

**The Sephardi Jewish Community of Shanghai
1845-1939 and the Question of Identity**

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for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

From 1845 Baghdadi Jews settled in Shanghai via India and, over a century of existence, their numbers possibly never exceeded eight hundred. During this period they were exposed to great changes in their social, economic and political environment. Traditionalists believed that loyalties to the customs of their Baghdadi forebears, and occasionally even to Judaism itself, were being threatened. In this thesis the actions the Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai took to preserve their Jewish identity is examined, and changes in ethnic identity in Shanghai between 1845-1939 are analysed. Particular attention is paid to: their choice and the significance of the label 'Sephardi'; the religious and communal institutions they established in order to preserve their identity; their contribution to the economic development of the International Settlement; the reasons for their tenacious endeavours to be accepted as British subjects while remaining loyal to their religion; their reluctance to identify with the Zionist movement and their demonstration of solidarity with their co-religionists who sought refuge in Shanghai from Nazi persecution.

Notwithstanding the obstacles encountered in consulting documents preserved in the Shanghai archives, this thesis draws on a wide range of primary material, notably: the Shanghai Police Department Records, Foreign, Colonial and India Office Files, the Central Zionist correspondence with Shanghai, American Joint Distribution records, and newspapers printed in China, and in India. Particular use has been made of the *Israel's Messenger*, the first Jewish periodical and the only Sephardi journal to be published in China. Factual information rather than the opinions of its editor, Nissim Ezra Benjamin Ezra, has been taken into account. Despite a widespread search the communal records have not come to light. Consequently emphasis has been placed on the available documentation and on interviews with people who once lived in the community. These data have been particularly useful in understanding such phenomena as value systems and modes of thought. Of course, memories fade or become coloured over time. Nevertheless, frequently there has been a consensus among informants, or information given by any particular individual has been logically consistent, so that confidence in the data would appear to be justified.

It will be shown that the hopes and beliefs of the founding fathers, as expressed by David Solomon Sassoon - that the traders who left Baghdad to settle in new countries would remain true to the tenets of the Jewish religion and to the traditional observance of Baghdadi Jews in particular - were partially fulfilled. This demonstrates nevertheless the flexibility achieved by so many Jewish communities in the Diaspora, which remained faithful to their essential beliefs and values, and in so doing, assured their survival. It is hoped this addition to the considerable body of literature which documents the history of Jewish communities in the East, will promote an understanding of the economic development and social transformation of the Shanghai Sephardi community, and will also contribute to the history of foreign communities in China and Shanghai.

Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations used in text and in footnotes

AIU	<i>Alliance Israelite Universelle</i>
BCCJ	<i>Journal of the British Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai</i>
BDBJ	Board of Deputies for British Jews
CACC	China Association, China Association Circular Correspondence for the General Committee
CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People
CR	<i>Chinese Recorder</i>
EJ	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
FO	Foreign Office records
GMD	Guomindang
HSB	Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
IM	<i>Israel's Messenger</i>
IO	India Office Library and Records
NCDN	<i>North China Daily News</i>
NCH	<i>North China Herald</i>
PCP	Philip Cowan Papers
PE	<i>Points East</i>
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRO	Public Record Office.
R&R	Revenue and Statistics
SJCA	Shanghai Jewish Communal Association
SJS	Shanghai Jewish School
SJYA	Shanghai Jewish Youth Association
SMC	Shanghai Municipal Council
SMP	Shanghai Municipal Police
SVC	Shanghai Volunteer Corps
TCE	<i>The Celestial Empire</i>
TCP	<i>The China Press</i>
TJM	<i>The Jewish Messenger</i>
TJT	<i>The Jewish Tribune</i>
WZM	World Zionist Movement
WZO	World Zionist Organisation

Note on the Romanisation of Chinese Names

In accordance with standard practice the modern Hanyu pinyin system has been used in the transliteration of Chinese names and place-names. The exceptions are the retention of 'Sun Yatsen' and 'Chiang Kaishek'. Transliterations of place-names and street-names are retained in references and titles.

