

Shanghai's "Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted" Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol*

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This article examines the potency and persistence of myth and language in the context of the dispute, now over 80 years old, about the officially-sanctioned wording of regulations in the municipal parks of foreign-administered Shanghai. Specifically, it examines the potent symbol of the sign placed in Shanghai's Huangpu Park that allegedly read: "Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted." This symbol has secured a totemic position in the historiography of the Western presence in China before 1949 and is deeply embedded in contemporary Chinese and Western perceptions and representations of that era, and of the whole question of Western imperialism in China. It is the subject both of popular discourse and official fiat in China today. Drawing on a series of revisionist writings and new archival research this article shows that the true facts of the case are both beyond dispute and irrelevant, but that the legend survives undiminished.

For over 60 years before June 1928 most Chinese certainly were barred from the parks administered by the foreign-controlled Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) of the International Settlement in Shanghai. As shown below, the enforcement of the ban varied over time but for the first three decades of the 20th century it was rigidly administered. Dogs, ball games, cycling and picking of the flowers were also forbidden, but the alleged juxtaposition of the bans on dogs and Chinese became notorious. The potency of "dog" as an insulting and dehumanizing epithet in China undoubtedly exacerbated the insult, and also made the story of the sign's outrageous wording seem all the more plausible. After all, Han Chinese had for centuries used the "dog" radical in characters referring to members of ethnic minorities living in China's frontier regions, and "running dog" (*zougou*) has been a potent political epithet since the 1920s.

The first section of the article shows how sensitive the issue is in Shanghai today, and also how widespread popular belief in the standard story of the sign is, and explores the reasons why this tale has become so firmly entrenched in Chinese and Western imaginations. It then outlines the revisionist stance recently taken towards the issue by contemporary scholars who are openly critical of the Shanghai Municipal Council's behaviour toward native residents. It asks how this approach differs from

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that adopted by earlier sceptics, who tended to be Western residents or ex-residents of the city concerned with defending the good name of their “Model Settlement” and the Council that governed it. What makes the recent revisionist writings so convincing? The penultimate section provides a chronology and explanation for the origin and spread of the legends concerning the sign. Finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, the article asks whether revising the image of the notice requires modifying one’s understanding of imperialism (which some scholars have recently called for) and of treaty port injustices and prejudices, in which references to a ban on “dogs and Chinese” fit so well. In short, it looks at both the sign’s historicity (or lack thereof) and its “afterlife” as a protean political symbol.¹

The Regulations of the Public Garden, 1868–1928

The park at the centre of the dispute is now known as Huangpu Park, and lies at the northern tip of Shanghai’s Bund. Initially known as the Public Garden, or Recreation Ground, it was also later known (in English and Chinese) as the Bund Garden (*Waitan gongyuan*).² It was built on reclaimed land opposite the British Consulate and was first opened to visitors in 1868. Its location on the waterfront near the thoroughfare that would come to be known as Nanjing Road is significant, since this part of the Bund soon acquired icon status, thanks in part to its impressive skyline but also to the modernity it came to symbolize, which boosted the symbolic importance of the Public Garden in both Chinese and Western minds.³ Complaints from foreigners about Chinese use of the park can be found during the very first months of its existence.⁴ From its early days until 1881 the park was barred to Chinese except, at the discretion of the police, to those who were “respectable and well-dressed” (servants of Westerners, particularly amahs, as long as they were accompanied by foreigners, and city employees, such as the Chinese police constables, were also admitted). Complaints from Europeans about the numbers admitted led to the Council changing this policy in 1881, an action which angered some of the Settlement’s leading Chinese residents. They petitioned the Council for clarification of its policy and, unsuccessfully, for admittance. Between 1881 and 1884 the rules were properly laid out,

1. See, for example, Lucian Pye, “How China’s Nationalism was Shanghaied,” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 29 (January 1993), pp. 107–133; for a thoughtful survey of generations of Western sinologists’ arguments over imperialism’s effects, and a critique of Fairbanks’ paradigm of “synarchy” in the treaty ports, which Pye argues should have been more fully studied over the years (p. 114), see Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Writings on the Recent Chinese Past* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 97–148 and *passim*.

2. In Chinese it has also been known as the *Gongjia huayuan* (Public Garden) and *Xiren huayuan* (Westerners’ Garden).

3. On the Bund see, for example, Jon Huebner, “Architecture of the Shanghai Bund,” *Papers on Far Eastern History*, No. 39 (March 1989), pp. 127–165. From quite early on the Bund was the subject of rhapsody, H. Lang, *Shanghai Considered Socially* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1875), p. 35.

4. *The Shanghai Evening Courier*, 23 July 1869, p. 990.

and seem to have been displayed in the Gardens for the first time. A pass system was introduced allowing Chinese residents entry for themselves and their companions, for a week at a time. Access through this system was restricted in 1889 as a result of alleged abuses and because too many passes were being applied for. Admittance of any sort lapsed with the opening, in 1890, of the Chinese Public Garden, constructed by the SMC alongside the Soochow Creek (Suzhou river), to head off the continual complaints it had been facing and to “set at rest for good and all the intermittent attempts to interfere with the exclusive purpose for which the present garden ground was set aside.”⁵

The historical records show that in 1894 the Public Recreation Ground, in the interior of the racecourse, which was administered, but not owned, by the SMC ordered that:

4. No Chinese shall be admitted to the ground except servants of the various Clubs using the same, or of members belonging to such Clubs.

The 1903 regulations of the Public Garden included the following items:

1. No dogs or bicycles are admitted.
5. No Chinese are admitted, except servants in attendance upon foreigners.

The 1913 “Revised Regulations,” however, began:

1. These Gardens are reserved exclusively for the foreign community.
2. No dogs or bicycles are admitted.

In 1917 the order had been altered to:

1. The Gardens are reserved for the foreign community.
4. Dogs and bicycles are not admitted.⁶

The possible implications of some of these alterations are discussed below, but it is quite apparent that the phrase “Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted” did not appear on any officially-sanctioned sign. The 1917 regulations remained in force until June 1928, when the park was opened to the fee-paying public; they appear on the only photograph of a park signboard in circulation, which first appeared in Colonel L’Estrange

5. *The Shanghai Mercury*, 10 May 1881, p. 3; *Rules and Regulations of the Shanghai Municipal Police Force* (Shanghai: Celestial Empire, 1881); *North China Herald* (hereafter *NCH*), 13 May 1881, pp. 462–63; *Rules and Regulations of the Shanghai Municipal Police Force* (Shanghai: North China Herald, 1884), pp. 53, 54; *NCH*, 9 December 1885, p. 658; 29 March 1889, pp. 376–77; 20 July 1889, p. 82; 31 August 1889, p. 274; 21 September 1889, p. 362; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report* 1890, pp. 222–24 and *NCH*, 19 December 1890, p. 758. A comprehensive general discussion of early park rules, the pass system, the petitions of the 1880s and the opening of the Chinese park is provided in George Lanning and S. Couling, *The History of Shanghai, Part 2* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1923), pp. 202–205.

6. These extracts from the full regulations are taken from: *Handbook of Local Regulations issued by Order of the Municipal Council* (Shanghai: Shanghai Municipal Council, 1903), p. 60; *Shanghai Municipal Council Gazette* (hereafter *SMCG*), 24 July 1913, p. 172; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Handbook of Local Regulations* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1918), pp. 40–43; There were in fact occasional diplomatic exceptions to exclusion, a few passes being issued to “Chinese officials, etc., upon special application,” 28 April 1926. SMC Parks Committee, Minute Book No. 2, Shanghai Municipal Archives (hereafter SMA).

