the Office’s ‘pièce de résistance’.\footnote{SMC, Annual Report 1932, p. 312, Annual Report 1934, p. 242, Annual Report 1935, p. 263. Japanese translations were issued of the 1941 and 1942 reports.} The print run of the Municipal Gazette had steadily to be increased, reaching 6,500 copies by April 1939.\footnote{NCH (August 2, 1939), p. 200.} For the first time Chinese residents had equal access to a view of the workings of the administration (although delayed, the English edition had priority and the translation sometimes took up to five months), and the Gazette appeared in translation a week late.\footnote{NCH (September 23, 1930), p. 475.}

But this was just one side of the office’s work. The rest was taken up with translation from the Chinese. Language was itself, naturally, a marker of dignity, even in the multi-lingual maze that was Shanghai. The SMC systematically learnt after 1930 to express itself in Chinese, and to detail its myriad operations in Chinese for its Chinese ratepayers. But language was a more sensitive an issue yet. At times Chinese business organisations demanded that the SMC communicate with it in
Individual foreigners might still make free with pidgin even though Shanghai English-language guidebooks had long warned visitors against too free use of this bastard-English: ‘The dignity of the native is much ruffled if he is addressed in pidgin when he understands ordinary English’ noted Revd C. E. Darwent; ‘cultured Chinese naturally dislike being addressed in that jargon’ wrote Carl Crow. How much more dignity was conferred – and demanded – by the use of Chinese itself, whether the street Shanghainese of the British patrolmen, or the more elegant written texts produced by the translation office. In the 1930s the SMC sought to lower its foreign profile by expressing itself in Chinese, by recruiting more Chinese staff to more senior positions in its administration, and by extending its activities in a number of areas to more systematically provide a more equal range of services to Chinese and foreign residents alike. Translation was a key component of this work.

In 1931 it was reported that the workload of the Translation Office had increased by 50 per cent in one year, and that ‘A large proportion of the Chinese correspondence received is of a trivial nature, some are even frivolous, some anonymous, while others are as illiterate as they are puzzling; but they all demand “equal treatment” at the hands of the translator’. By 1932 ‘equal treatment’ needed a staff of twelve and the following year nineteen. In his annual reports Charles Kliene, Director of Chinese Studies and Official Translator, moaned steadily about the weird variety and sheer quantity of correspondence received. ‘All communications are translated into English immediately upon receipt, however trivial the contents of a letter may be’, he noted in 1934, ‘At times the work is exceedingly heavy because every conceivable topic comes in for somebody’s attention. In these days of business depression,’ he surmised, ‘everybody seems to have leisure to indulge in letter writing, often at great length’. Such routine work doubled in volume the following year (the ongoing rickshaw dispute was partly responsible), and ‘professional letter writers who fail to express the real object of their customers in the endeavour to impress them with the confused grandiloquence of their language’ hardly helped.

All letters were translated on the day received as a matter of policy, and the English versions eventually took ten standard forms, ranging from brief précis to verbatim translation.

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111 NCH (August 2, 1933), p. 177.
112 Darwent (1912), p. ii; Crow (1921), p. 32.
117 Ibid., 1940, p. 244.
Increased availability of detailed Chinese documentation on SMC activities helped focus ratepayer and newspaper reader attention, prompting and aiding scrutiny and response. But the bulk of the Council’s non-official correspondents were generally probably a different constituency altogether. They were likely to be non-ratepayers, and not members of the CRA. These correspondents had no indirect access to the SMC and so tackled it directly. They were assuming and demanding that the SMC could and should do something, about this or that perceived problem. The police received anonymous denunciations; stall holders complained about Public Health Inspectors. The 1933 Annual Report gives some further clues about the range of concerns covered in this dialogue: 916 correspondents complained about specific instances of unsanitary conditions, another 76 about markets or food shops. But the writing public did not stop there. They wrote, complained Kliene, ‘on almost every conceivable subject under the sun from choked drains to quack doctors, from factory noises to forged signatures, from barbed wire to bus accidents, etc., etc. There certainly is no lack of variety in the daily pabulum’. Moreover, he continued,

all these thousands of communications are specially written for some good reason or other; their purpose is invariably stated, they are intended to promote the public weal, to maintain peace and order, to uphold justice, to further the interests of public health, to benefit the poor, and to help the Council to administer the affairs of the Settlement.118