Introduction

...Spiritually and religiously they remained dependent on the teaching and tradition of Baghdad, although politically and economically they became independent. Yet the wealth gathered and the good fortune experienced in the new countries did not make them forget the 'Rivers of Babylon'.¹

This thesis investigates whether David Solomon Sassoon's observation on the Jews who left Baghdad in the first half of the nineteenth century remained true of those who settled in Shanghai. In the International Settlement many rose to an unparalleled level of commercial achievement and social sophistication. The challenge that confronted them was to maintain their Jewish identity whilst struggling to find acceptance in the wider society of Shanghai. There was always the awareness that successful integration into the predominantly British life in the Settlement might erode the culture, religion and the cohesiveness of the fledgling community, perhaps resulting in its ultimate disappearance. The more conservative elements among the early settlers were conscious of the necessity of maintaining a cultural distinctiveness which set them apart.²

One of the aims of this thesis will be to examine the social alterations that occurred within the community in the face of changing historical experience in Shanghai between 1845 and 1939 during which time the community grew and developed. Japanese occupation, World War II and its aftermath, meant that the general political, social and economic life described here altered substantially. For the Jewish community it meant depletion and then complete evacuation from Shanghai. Their identity as Jews was no longer of consequence when war broke out and the Japanese administrators superimposed on them a new identity. For political reasons it classified them as first class enemy nationals if they were British or American subjects, or second class enemy nationals, if they were Iraqi subjects or stateless.

¹ David Solomon Sassoon, *The History of the Jews in Baghdad*, (Letchworth, 1949), p.203 and 'Settlement of Baghdad Jews in the Far East', Chap. XXXIII.

² Compare South African Jewish psychologist Simon Herman, *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective*, (Berkeley, 1989), p.2.

Jewish communities all over the world, and through the ages, adapted to vastly different host societies. Generally their cohesion, in spite of internal strife, resulted from belief in God, in the value of Judaic laws, and in maintaining traditions which symbolised their beliefs and values. Differences in customs developed in response to the conditions in which the Jews found themselves. An important objective here is to examine changes over time in the identity of the Shanghai Sephardim within the specific historical, socio-economic and political context of the International Settlement. This will be explored at various levels - identity with Baghdad, with Sephardim, and broader still, with other Jews and with Judaism. Given that Judaism, like other religions, itself goes through processes of development, with traditionalism and modernism in tension, this will be traced in the period of transition encompassed in this thesis.

To understand fully the questions surrounding identity of Shanghai Sephardim, it needs to be explained first, that in Jewish law a person is a Jew if born of a Jewish mother. Belief in God and a special relationship of the Jewish people with Him and His ethical commandments are constants in Jewish culture.³ There is very little variation in these beliefs between one historical period and another and between Jewish communities generally. Like other groups or communities, Jews are usually bound together by common beliefs, values and laws, and this is expressed in the day to day life by traditionalists - for example, particular ways of observing the Sabbath and festivals, both in the home and in the synagogue, in *rites de passage*, and in their personal and domestic life, *viz* observance of ritual cleanliness and dietary laws. Ritual gives meaning to belief, as it is in this way that it impresses itself on the consciousness of individuals who have the will to belong to, or identify with, a particular group. It is in this sense that identity is discussed here. There are two distinct elements: the system of beliefs and values which tend to remain constant, and ritual or traditions which may vary between individuals in a single community or between communities themselves. Variations may occur for a number of reasons, such as differences in interpretation of laws or practices, flexibility required in a gentile environment, or tensions between orthodoxy and modernity in a rational

³ N. Kokosalakis, *Ethnic Identity and Religion, Tradition and Change in Liverpool Jewry*, (Washington, 1982), p.2.

world. For the purpose of this thesis, 'Jewish consciousness' and 'Jewish identity' have been used interchangeably. 'Consciousness' seems to be more aptly applied to individuals, and 'identity' to groups.

Social stratification in large groups is generally reflected in its sub-groups, and this is the case with Jewish communities. Although divisions, strife, and fragmentation exist within groups, there are nevertheless overall cohesive forces which operate at the same time. This is usually because of a general will to affiliate which comes from within the community, or as a defensive response to hostility from outside it. Even when individuals seek to dissociate themselves from their community they are often still perceived by others as being part of it. This was the case in Shanghai.

Chapter one examines the establishment and growth of the community in the evolving socio-economic context of Shanghai during the second half of the nineteenth century. However important the interaction between Jewish communities and their surrounding environment, Kokosalakis rightly points out that 'emphasis on social experience must never reduce Jewish culture and consciousness to products of that experience. That would destroy them and would not account for their historical continuity and their essential identity and unity'.⁴ By focusing on the lives of three pioneers, Elias Sassoon, Benjamin David Benjamin and Silas Aaron Haroon, it is possible to explore why varying degrees of importance were attached to preserving Baghdadi, Sephardi and Jewish identities.