Malone’s *New China: Report of an Investigation* in 1926, and can be seen in many of the books which mention this issue. It is also prominently displayed, for example, in the museum at the site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai.⁷

This statement of the facts concerning the regulations itself follows in a long tradition, perhaps best exemplified by a 1927 pamphlet issued by the Tianjin British Committee of Information, which attempted to counter “once and for all” what it called a “mischievous slander” by printing the 1917 rules, offering a suggestion as to the origin of the legend, and also providing some of the widely circulated excuses for exclusion offered by foreigners in Shanghai. As Pu Yi’s tutor Reginald Johnston perceptively wrote in the same pamphlet, however, “... it is the kind of slander which takes a lot of killing, and survives even the most authoritative denials.”⁸

The Persistence of a Legend

The facts, however, form only a small section of this tale. The story received its biggest single burst of publicity in recent years with the simultaneous publication of an article, “‘Huaren yu gou bu de runei’ wenti de lailong qumai” (“The entire story of the ‘Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted’ question”) on 7 June 1994 in Shanghai’s mass circulation evening paper *Xinmin wanbao*, the daily *Qingnian bao* (*Youth Post*) and the *Wenhui bao*. The more staid *Jiefang ribao* also devoted a short essay to the question.⁹ This long and strongly worded tract – jointly written by Ma Fulong, Xu Guoliang and Yu Xiao – is replete with textual references dating back a century, and was reprinted from the small-circulation *Dangshi xinxiabao* (*Party History News*) published by the Shanghai Municipal Party School (Shanghai shiwei dangxiao). In the *Qingnian bao*, and in *Shiji* (*Century*) magazine (where the article was reprinted in August),¹⁰ the text was accompanied by an indistinct reproduction of the Malone photograph.

The article was concerned with rebutting a recently published note which had challenged one aspect of the myth; more generally, it was targeted at the growing tendency among Shanghai’s leading historians, both older and younger, to ignore or openly rebut the accepted story of the sign, and related items such as the “park sign” (worded as in the legend) that was displayed in the Shanghai History Museum at its old site.¹¹ This debate was also replayed in *Guangming ribao* and in Chinese

7. Colonel C. L’Estrange Malone, *New China: Report of an Investigation* (London: Independent Labour Party Publication Department, 1926, 2 vols.), Vol. 2, facing p. 20; personal observations.

8. *A Mischievous Slander* (Tianjin: Tientsin British Committee of Information, Memorandum 19, 21 March 1927).

9. Chen Yujie, “Bu neng wangji lishi” (“History must not be forgotten”), *Jiefang ribao*, 7 June 1994, p. 1.

10. *Qingnian bao*, 7 June 1994, p. 4; *Shiji* (August 1994), pp. 23–25.

11. The issue had been politicized to such an extraordinary extent that we will refrain here from citing any of these pieces, but any search through the recent historical literature emanating from Shanghai will turn up examples.

newspapers overseas.¹² For all its scholarly apparatus, the “entire story” neglects to prove that a sign ever existed with the alleged wording, relying on the cumulative effect of unsubstantiated claims that it did. It is hardly surprising that the story has its critics, if little proof can be found by even its most ardent defenders. The article also neglects to mention that after 1928 the parks were opened to all who could afford tickets.

The extraordinary publicity accorded this issue in June 1994 must be understood with reference to its contemporary uses, not just its historicity. Shanghai’s economic development in the years 1993–94 reached break-neck speed, and was accompanied by a rapid acceleration in its opening up to the outside world. The city’s historians, like their colleagues throughout China, are increasingly exposed to, and show interest in, Western historiographical methods and interpretations of China’s modern history. The move to reinstate the official line on the sign story might be seen as a reminder to both the reading public and historians of Shanghai (for whom lengthy historical lectures in the *Xinmin wanbao* are unusual) of the humiliating inequities perpetrated by foreigners the last time Shanghai was opened up. Items published later in the year seem to have taken the point.¹³ It is hardly accidental that the issue came to a head in a year in which the Chinese press also attacked the treatment of Chinese labour by foreign enterprises in China, and in which the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the return of Hong Kong – “which eradicated the humiliation suffered by the Chinese people for more than 100 years”¹⁴ – was marked by the erection of an electronic timer in Tiananmen Square to count down the seconds and days until the retrocession.¹⁵ It also followed closely on the heels of the propaganda barrage surrounding the 150th anniversary of the Opium Wars. National humiliation has also been the titular theme of a number of recent works on the treaty port era. Commenting on the sign issue in *Guangming ribao*, Ye Qing reminded his readers that “Western colonialists in China committed monstrous crimes, too many to mention in fact; the sign placed at the entrance to the parks reading “Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted” is prime evidence of their guilt.” He went on to caution historians explicitly: “Some people do not understand the humiliations of old China’s history, or else they harbour sceptical attitudes (*huaiyi taidu*) and even go so far as to write off a serious historical humiliation lightly; this is very dangerous.” The sign is as much a symbol, then, of a new-found relativism expressed towards official discourse by historians in China as

12. Ye Qing, “Guanyu ‘Huaren yu gou bu de runei’ de yixie shishi” (“A few historical facts concerning ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted’”), *Guangming ribao*, 13 June 1994, p. 3; *Dagong bao*, 12 April, 1994.

13. See, for example, Li Tiangang, “Shanghai zaoqi xiqiao yule jigou (er ti)” (“Early entertainment organizations of Shanghai’s Westerners”), *Shanghai wenhua* (October 1994), p. 57, and “Monumental change,” *Shanghai Star*, 2 December 1994, p. 16.

14. The quotation comes from one of the draftees of the agreement, “A far sighted agreement – an interview with Shao Tianren, legal adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” FBIS-CHI-94, 19 December 1994.

15. *China Daily*, 19 December 1994, p. 1.

it is an icon of the country’s “historical humiliation.” It is a contested symbol.¹⁶

Sceptics of the sign myth have certainly been persistent from the 1980s onward. Scholars such as Wu Guifang, one of Shanghai’s leading local historians, and Nicholas Clifford, an American China specialist, have made a convincing case for seeing the “entire story’s” version of this icon’s history as an urban legend containing key details that fly in the face of the existing evidence.¹⁷ There is no question, as shown above, that exclusion was the official SMC policy before 1928. Wu and Clifford have made it quite clear, however, that it is simply not true that an official sign expressly equating Chinese to dogs was placed in a prominent location near the entrance to the Public Garden in 1885 and stood there until the SMC abolished its old exclusionary rules.

Despite the accusations of their critics, historical sign revisionists (we include ourselves in this category) have tended to stress that clarifying the empirical case concerning the infamous notice does not necessarily invalidate basic assumptions about the history of the International Settlement, including a conviction that Chinese residents of this foreign enclave had good reason to feel aggrieved at the treatment they received from the SMC. In this sense, the stance toward the sign adopted by scholars such as Clifford and Wu should be differentiated from that of apologists for the SMC who have tried to suggest that scepticism about the historicity of the notice should lead to scepticism concerning the general notion that the treaty port system was offensive or disadvantageous to the Chinese. Scholars such as Clifford and Wu insist that, whether or not signs with the precise wording in question ever stood where they were said to have stood, the kind of prejudice that descriptions of the notice are typically used to conjure up certainly did exist, and that niceties of wording aside, native residents of old Shanghai unquestionably had good reason for finding the rules offensive, and for feeling that they were being treated as second-class citizens, even though the city they lived in was on Chinese soil.

These are more than historical issues; they have contemporary relevance in domestic Chinese politics and foreign relations. The early 1990s have seen debates over the policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) add yet another chapter to this sign’s long history as a touchstone for political discussions. Scholarly research in the archives

16. Ye Qing, “A few historical facts”; for discussions on other similarly contested issues in China see the pertinent chapters in Rubie S. Watson (ed.), *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994).