Some of the latter phraseology he put down to the work of public letter-writers, ‘whose object’, he claimed in a typical aside, ‘is to impress their clients rather than the Council’.119 Whilst he may have had little patience for such rhetorical templates, he deplored the growing use of the fountain pen in letters received. The ‘beautiful Chinese calligraphy’ was protected by his office’s ban on pens, and insistence on the use of the brush in Chinese official documents.120 But his correspondents were more concerned with the trivia and detail that make for engagement with public life.

Added weight to the ‘daily pabulum’ might be given if suggestions were routed through the Chinese Ratepayers’ Association, which was largely accepted as a vehicle for Chinese opinion. After 1931 members of the CRA elected the Chinese Councillors, and put forward another half-dozen men to the co-opted committees.121 The

118 SMC, Annual Report 1938, p. 274.
119 Ibid., 1936, p. 251.
120 Ibid., 1938, p. 274.
121 In 1931 the Joint Committee of Shanghai Women’s Organisations requested that the SMC appoint at least one woman to each of the Council’s committees. Three women were appointed
CRA demanded, for example, more drinking water fountains in settlement parks and gardens in 1931, half-price admission to the settlement swimming baths for China Swimming Club members – as swimming ‘cleanses the body, stimulates the spirit, improves gradually the behaviour of urbanites (shimin 市民)’122. The CRA challenged the SMP on its ‘inability to protect life’ as a result of the late 1920s kidnapping wave, and solicited the submission of statements from Chinese business organisations to Judge Richard Feetham’s investigation into the International Settlement.123 But even if this vehicle of organised public opinion got things done – got the water fountains installed, the ticketing system revised and the police more responsive to the kidnapping threat – not all of the International Settlement’s Chinese residents paid enough rates to qualify for membership of the CRA (as membership and eligibility for office exactly copied the franchise qualifications for foreign ratepayers). So Shanghai urbanites complained in person, or in writing, deluging the SMC offices with their fountain-penned missives.

**Conclusion**

The political structures of the International Settlement discriminated against Chinese participation until 1928. Obviously, the foreign elite worked in tandem with leading Chinese interests throughout the settlement’s history, starting with the Cantonese who first moved north with the foreigners after 1843 and then with the new city elites as they developed, otherwise the settlement would not have functioned. But only after 1928 were they co-opted formally into the committee system which ran the administration and its agencies. Even after this, however, ultimate control fell back into the hands of foreign diplomats, especially after 1937 when the SMC made its own pact with the (British) devil and surrendered its quasi-independence to protect itself from Japanese occupation. But if formal participation of Chinese was limited and hedged around with constraints and tensions, Chinese residents acted out a Shanghai citizenship in their daily lives, and in their decisions to write to the SMC with their suggestions and complaints.