Chapter two concerns Baghdadi identity and seeks to establish why these Jews preferred to be known as Sephardim. Did this imply an erosion of Baghdadi identity, and a conscious effort to forge an identity as Sephardim? Common origin and common religious belief were the core of Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews, despite the growing diversification of the community. Therefore, there were feelings of interdependence and a sense of mutual responsibility, summed up in the Hebrew saying '*kol Yisrael arevim ze lazeh*', [all Jews are guarantors one for the other], as all belong to *klal Yisrael* [world Jewry].⁵ This leads to an examination of the attempts of Shanghai Jewry to prevent the total assimilation of the Jewish community

⁴ Kokosalakis, *op. cit.*, p.35.

⁵ Herman, *op. cit.*, pp.11, 24.

of Kaifeng which had been established about the mid-eleventh century. Isolation from other centres of Jewish life, almost total acculturation to Chinese society and, perhaps most important of all, intermarriage, undermined its very existence.

Chapter three evaluates the selective preservation of Baghdadi and Jewish traditions, customs and rituals. The internal cultural elements in the Jewish community combined with the social structure of the wider community gave shape to the organisation of its institutions. Questions concerning Baghdadi identity will be related to the family and to Jewish laws, such as the dietary laws, rituals and superstitions which affected daily life. Identity will be examined by focusing on the development of religious institutions and on the Rabbinate in Shanghai, factors crucial both to the cohesion and erosion of Baghdadi/Sephardi identity.

Chapter four advances the study of institutions to those intended for general participation by members of the community. Although some institutions are clearly non-religious, all reflect Jewish affiliation. How widespread was support for an umbrella organisation such as the Shanghai Jewish Communal Association? To what extent was the Shanghai Jewish School perceived as having an essential role in the community? Why was there no viable Sephardi Jewish Club in Shanghai until 1937? What part did the Boy Scouts movement play in communal life? The dual effects of association and dissociation, cohesion and conflict, will be applied to matters of identity.

Chapter five concerns the economic activities of the wealthy, a small but influential proportion of the Jewish community, which had a significant effect on the British and Chinese governments and on international trade. Trade in opium flourished in the mid-nineteenth century but fell into disrepute by the turn of the century. What effect did this have on the community as a whole? Did social stigma fragment the community or strengthen its solidarity? Wealth generated by opium was invested in land and property. The prestigious buildings erected by Sephardi entrepreneurs were said to be evidence of their wealth and power. Was this explanation sufficient, or were there other considerations, such as pride in being identified with the development of the British Empire, or providing a sense of political security within the International Settlement?