17. Wu Guifang “Songgu mantan (san)” (“An informal discussion of old Shanghai (part three)”), *Dang’an yu lishi (Archives and History)*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1986), pp. 80–82 (this was reprinted as “Guanyu ‘Huaren yu gou bu de runei’ ” (“Concerning Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted”), in his *Songgu mantan (Informal Discussions of Old Shanghai)* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1991), pp. 191–94; Nicholas Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1991), p. 26; Ye Xiaoqing, “Shanghai before Nationalism,” *East Asian History*, No. 3 (June 1992), pp. 33–52. See also Robert A. Bickers, “Changing Shanghai’s ‘mind’: publicity, reform, and the British in Shanghai, 1927–1931,” *China Society Occasional Papers*, No. 26 (1992).

and libraries of Shanghai has assembled most of the rules governing park usage, which add new dimensions to the revisionist arguments already being made by scholars such as Wu and Clifford. In such a situation there are two dangers for China specialists. One is that those who continue to treat the standard story of the sign as a straightforward historical account will look foolish. The other more subtle one is that revisionism of the facts of the tangible prejudices and inequities that characterized the International Settlement will go too far. As useful as it is to get the facts straight about park signs and exclusionary policies, it is important to avoid jumping to the conclusion reached in one conservative London newspaper that the revelation of the forging of the signs displayed in the Shanghai History Museum should make “ordinary Chinese” question the received wisdom that “... foreigners persecuted and exploited the country before the revolution.”¹⁸

A Sign for Our Times

When Westerners hear or read about “Old Shanghai,” one of the first images that is likely to spring to mind is the alleged sign that read “Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted.” This is because for decades, novelists, journalists, popular historians, academics and travel writers based in the West have been assuring their readers that a notice existed with these precise words or some very close approximation (such as “No Dogs or Chinese Allowed” or “Dogs and Chinese Not Allowed”).¹⁹ References to this icon first began appearing in English language texts in the first decades of this century, and within a relatively short time had become a commonplace feature of Western works on China. The earliest reference can be found in a novel by treaty port journalist Putnam Weale (B. L. Simpson) that appeared in 1914:

There has just been a fierce controversy in the newspapers ... over the notices put up in the public gardens here. Some fool in the municipality had signboards painted with – “Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted.” Rather rough I call it. If I were one of them I should kill some foreign devil just to equalise matters.²⁰

The first reference in a non-fiction work was in 1917 in K. S. Latourette’s

18. *Daily Telegraph*, 13 April 1994, p. 11. The report of the forgeries was published in *Dagong bao*, 12 April 1994.

19. Representative texts by authors belonging to the various groups mentioned include: James Bertram, *Return to China* (London: Heinemann, 1957), pp. 195–96; Jerome Ch’én, *China and the West: Society and Culture, 1815–1937* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 217–18; Daniel Seligman, “Ghettos in China,” *Time*, 7 April 1980, p. 42; Ruth Lor Malloy, *Travel Guide to the People’s Republic of China* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1980), p. 201; John Fraser, *The Chinese: Portrait of a People* (Toronto & London: Collins, 1980) photograph caption (p. 7); Sarah Allan and Cherry Barnett, *China* (London: Cassell, 1980), p. 149; A. N. Rosenthal, “Memoirs of a new China hand,” *New York Times*, 26 July 1981, p. 19; Lyman Van Slyke, *Yangtze: Nature, History, and the River* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1988), p. 25, and Arthur Cotterell, *China: A Cultural History* (New York: Penguin 1988), p. 232.

20. Putnam Weale, *The Eternal Priestess*, p. 26. (Searches have yet to reveal any such controversy in the *North China Herald* for the years before 1914.)

The Development of China.²¹ In the original version of John Espey’s memoir of his boyhood days in Shanghai he drew attention to the notice’s fame by saying that it had become “the sign without which no book on Shanghai can be written.”²² This comment, which appears in a work published just after the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949, is only a slight exaggeration of the situation as it stood in the middle of this century. The standard version of the sign’s history has, moreover, continued to appear in a wide variety of Western texts, where it is typically used to add colour to general discussions of the inequities and prejudices of the treaty port era. The tale has been used this way in dozens of recent guidebooks and magazine articles published in Europe and America, and has also made its way into television documentaries and textbooks. Western commentators have also referred to the notice when discussing the “foreign guests only” signs that became increasingly common sights in some Chinese cities in the late 1970s and 1980s.²³ In short, it is used as a powerful symbol of imperialism’s effects on China, and the country’s troubled relationship with the outside world.²⁴

Just as the sign remains a common point of reference for Westerners, it is also deeply etched in the contemporary political and historical lore on Taiwan,²⁵ and especially in Hong Kong, where issues of foreign privilege have always been and remain a sore point. One reason the notice is especially well known there is that it plays a prominent role in a pivotal scene in *Jing wu men (The Chinese Connection)*, an enormously popular kung fu film starring Bruce Lee (Li Xiaolong), made in 1973 but set in turn-of-the-century Shanghai. The scene in question begins with Lee’s character becoming angry when a Sikh policeman attached to the SMC-run Shanghai Municipal Police draws attention to the infamous sign. The policeman tells Lee that he cannot enter the Public Garden, even though it is made clear to the audience that kimono-clad Japanese and even Westerners with dogs are allowed to pass the gate freely. Lee’s character is taunted with the suggestion that if he pretends to be a dog the policeman might let him pass. The highlight of the scene, and perhaps the film as a whole, takes the form of a slow motion sequence that shows Lee destroying the hated sign with a powerful kick. It is said that when the

21. K. S. Latourette, *The Development of China* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1917), p. 236.

22. John J. Espey, *The Other City* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1950), p. 155.

23. Joan Grant, *Worm-eaten Hinges: Tensions and Turmoil in Shanghai, 1988–89* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991), pp. 68–69; see also Jay Mathews, “Foreigners in China emerge as a new privileged class,” *Washington Post*, 9 March 1980, p. A18.

24. A documentary case in point (Yorkshire Television’s *China Rising*) is described in Max Davidson, “The arts: female struggle,” (London) *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1992, p. 10; a Japanese documentary, “Shanghai Kyodo Sokai” (“Shanghai International Settlement”), first shown on 5 May 1986, included a shot of the Malone photograph of the 1917 sign, identified inaccurately as the “Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted” one; a sample work that focuses only briefly on China which includes a reference to the sign is Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement: Feminism and Social Action* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 207.

25. The reference to the sign in a 1993 guidebook, *Shanghai* (Taipei: Huwei shenghuo), p. 46, is not unusual.

film was first shown in Hong Kong, this scene was greeted with enthusiastic shouts of approval from the audience.

Stories of the Sign in Chinese Sources

As famous as the sign is in Hong Kong, there is no doubt that the place it is best known is Shanghai itself. This is in part because the CCP throughout its first decades in power made concerted efforts to keep the standard story of the notice alive, and made extensive use of it as a symbol of imperialist exploitation. On an international level it has also used the issue to counter Western criticisms of human rights in China. Virtually every textbook, popular history, academic work and guidebook dealing with Shanghai published in the PRC between the early 1950s and the early 1980s contained at least a few lines about the sign and the history of Public Garden, which is often described as having been “reborn” in 1949 when the CCP took control of and renamed the grounds. In the 1950s, the local representatives of the Party took an extra step to ensure that everyone who visited Shanghai would be reminded of the city’s most infamous artifact, erecting a commemorative plaque in Huangpu Park that read in part as follows:

Before liberation the park bore silent witness to the imperialists’ aggression against China and their wanton trampling on her sovereignty. The gate of the park was guarded by police of the “International Settlement” and Chinese were refused admittance. To add insult to injury, the imperialists in 1885 put up at the gate a board with the words “No Admittance to Dogs and Chinese” written on it. This aroused among the Chinese people popular indignation and disgust, which finally compelled the imperialists to remove the board.²⁶

It is further indicative of the recent importance attached to the issue that it has been suggested that the city government intends to replace the sign, or put a similar one, in the renovated Huangpu Park. This version of the story built on, and partly utilized, a long tradition of Chinese publications concerning Shanghai that referred to the sign, whether guidebooks, histories, memoirs, textbooks or polemics. Some of these are examined here.