122 SMA U 1-3-4145, CRA to Secretary SMC (August 25, 1931); SMA: U 1-3-2434, CRA to Secretary SMC (June 30, 1929).

Marie Claire- Bergère was among the first to point to the growing weakness of the SMC after 1928 in the face of assertive Guomindang rule nationally and locally. Contemporary Shanghailander notions – if not fancies – of robust cosmopolitan autonomy, and hostile caricatures of the SMC as a bastion of imperialist strength and aggression alike bear little relation to the actual exercise of power in the city before war in 1937. One agency of change was certainly the Municipality of Greater Shanghai, which worked to roll back the power of the SMC geographically and in local society, culture and politics. But the other major agent of change was the Shanghairen. The SMC was being fully appropriated in the 1930s into Shanghai society and city life. Chinese residents of the International Settlement and of Shanghai beyond the settlement took over the SMC and its agencies. They applied to work for it: 1,200 people applied for thirty mid-ranking police jobs (inspectors and sub-inspectors) in 1930; sometimes a 1,000 men at a time mustered at the Gordon Road training depot on Saturdays to offer themselves as constables. Over 10,000 Chinese men joined the SMP between 1900 and 1942. In 1930 dozens applied for a selection of cadetships newly opened in the administration. Within the SMC, Chinese staff formed a staff association in 1930. Chinese councillors served as a new route for the discussion of staff issues, drawing attention to concerns that British administrators might not be sensitive to. They also attempted in places to roll back Euro-American conventions concerning, for example, public decency. One Chinese member of the Public Health Committee demanded the re-segregation of the swimming baths by sex, as mixed bathing was ‘subversive to decent morale’. Furthermore, Chinese residents engaged in a wide range of settlement voluntary activities. The Chinese company of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC), founded in 1907, was consistently overstaffed – the established strength from 1931 to 1933 was 5 officers and 120 men, but there were 5 and 134 in 1931, and 7 and 164 in 1933. This company achieved an efficiency rating of 98.6 per cent in 1932-1933 – the highest of all units.

125 SMA: U 1-3-1349, ‘Police Force: Chinese Branch (1921-1932). Candidates were required to be able to read and write English, speak Mandarin as well as Shanghaiese, and provide a guarantee or guarantor. It was hoped, noted Commissioner of Police Gerrard, to ‘obtain Chinese of good education and social standing’. Gerrard to Secretary, SMC (March 24, 1930).
129 SMC, *Annual Report 1933*, p. 60-61. Its efficiency was pretty consistent: it was third highest after the field artillery and the Japanese company in 1923, SMC, *Annual Report 1923*, p. 10. On
engaged. Chinese residents demanded equal treatment by the Council and its organs in the fields of education and public health, and they appropriated its institutions for their own use – such as the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, which served directly and indirectly as a major vehicle for the training of young Chinese musicians.\textsuperscript{130}

Hanchao Lu argues that Shanghaineseness might be partly characterised by an everyday ease with the foreign, and an everyday ease with a quasi-foreign munici-
pality might be part of this.\textsuperscript{131} Perhaps the key issue is neither the anti-imperialism nor the nationalism which structures most accounts of Sino-foreign relations in the city and settlement, although we might take those as given up to a point – when asked directly, by Feetham for example, Chinese organisations called for retroces-
sion.\textsuperscript{132} But how could they not? For individuals, however, the issues revolved around that question of equality, of equal treatment for those playing the game – or simply those resident – and the indignity of inequality. ‘Respectable businessmen’ requested equal treatment of their social clubs in 1926; swimmers demanded equal access to the swimming baths.\textsuperscript{133} Jeffrey Wasserstrom concluded that, over such issues as the parks and representation, Shanghai’s Chinese residents were ‘fighting … to remove the second-class stigma from their status as Chinese citizens of a political community that contained citizens from many lands’.\textsuperscript{134} Aside from the fact that they were more often writing, reporting, or walking that citizenship in the daily business of living in the city, than ‘fighting’, this essay confirms this analysis of the underlying goal. Bryna Goodman, however, suggests that the ‘notion of an urban citizenry’ evoked in the literature surrounding the CRA, similar bodies and in the press, was ‘unambiguously collective and unified’.\textsuperscript{135} But this seems to me to overlook the numerous ways in which individual urban citizens demonstrated their individual sense of a


\textsuperscript{131} Lu (1999), p. 310-311.

\textsuperscript{132} Feetham Report, vol. II, p. 6, 14.

\textsuperscript{133} SMA: U 1-3-227, ‘Chinese Clubs and Associations: Applications for Free Licenses’.

\textsuperscript{134} Wasserstrom (2002), p. 132.

right to participate in – indeed appropriate – the life and activities of the Shanghai International Settlement. They mostly had no votes – and most of Shanghai’s foreigners had no votes either – so they voted, as Shanghailanders and others did, with their feet, and with their pens and brushes, writing their opinions into the public record – the press – and into the administrative machinery of the Shanghai Municipal Council, participating this way in the multifarious life of the International Settlement.

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