Since the CCP has done more than any other group to promulgate the tale of a prominently placed, officially sponsored Shanghai notice expressly linking Chinese to dogs, it is appropriate to look first at Communist treatments of the issue. The earliest references to the sign by prominent radicals, including people who were already or would later become members of the CCP, all seem to date from the early 1920s. The first of these – or at least the earliest one cited by PRC scholars in their

26. The text of the plaque is provided in Ted Thomas, “Keeping a myth alive,” *South China Morning Post*, 22 January 1987, p. 12. The version of the sign’s history recounted on the plaque, which has disappeared during the recent renovation of the park and the building of the Martyrs Memorial, is very similar to that provided in PRC publications such as Xiang Hua, (ed.), *Shanghai shihua (An Informal History of Shanghai)* (Shanghai: Wuwen shuju, 1971), pp. 138–142.

recent defences of the official Party line on the sign – is an essay by Guo Morou that appeared in print in September 1923. Near the beginning of this article, Guo refers to the fact that Chinese and dogs were both banned from entering the parks in Shanghai, but that Chinese could enter if they donned Western clothing. He states that when his wife suggested he do this he refused, arguing that to have worn Western clothes for this purpose would have been to become a “pretend-Oriental-Westerner,” which would in a sense have been to accept the status of being a dog. Throughout the essay he continues to play upon the imagery of dogs and clothing choices, and insults to the humanity of Chinese. Noting that since, even though officially banned from entering the park, dogs were in fact often allowed in, Guo points out that if a Chinese wanted to enter all he would need to do would be to “change himself into a dog.” He complains that it was perfectly acceptable for those wearing Indian clothes to enter the park, and also comments on his dislike of Western clothes, which make people look like dogs. In fact the first time he saw someone wearing such apparel he thought that he had seen a strange dog. At no point does Guo refer to signs or notices *per se*, but in case any modern reader has doubts that this is what is to be read into his text, an author’s note is added to the version of the essay that appears in the 1985 edition of his collected works which states: “In earlier times, the parks in Shanghai’s concessions had notices at the gates saying “Chinese and dogs not admitted.”²⁷

During the months that followed the appearance of Guo’s essay, both CCP leader Cai Hesen and Kuomintang leader Sun Yat-sen worked references to the sign into polemics against the inequities of Western imperialism. Interestingly, while Cai (whose article appeared in mid-November 1923) states that a sign explicitly linking dogs with Chinese still stood at the gates of the Bund Garden, Sun’s mention of the notice a fortnight earlier in a speech to the Guangzhou YMCA (21 October) noted that it had “formerly” (*congqian*) stood there.²⁸ Nor do Cai and Sun agree on the wording of the sign. Cai reports that it says “*Huaren yu quan bu de runei*” (Chinese and dogs not admitted); Sun reports it as having once said “*Gou yu Zhongguoren bu xu ru*” (Dogs and Chinese not permitted to enter). Sun referred again to the sign in November 1924, again describing it as something that no longer existed, and contrasting the continuing exclusion of Chinese from the parks on the Huangpu river (the Public Garden) and North Sichuan Road (Hongkou Park) with the absence of any such restrictions in Hong Kong.²⁹

Another pre-1949 discussion of the sign that defenders of the official CCP version of its history like to cite is one by famous Party leader Fang Zhimin, written in prison before his execution in July 1935. In his “Keai

27. Guo Morou, *Guo Morou quanji* (Collected works of Guo Morou) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), Vol. 9, pp. 41–54, see esp. pp. 41–43.

28. Cai Hesen, *Xiangdao zhoubao* (The Guide Weekly) No. 46 (16 November 1923), p. 352; and Sun Yat-sen, *Sun Zhongshan quanji* (Collected Works of Sun Yat-sen) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), Vol. 8, p. 3.

29. Sun Yat-sen, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 387.

de Zhongguo” (“Loveable China”), Fang claimed that seeing a sign containing the words “*Huaren yu gou bu zhun jin yuan*” (Chinese and Dogs not allowed into the park) was an experience which helped radicalize him. When he saw the sign in his youth, he felt “insulted as I had never been insulted before!” That the imperialists had been allowed to “build a park in Shanghai, a part of China,” was bad enough, Fang argued, but that they had gone beyond this to “ban Chinese from entering, and beyond that to put Chinese and dogs into the same category, how could so-called ‘civilized’ people do this?”³⁰ Later memoir writers point to coming across the sign as a radicalizing experience.³¹

The first extended discussions of the sign by authors associated with the CCP, which go beyond using it as a generic symbol of imperialist aggression to giving a detailed account of when it was supposed to have been put up and taken down, date from the 1950s. The section on public parks in an officially sponsored guidebook published to mark the second anniversary of Shanghai’s 1949 “liberation” from Kuomintang rule is a notable early example of the kind of detailed discussions that would emerge in this period. It begins by noting that the first public park was founded by foreigners in 1868, and that from that point up until 1928 not only was it kept as a special preserve for *yang daren* (the foreign elite), but that at the entrance was posted a humiliating notice saying “Chinese and dogs not allowed to enter” (using *quan* instead of *gou* for dog). With the advent of the May 30th Movement and the rise of popular anti-imperialism generally, the text continues, the Western elite came to realize the strength of the Chinese masses and in 1928 were forced to remove the ban on native use of the park.³² “But because they instituted an entry fee and kept out anyone not dressed formally,” ordinary Chinese workers were still prevented from using the grounds. Finally, after the Second World War, according to this text, the park was controlled by the Chinese authorities, but it was only after 1949 that the “people” (*renmin*) really came to feel that it was their own and it was turned into a “place of rest for workers and people of all other classes.”³³ By the side of a larger

30. Fang Zhimin, *Fang Zhimin wenji (Writings of Fang Zhimin)* (Beijing: Xinhua, 1985), p. 126.

31. *Wusi Yundong liushi zhounian jinianji (Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary of the May 30th Movement)* (Shanghai: Shanghai shi zonggonghui and Shanghai gongren yundong shiliao weiyuanhui, 1985), p. 14; and not only Communists, see, for example, “Oral history,” an interview with Nationalist diplomat Wellington Koo in *The New Yorker*, 18 April 1977, p. 32. Curiously, we have found no references in PRC works to the story of Mao Zedong having become radicalized by the sign, although the tale has become fairly well known in China, presumably through oral transmission. It is also well known in the West, thanks to Stuart Schram’s *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 73. See also Joshua Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naito Konan (1866–1934)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 103.

32. It is interesting to note, in fact, that the lawns and benches on the Bund Foreshore, alongside the Huangpu but not in the Public Garden, and barred to Chinese use from the turn of the century onwards do actually appear to have been “reclaimed” by Chinese users after May 30th, despite SMC policy. Parks Committee, 16 December 1927, Minute Book No. 2, SMA.

33. *Xin Shanghai bianlan (A Handy Guide to New Shanghai)* (Shanghai: Dagong bao, 1951), pp. 415–16; see also *Shanghai ji jinbu yiri you (A Day’s Travels in Shanghai and*

photograph of Chinese sitting, talking and reading in the Bund Gardens, a 1958 illustrated booklet, *Shanghai jinxi (Shanghai Yesterday and Today)*, specifically contrasts a photograph of an old worker and his granddaughters sitting on a bench in the park with a reproduction of Malone’s snapshot of the actual sign. The caption underneath Malone’s shot states that “Before liberation the sign which the imperialists placed at the entrance to the Bund Garden was inscribed with the phrase, insulting the Chinese people, ‘Dogs (*gou*) and Chinese not admitted’.”³⁴ Accounts such as this were adapted to form the basis of the official commemorative plaque described above.

The most detailed and widely distributed accounts of the park’s history appeared during the Cultural Revolution era, during which references to the notice played an especially prominent role in CCP propaganda campaigns. One of the most comprehensive discussions of the issues can be found in a popular history of Shanghai published in 1971, which devotes nine pages to a chapter entitled “The Story of Huangpu Park.” The second section of this chapter, entitled “Dogs and Chinese Not Allowed,” begins by noting that the park’s first name included the word “public” but that “... at the time, the word ‘public’ (*gong*) was taken to refer only to people from America and Europe,” and not to the Chinese. To make this clear, the text claims, from the day the park was opened the SMC stationed guards at the entrance to exclude Chinese forcibly. A change in policy occurred briefly in the early 1880s, the text notes, when members of the Chinese elite managed to convince the SMC to let select groups of native residents use the park, but in 1885 the Council reinstated its ban and erected a “large wooden notice,” which included a section that comprised a “public insult to the people of China: ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Allowed’.”³⁵ The story of the opening of the “Chinese Park” in 1890 is then recounted – the park being dismissed as being so small and unattractive that it “hardly deserved to be called a ‘public park’,” and is said to have not surprisingly drawn few visitors – and also various changes in Huangpu Park that were brought about by revolutionary forces. The final subsection of the chapter, which is devoted to chronicling these changes, begins by saying that in the wake of events such as the May Fourth Movement and the 1927 struggles for retrocession of all foreign concessions, the imperialists became aware of the strength of the Chinese masses and “advances were made in the fight to bring the parks under Chinese control and avenge the insult of the ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Allowed’ sign.” In 1928 the park was opened to Chinese and, the argument continues, the hated sign was done away with. Elaborating on the themes discussed in the 1951 guidebook the account goes into considerable detail about the barriers to the full liberation of the park

footnote continued

Neighbouring Parts (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1957), pp. 24–25. An exact reprint of the latter work was published in Hong Kong in 1972 by the Luyou chubanshe.

34. Dong Weikun (ed.), *Shanghai jinxi (Shanghai Yesterday and Today)* (Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1958), pp. 6–7.

35. Xiang Hua, *Informal History of Shanghai*, p. 142.

before the late 1940s; not only were the entrance charges prohibitive, but monuments to imperialist heroes remained in the grounds and the Kuomintang allowed the American military to use the park after 1945. In 1949 the people took charge, the Margary Memorial was removed and the park took on a new aspect and was able to “begin a new life” and put on the “smiling aspect” that characterizes it today.³⁶

The dawn of the Dengist era did not bring any immediate changes to the myth of the sign: the commemorative plaque remained in place throughout the first part of the reform era and guidebooks continued to tell of a prominently located officially sanctioned sign explicitly linking dogs and Chinese, which was only removed after decades of struggle by the masses.³⁷ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, the situation began to change. Scholars of Shanghai history began to express doubts about the standard CCP version of the park’s history. Not only did Wu Guifang’s influential article appear, but so did a number of other works that either cast doubts on the story or simply left out references to the sign in their historical discussions. Two books with the title *Shanghai cidian* (*Dictionary of Shanghai*) were published in 1989; each had a section on the Huangpu Park, but one referred only to exclusion of Chinese before 1928, while the other repeated the standard story. *Yuanlin jiqu* (*Record of the Parks*), part of a series published to mark the city’s 700th anniversary, simply reported that there were “differing theories” about the humiliating sign: one is that one regulation barred dogs and bicycles, and another rule barred Chinese, while another theory held that the sign existed. After 1949, it continues, searches never revealed a sign with the actual English regulations, or any trace of a “Chinese and Dogs not Admitted” notice, nor were there any photographs.³⁸ The new Shanghai History Museum has only a photograph of the park on display, and no comment at all about exclusion. Some authors continued to stick to the orthodox line during this period. Yang Jiashi noted in 1988 that “... because Shanghai had not seen such places before, they all wanted to go in, so the imperialists limited access, wrote up their ‘Chinese and Dogs not admitted’ regulation, which infuriated the Chinese people, and after more than 40 years of negotiations and protests, they were opened up to the Chinese.”³⁹ More interestingly, another hard-line history, *Lieqiang zai Zhongguo de zujie* (*The Concessions the Powers Established in China*) presaged the 1994 “entire story” by citing both the published regulations

36. *Ibid.* pp. 142–47; for a similar view, which includes a reproduction of the Malone photograph as evidence, see *Shanghai waitan Nanjinglu shihua* (*An Informal History of Shanghai’s Bund and Nanjing Road*) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1976), pp. 46–49.

37. A sample brief account from the early 1980s, one of many, may be found in *Shanghai youlan* (*Shanghai Guidebook*) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1980), p. 24.

38. *Shanghai Cidian* (*Dictionary of Shanghai*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1989), p. 435; *Shanghai Cidian* (*Dictionary of Shanghai*) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1989), pp. 473–74; Zhang Xuelin (ed.), *Yuanlin jiqu* (*Record of the Parks*) (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 1991), pp. 23–25.

39. Yang Jiashi, “Shanghai yuanlin zhilüe” (“An outline gazetteer of the parks”), *Lishi wenhua mingcheng—Shanghai* (*Shanghai—A Famous City of History and Culture*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1988), p. 88.

and the conclusion of (undated) interviews conducted by the Shanghai Revolutionary History Museum with some 20 former park workers, that around 1900 a small wooden sign with the pertinent phrase in English and in Chinese had been erected.⁴⁰ The emphasis in the 1992 *Concessions the Powers Established in China* and 1994’s “entire story” on collecting and presenting citations and other forms of evidence to back up assertions of the sign’s historicity is a new trend in CCP writings on the issue which, as shown above, previously relied on the polemical reassertion of its historicity. If, in recent years, the story had not been so widely represented as having been at best a mystery, at worst a fiction, or, pragmatically, its use a form of shorthand for the actual rules rather than a statement of their factual wording, this would not have been necessary, and it may also indicate that this issue parallels wider trends in historiography within the PRC.

The sign has also formed a prominent part of the vocabulary of PRC critics of Western concerns with “human rights.” A 1979 *Guangming ribao* article noted of the sign’s pre-liberation existence that “in this abominable way, the imperialists who invaded China humiliated the Chinese people and denied outright that the Chinese people had any human rights at all.” The Information Office of the State Council released a *White Paper on Human Rights* in 1991 that identified the sign as indicative of imperialist abuses, while a September 1994 speech comparing human rights in China and the United States began with the speaker’s memories of learning about the sign at school 50 years ago.⁴¹

The “entire story” turned to pre-1949 non-Communist writings about the sign as part of its proof, and although they reveal much about the development of the debate, they say nothing of the sign. The earliest texts concentrated merely on the question of exclusion itself: it was declared unfair, and the contradiction between the park’s public name and private reality was pointed to, as was the fact that Chinese residents provided much more of the SMC’s revenues than Westerners. A close reading of the early complaints and petitions suggests that the three things members of the local elite found most galling about the situation had nothing to do with the way regulations were phrased. What bothered them most was, first, that they were being excluded from a piece of land that stood on the soil of their native country; secondly, the foreigners in charge of the International Settlement sometimes seemed to view and treat them as if they were no different from “ordinary coolies” (who, in their eyes, might indeed be worth keeping out of the Garden); and thirdly, Japanese and Koreans were able to use this “Western” park. In 1909 *Shenbao* published a large photograph of the park captioned “The Shanghai park Chinese are

40. Ren Wuxiong and Xu Yulin, “Waitan gongyuan de lishi” (“The history of the Bund Garden”), *Lieqiang zai Zhongguo de zuijie* (*The Concessions the Powers Established in China*) (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1992), pp. 100–103.

41. *Guangming ribao*, 26 October 1979; Xinhua News Agency, 2 November 1991; *Guangming ribao*, 11 September 1994, p. 3.

not allowed to enter.”⁴² Early Shanghai guidebooks simply describe the topography of the Public Garden, and then state that Chinese were not ordinarily permitted to enter, or Chinese were not allowed to enter unless accompanied by Westerners, or that Chinese could not enter unless they wore Western or Japanese clothes.⁴³ The frequency with which the latter point occurs does seem to suggest that Chinese did indeed often enter the park in the guise of Japanese. Indeed, the SMC’s Parks Committee minutes record the exasperation of the Municipal Engineer in 1911 at the “difficulty of differentiating between Chinese and others dressed in the European manner.”⁴⁴ This may also account for the fact that Chinese guidebooks, even in the era of exclusion, still tended to include sections on the foreign parks.

The earliest Chinese reference that resonates with later accounts is the 1907 *Shanghai xiangtu zhi* (*Gazeteer of the Shanghai Region*) which states that “Orientals and Occidentals from all countries, even ... Indians, who are the chattels and slaves of the Westerners, are able to enter the gates, only Chinese are barred from entering,” only they are thus treated “like slaves, like dogs, like horses.”⁴⁵ In *Lao Shanghai (Old Shanghai)* (1919) the park regulations are discussed in a passage worth quoting at length:

The Public Garden regulations are very strictly enforced on Chinese by the police. At the Huangpu Public Garden, Chinese and dogs are not allowed to enter for recreation (*bu zhun huaren ji gou runei youwan*). They put the Chinese and dogs together. It is a great insult. But some of our country fellows do not know self-respect, they spit all over the place and also break twigs off trees and pick flowers, all forbidden by the park keepers.⁴⁶

The actual rules are then itemized “to warn those who have self-respect.” It is a sign that the comparison was being widely made that the 1919 *Shanghai xianhua* (*Anecdotes of Shanghai*) noted that a sign with the wording “*Gou yu huaren bu zhun runei*” was placed at the entrance to Shanghai’s *racecourse*, but it is with the Communist and Nationalist writers mentioned above that the standard sign story begins to emerge, often in the English-language publications of their propaganda campaign against the powers in Shanghai. It appeared, for example, through the work of the self-styled (probably student-run) Chinese Information Bureau, which circulated propaganda in London and claimed in a 1925

42. *Shenbao*, 28 April 1881, 29 April 1881, 8 December 1885, 21 September 1888, 11 August 1889, 27 January 1909, quoted in “The entire story.”

43. *Shanghai youlan zhinan* (*Shanghai Touring Guide*) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1923), p. 29; *Xiuzhen Shanghai zhinan* (*Pocket Guide to Shanghai*) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1911), p. 65; *Shanghai zhinan* (*Shanghai Guide*) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1909), part 8, p. 2; *Shanghai zhinan* (*Shanghai Guide*) (Shanghai: Shanghai yinhang luxingshe, 1925), p. 23.

44. Parks Committee, 29 December 1911, Minute Book No. 1, SMA.

45. *Shanghai xiangtu zhi* (*Gazeteer of the Shanghai Region*) 1907, reprinted in *Shanghai tan yu Shanghai ren* (*Shanghai and the Shanghainese*) (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), p. 72.

46. Bo Xi (ed.), *Lao Shanghai (Old Shanghai)* (Shanghai: Shanghai taidong tushuju, 1919), p. 155.

pamphlet that the sign was “until recently ... displayed over the main gates of the park.”⁴⁷ T’ang Leang-li (Tang Liangli) repeated the same basic information in a book published in English in 1927, and cited the Malone photograph as proof, claiming that the sign had been removed during the latter part of the First World War. Tang did much to keep the issue of the sign and similar exclusions in the public eye in the pages of the *People’s Tribune*, which he edited, and in various other publications.⁴⁸ On the whole, however, the issue is absent from surviving printed literature, although there are certainly references to its existence as a rumour (in “half-baked student conversation” for example) during the years of the nationalist revolution.⁴⁹

After the parks were opened, the issue was kept alive and began for the first time to creep into respected academic history. Kuai Shixun, using such sources as the SMC’s annual reports, wrote on the history of public parks in Shanghai in 1933 (republished in 1980). Kuai noted that Chinese had desired entry to the park ever since 1881, and he quoted the 1889 letter of complaint on the issue from Chinese merchants to the Shanghai Daotai, which stressed the unfairness of the regulation and the immensity of the insult. The story of the sign gets a brief mention but his source was Latourette’s *Development of China*. In the 1936 *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao* (*Shanghai Research Materials*), it was noted that an “insulting sign” had once stood at the entrance, and that even those with bad memories would find it unforgettable.⁵⁰ Most post-1928 guidebooks, like most guides before that date, mention that entry to the park used to be restricted but do not mention the sign, but popular histories and literary works began to.⁵¹ Although largely absent from post-war accounts of Shanghai and Shanghai history, the issue had crept back into prominence in the official and unofficial propaganda issued under the Japanese collaborationist regimes. The fierceness of anti-imperialism (anti-European imperialism) in these books and pamphlets is extremely reminiscent, in its use of the sign, of the nationalism of Cai Hesen and Sun Yat-sen, and probably stems from the appeal to the “true” Kuomintang heritage made by the Wang Jingwei regime (publicist Tang Liangli became a senior official in Wang’s government). It is also resonant of the language used by the CCP

47. Chinese Information Bureau, *How Foreigners Live and Carry on Trade in China* (London: Chinese Information Bureau, 14 July 1925) p. 3.

48. T’ang Leang-li (Tang Liangli), *China in Revolt: How a Civilisation Became a Nation* (London: Noel Douglas, 1927) p. 51; *China Facts and Fancies* (Shanghai: China United Series, 1936).

49. “Chinese and Dogs,” *North China Daily Mail*, 23 July 1927.

50. Kuai Shixun, “Shanghai YingMei zujie de hebing shiqi” (“The era of the amalgamation of the British and American settlements”), *Shanghaishi tongzhiguan jikan* (*Shanghai Tongzhiguan Quarterly*), Vol. 1, No. 3 (1933), pp. 688–691; Shanghai tongshe (eds.), *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao* (*Shanghai Research Materials*) (Hong Kong: Nantian shuye gongsi, 1972), p. 481.

51. *Shanghaishi zhinan* (*Guide to Shanghai City*) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1933), p. 179; Ni Xiyang, *Shanghai* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1938), p. 95.

in its post-1949 polemics. The contest for the use of this symbol has, then, also involved competing nationalisms.⁵²

The Origin of the Myth

Having surveyed the existence of the myth in Chinese and foreign texts, and looked at contemporary attempts to perpetuate the story, it is time to speculate about a few specific questions related to the origins of the legend of the “dogs and Chinese” sign. Definite answers to these questions continue to be elusive, and may always prove impossible to provide. The following are “best guesses.” First, regarding timing, since written discussions of the sign that appeared in the late 1910s and 1920s intimate that the notice’s existence was already a frequently mentioned fact, it seems likely that stories of the sign began to circulate in the first decade of the century. Secondly, as far as the origin of these stories is concerned, a close look at the different versions of the regulations that were posted at the entrance to the grounds during the first decades of this century suggests that the most plausible reconstruction of the legend’s origin involves linking a version of Reginald Johnston’s 1927 suggestion, that some people began using the phrase “No Dogs and Chinese Allowed” to summarize the implications of the regulations that referred to people and animals in separate places, to an examination of the role of amahs in the spread of information in old Shanghai.⁵³ It is known that Public Garden regulation number 5 (of 6), “No Chinese are admitted except servants in attendance upon foreigners,” existing in 1903 was replaced in 1913 by more neutral wording emphasizing foreign exclusivity. (It might also be worth noting that although dogs were allowed into the park in 1896 if “led,” they were completely barred by 1903.)⁵⁴ The order of the rules also changed, and the clause dealing with the Chinese was moved from line 5 to line 1, and that with dogs from line 1 to line 2. In 1917 this ordering had been altered to lines 1 and 4 respectively. The proximity of the rules relating to dogs and foreign exclusivity in the 1913 sign may have played a key role in the rise of this urban legend. If Ye Xiaoqing’s thesis that the myth of the sign was “spread by educated people in order to spread nationalist ideology” is to be accepted, then this is only in the knowledge that while it was undoubtedly true for the period after the rumour had gained currency, say from 1923 on, in fact the most

52. Li Shaozhong, *Shanghai yu Shanghai ren (Shanghai and the Shanghainese)* (Nanjing: Zhongwen fangsong yinshuguan, May 1945), pp. 16–18 (this was reprinted in 1948 as *Shanghai zhongshengxiang (Tales of Shanghai Life)* by Xu Chi et al. (Shanghai: Xin Zhongguo baoshe); *Shanghai zujie de heimou (The Dark Side of the Shanghai Concessions)* (Shanghai: Shanghai tebie shi xuanchuanbu, 1943), pp. 21–22; Ji Longsheng (pseud.), *Da Shanghai (Great Shanghai)* (Taipei: Nanfang zazhishe, 1942), pp. 36–37; *The China Annual 1944* (Shanghai: Asia Statistics Co., 1944), p. 183.

53. *A Mischievous Slander*, p. 4. The 1943 *Dark Side of the Shanghai Concessions* notes that “one line of the regulations read ‘This park is reserved exclusively for foreigners,’ another line ‘Dogs not admitted to this park,’ put simply (*jiandan shuoqilai*) this is ‘Chinese and Dogs not admitted’ ” (p. 21).

54. *Police Guide and Regulations* (Shanghai, Kelly and Walsh, 1896), pp. 70–71.

likely people to have played a role in spreading the story prior to this point were those Chinese who were allowed partial access to the parks.⁵⁵ The urban legend may have taken hold as amahs and other servants, who could not read English but “knew” what the signs said point by point, told other Chinese about the notice: point one, no Chinese; point two, no dogs. The strength of dog as an epithet in China deepened the insult. The story of the “Dogs and Chinese” sign might, in short, lie in the “scandalous tales” recounted by amahs which, it was feared by one correspondent in 1911, “are disseminated, and of course, grow in the telling.” Such fears were normally related to gossip about the behaviour of foreign masters and mistresses, but stories about park rules could easily have spread in the same fashion.⁵⁶

This myth would have gained currency and added sting in the light of the creation of new parks for foreigners that stood outside the boundaries of the International Settlement and yet were controlled by the SMC, notably Hongkew Recreation Ground (now *Hongkou gongyuan*), which was built in 1908–09 and located to the north of the International Settlement in what was supposed to be a Chinese administered area, and Jessfield Park (now *Zhongshan gongyuan*), which stood to the west of the foreign enclave’s borders and was built in 1913–14. It seems likely that these new and prominent developments made the issue of the exclusion of Chinese from the SMC’s parks much more generally known; the rapid increase in Shanghai’s population in this era must also have increased pressures.⁵⁷ As park signs followed the new parks into Chinese territory, the ambiguities of administration of these newly established (or seized) areas must have brought the issue for the first time into the daily lives of many Shanghai Chinese not previously touched by the International Settlement and its mores (indeed, the full plans for Jessfield called for the “removal of three villages,” and the 1903 design for Hongkou shows it surrounding one village on three sides).⁵⁸ Barring Chinese from parks in the Settlement itself was at least logically defensible, because of the legal fiction that the International Settlement was still technically reserved for foreign occupation: exporting that segregationism into a still-Chinese controlled area was plainly rude.

There is reason to think, too, that Shanghai’s student population would have been made increasingly aware of the SMC’s policies. Jessfield Park also abutted directly onto the main entrance of St John’s University, and this immediately became a source of friction between the park authorities and the students.⁵⁹ Moreover, as organized student athletics became more popular in the 1910s and 1920s, the Parks committee was faced with

55. Ye Xiaoqing, “Shanghai before nationalism,” p. 52.

56. *NCH*, 9 September 1911, pp. 651–52; Crow, *Foreign Devils in the Flowery Kingdom*, p. 197.

57. The number of Chinese residents of the International Settlement nearly trebled between 1890 and 1910, to 488,000 (SMC, *Annual Report*, 1890, p. 299).

58. Parks Committee, 25 October 1915, Minute Book No. 1, SMA; SMC, *Annual Report 1903*, map inside front cover.

59. Parks Committee, 16 July 1915, Minute Book No. 1, SMA; Gu Ziren, who complained in London in 1925 about exclusion from the parks, was a St John’s graduate, *The Times*, 4

requests to allow the “Asian Olympic Games” to be held in its parks in both 1914 and 1921. The former event was cancelled because of the war but in 1921 the Council agreed to the request, provided that students only were issued with tickets to enter the rest of the Park. However the student organizers set up booths and sold tickets “promiscuously to all Chinese applying.” The SMC intervened and forbade the sale of tickets and the entry to the Park of anybody but students.⁶⁰

The period 1907 to 1911 also saw a general regularizing and hardening of the regulations, in part as a consequence of the innovatory appointment in 1899 of a “trained specialist from Kew,” Mr Arthur, as “Superintendent of Parks and Open Spaces.” The management of the parks, previously “in the hands of a Committee of gentlemen interested in horticulture,” “fell into line as an ordinary branch of the Engineers’ Department.”⁶¹ He was followed by another Kew-trained professional horticulturalist, who kept a close eye on modern trends in park management and in close contact with his peers abroad. In addition, this was a period during which Indians, if badly dressed, were specifically banned from entering the parks, especially disreputable and dirty watchmen (1908); Japanese men were enjoined to dress in Western clothes or “haori and hakama” (1908); and amahs were barred from the seats during musical performances (1910).⁶² In general there appears to have been a professionalization of the Parks service in the International Settlement and a formal codification of many rules that had not previously been written down.⁶³ This tightening must surely have caused friction between the park keepers and people, such as the amahs, who were already using the gardens (or students using Jessfield before it was properly completed). It is also known, at least in the case of the ban on amahs using seats, that changes in regulations included injunctions specifying that “notices be exhibited at the entrances to the Garden to which the police will give effect.”⁶⁴ All this may help account for the myth’s persistence in the popular imagination, during the period before the sign became a political symbol to politicians interested in promoting a nationalist agenda.

Conclusion

Setting the standard story straight about the Shanghai sign, and proposing an explanation for its origins, does not necessarily mean that a radical revision of the accounts of treaty port prejudices and the iniquities of

footnote continued

February 1925, p. 16; *Who’s Who in China* (5th ed., Shanghai: China Weekly Review, 1936), p. 291.

60. Parks Committee, 8 May 1914; 1 June 1921, Minute Book No. 2, SMA.

61. J. O. P. Bland to Public Garden Committee, 14 July 1899, Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report*, 1901, pp. 421–22.

62. *SMCG*, 10 October 1908; 5 September 1908 (quoted in 29 June 1911, p. 166); 2 June 1910, p. 185.

63. The 1881 protest pointed out that “*there is in view no official notification*” (emphasis added) giving information on the rules; *NCH*, 13 May 1881, pp. 462–63.

64. *SMCG*, 2 June 1910, p. 185.

extraterritoriality is necessary. However, imperialism in Shanghai, and throughout China generally, was a more subtle actor in its quotidian activities than the CCP vision of Chinese history allows. The successful development of Shanghai's commerce and industry, and society and culture, required engagement, cohabitation and dialogue between the Chinese and Western elites in the city. The conventional treatment of the notice does distort some aspects of Chinese and treaty port history, largely because it fits in a bit too nicely with the caricature of Western inhabitants of the Settlement as a group united by a common outlook (the “Shanghai mind”) that was narrow-minded, provincial and racist in the extreme. There were certainly residents whose attitudes were not very different from that of the stereotypical “Shanghailanders” portrayed by Arthur Ransome in his famous 1927 essay on the “Shanghai mind,” but there are three main problems with the caricature he helped to popularize.⁶⁵

The first is that it presents the attitudes of the International Settlement's foreign community as much more homogenous than they actually were. There were some Western residents of the International Settlement who were openly critical of policies that excluded the Chinese from using local parks. Some criticisms came from predictable sources, such as J. B. Powell, who often satirized the policies of the SMC and mocked positions taken by the publishers of the British-owned *NCH*.⁶⁶ Occasionally, however, even ardent defenders of the status quo expressed displeasure with this particular feature of local policy. For example, Major General J. Duncan, the commander of the British Shanghai Defence Force in 1927–28, could not stomach the exclusionary policies.⁶⁷

Secondly, businessmen were certainly too pragmatic to “spend our time deliberately insulting our Chinese friends,” as one put it in 1927.⁶⁸ Old Shanghai's cosmopolitan egalitarianism has certainly been much exaggerated by propagandists of the foreign regime; however, trade was not likely to function to anybody's advantage in an atmosphere of conflict. In fact, without the establishment of a pragmatically equal relationship with the local Chinese elites, foreign Shanghai would have been ungovernable. The oligarchy which ran the city was generally aware

65. Ransome's piece first appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, 2 May 1927, and was later reprinted in the author's book, *The Chinese Puzzle* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927).

66. The diversity of Shanghai's foreign community and differences of opinion relating to the way Chinese residents should be treated are handled well in Nicholas Clifford, “A revolution is not a tea party: the Shanghai mind(s) reconsidered,” *Pacific Historical Review*, No. 59 (November 1990), pp. 501–526; and James Huskey, “The cosmopolitan connection,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 227–242. Contemporary Western criticisms of exclusionary policies include J. B. Powell, “And the Municipal Band plays on!” *China Weekly Review*, 13 April 1927, pp. 194–95; and a letter to the editors of the *North China Daily News* entitled “Admission of Chinese into public parks,” which was reprinted in *NCH*, 1 May 1926, p. 208.

67. “Such things as forbidding the good class Chinese from entering the Jessfield Park, when any Japanese or fifth class Portuguese half-caste is allowed to do so, strikes me as an intolerable insult and one that does much harm,” Maj. Gen. J. Duncan to Sir Miles Lampson, S/O 16 January 1928, Great Britain Public Records Office Foreign Office files, FO228/3804/16 25a.

68. Quoted in *SMCG*, 19 April 1928, p. 159c.

that explicit discrimination would provoke ill-feeling; subtlety was much the preferred approach. It should be remembered that after 1881 the SMC knew full well that admission to the parks was a very sensitive issue. The Parks Committee itself described exclusion in 1909 as “undoubtedly a source of friction.”⁶⁹

The third problem with the caricature Ransome created lies in its implication that Western residents of the International Settlement were somehow unique, a breed apart even from their counterparts in other treaty ports and Shanghai’s own French Concession. Foreign administered concessions in Hankou and Tianjin, for example, had regulations relating to native use that were much like those found in Shanghai.⁷⁰ The French Concession is often presented as having been more enlightened than the International Settlement when it came to interactions between native and foreign residents, since the former was much quicker than the latter to give serious consideration to the idea that Chinese representatives should be allowed a place on its municipal council, but a close look at evidence relating to parks calls this assumption into question. For example, as Wu Guifang points out with an ironic turn of phrase, there were some recreation grounds in the French Concession that *excluded* native residents but *allowed* foreigners to bring their pets in as they pleased.⁷¹ One of the very few eyewitnesses to come forward in print with a claim to have actually seen a notice that placed the words “dogs” and “Chinese” in the same sentence, does so in a letter to the editor of a journal published by the Shanghai Municipal Archive: the author claims that he and his friends once stumbled upon a faded sign of this sort in a park in the city’s old French quarter.⁷² Furthermore, this was a complex society that defies easily drawn Chinese/Foreign categories. One Briton objected in 1927 to opening the parks to all as inviting in “the scum of this City.”⁷³ “Scum” was deliberately vague. Restriction on entry to the parks was never merely a question of race, and focusing on the sign may lead one to forget how far class and/or cultural prejudices were as much an element as racial or ethnic ones. Europeans in Shanghai themselves were far from homogeneous: there were strictly observed class divisions even within British society in the city. The White Russian and, later in the 1930s, the Jewish refugees were low down the social scale. The Chinese elite too, hardly wanted to share its quiet moments with labourers or rickshaw coolies. Furthermore if, as Emily Honig has pointed out, “the

69. Parks Committee, 21 December 1909, Minute Book No. 1, SMA.

70. The British Municipal Council in Tianjin only opened its parks to all residents in 1926, (Tientsin No. 37b, 2 April 1927, “Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ratepayers,” p. 2, FO228/3179/101 108c). Previously Chinese were only admitted with permits, and in effect this was intended to mean amahs (except “quarrelsome” ones) and their European charges, British Municipal Council Tientsin, *Handbook of Municipal Regulations* (Tianjin, n.d., c. 1923), pp. 69, 92–93.

71. Wu Guifang, “Informal discussion of old Shanghai,” p. 81.

72. “Guanyu ‘Huaren yu gou bu de runei’ de erfang duzhe laixi” (“Two letters from readers concerning ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted’”), *Dang’an yu lishi* (*Archives and History*), Vol. 2, No. 3 (1986), p. 106.

73. W. H. Trenchard Davis quoted in *SMCG*, 14 April 1927, p. 147. See also Powell, “And the Municipal Band plays on!”

Jiangnan elite ... was defined by an association with – if only an aspiration to emulate – foreigners,” then restrictions on entry to the parks fit this definition well.⁷⁴ There were complaints about overcrowding in the parks when they were opened to all ticket-buyers in 1928, but the move served its purpose: it kept out the destitute of all nations, but especially the mass of Chinese residents (and especially Honig’s Subei people), who could not afford to buy tickets.⁷⁵

Our research has shown that Shanghai’s sceptical historians have largely decided that the story of the sign is misleading, and misrepresentative of the real nature of Shanghai society (and Shanghai’s societies) in the century before 1949. But they have also shown that this is a symbol with a life of its own, independent of the facts, and in Shanghai today it is, as it has been for 70 years, a contested symbol. On the day the “entire story” was simultaneously published in three of Shanghai’s newspapers a fourth, *Jiefang ribao*, carried a column commenting on the issue. Under the heading “History must not be forgotten,” Chen Yujie lectured his readers on the importance of understanding and remembering the past; “national integrity” and “clean minds” would thus both be preserved. Struggling to retain their hold as economic reform and openness to the outside world help stimulate new ways of thinking, and with a new relativism in Shanghai, the city’s authorities have turned to one of their surest icons concerning the experience of humiliation at the hands of strong foreign powers when China was weak. Implicit in the revival of the story after years of criticism of it is the idea that it was the Communist Party which saved the Shanghai people from such humiliations. But even here the issue of the sign remains contested. Chen refers to the recent debate on the sign but merely notes that it is the existence of the actual *regulations* which has been proved, and does not mention the alleged sign and its supposed wording.

After reading through many of the various texts relating to the legendary sign, we have both been left feeling, perhaps with Chen Yujie, that much of the general conventional wisdom relating to “old” Shanghai captures the historical mood of the place and time quite well. It is, however, important to set the record straight and note that there is a difference, at least in degree, between the offensiveness of the legendary sign, and notices that ban most Chinese from public grounds and place this injunction as number four in a series that also includes a rule forbidding dogs from entering. In a recent article calling for a re-evaluation of the treaty port experience Lucian Pye has also argued that the whole question of exclusion has been much exaggerated, and the attention devoted to it unnecessary.⁷⁶ However, we believe that although a

74. Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850–1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 15.

75. In fact, during the 1927 negotiations the commercial entrepreneur Liu Hongsheng pointed out that “the views of the lower classes of the Chinese must be given due consideration” as “a certain amount of pressure has been brought to bear on the delegates by this class of the community,” 17 February 1927, Parks Committee Minutes, Book 2, SMA.

76. Pye, “How China’s Nationalism was Shanghaied,” pp. 116–17.

close reading of the historical record shows that an officially-sanctioned sign explicitly linking “dogs and Chinese” never existed, and if it did exist elsewhere was definitely not a prominent and enduring part of the *physical* landscape of old Shanghai, the evidence relating to park rules does make clear that the kinds of biases this icon has been used to symbolize were indeed a prominent and enduring part of the *social* and *cultural* landscape of that city. John King Fairbank argued in *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast* that “Shanghaianders, for example, whatever their racial origin, found a common bond in the pursuit of profit in the Foreign Settlement. Wu Chien-chang and Edward Cunningham were Shanghaianders.” We would certainly accept the truth of this up to a point, but difference always remained important. It is surely significant on a symbolic level, that when the SMC and leading Western residents of the city sponsored public displays in 1893 to mark the 50th anniversary of Shanghai’s opening to foreign trade, people who looked like Cunningham were allowed to stand within the cordon surrounding the speakers, but people who looked like Wu were kept outside: racial origin mattered. At this celebration the creation of the Bund Garden (“the lungs of the city”) was explicitly lauded as one of the SMC’s accomplishments. Edward Cunningham would have been able to enter the park, but Wu Chien-chang would have been barred. Cunningham was a Shanghaiander, Wu was not.⁷⁷

77. *The Jubilee of Shanghai, 1843–1893* (Shanghai: North China Daily News, 1893), pp. 38–39; John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Development on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842–1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 466.

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¹ **How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied**

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⁵⁷ **Library Contributions**

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⁵⁹ **Pen Portrait: George Thalben-Ball**

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⁶³ **The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida**

Barbara Johnson

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⁷⁶ **How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied**

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