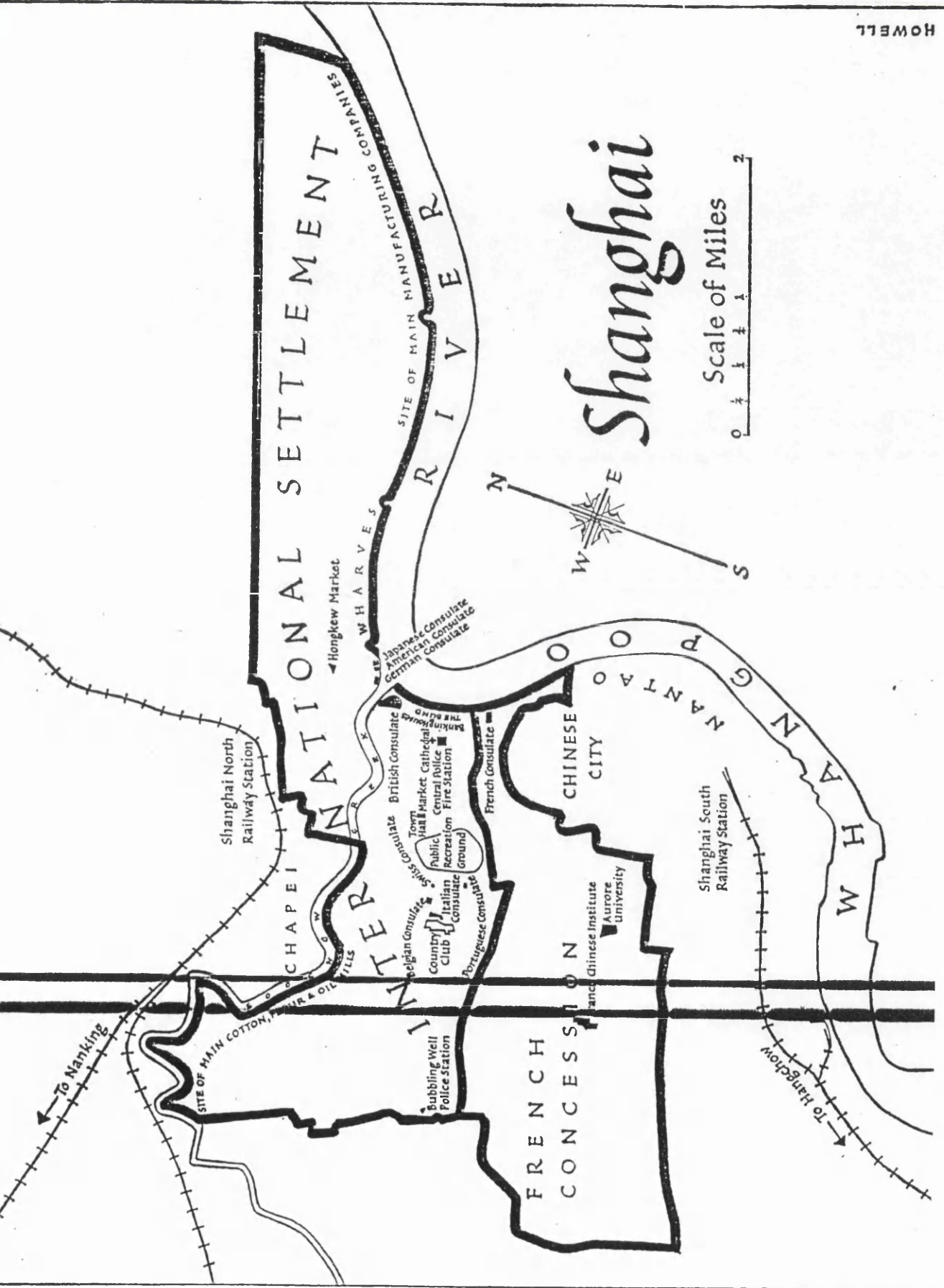
Chapter six examines the issue of nationality and its importance to the Baghdadi Jews, not least because their mercantile enterprises were endangered by bandits, as highlighted by the Lincheng Incident of 1923. This provides a case study of the operation of Sephardi merchants through the network of political structures in China. On a community level the incident provides an insight into their general response to a threat to its members. Their determined efforts to be classified as British subjects are examined in the light of the political, legal, economic and social benefits that this status provided. Reasons for their intense loyalty to Great Britain, and the importance they attached to an acknowledgement of their patriotism will be explored. These issues become clearer from an examination of the impact on the Sephardi Community caused by the revision of registration by the British government in 1922, and the problems of identity it triggered.

Chapter seven discusses Zionism in Shanghai. Simon Herman and writers of his genre emphasise an inextricable blending of national and religious elements in Judaism. Before the late nineteenth century Zionism, [nationality based on a homeland], was expressed as a hope, kept alive in prayer. Zionism enabled even atheistic or agnostic Jews to retain Jewish identity through a non-religious channel. What place did it have in the life of the community? Did some perceive Zionism as a substitute for British nationality for which they yearned? Did this phenomenon create tensions which emphasised the need to be acculturated into British society and be seen as loyal British citizens? Were they fired with enthusiasm for a homeland as were so many communities the world over? If so what was the nature of their support and how did this change over time?

Chapter eight examines the impact on the host Jewish community of the Jewish refugees from Russia, which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century and eventually numbered some four thousand, and also by some eighteen thousand refugees from Central Europe. By 1941 the latter outnumbered the Sephardim by some twenty-five to one. Given that this vast influx occurred when Shanghai was an embattled city and laboured under the stranglehold of Japanese occupation and economic disaster, how did the Sephardim cope with the challenges involved? What effect did it have on their identity as Jews? Did it heighten or diminish consciousness of their solidarity with their suffering co-religionists? This chapter also investigates

whether the presence of anti-Semitism emanating from White Russians and Nazis in Shanghai made any impact on their Jewish identity or on the solidarity of the Shanghai Sephardim. The responses to these challenges were important, not only from the point of view of a single small community, but also from the perspective of the wider community in Shanghai.

For a full understanding of its peculiar characteristics and development, the Sephardi Jewish Community of Shanghai has to be studied in the context of the gentile environment of the International Settlement. How did people from a Middle Eastern background react when exposed, over four generations, to Western education, to a milieu influenced by British culture and tradition which they wished to emulate? How did the Sephardim represent themselves to their non-Jewish neighbours? How did the host Jewish community respond later to the influx of Ashkenazi Jewish refugees from Russia and from Nazi Europe? These issues arise, and will be dealt with, throughout the development of this thesis.



INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT

Shanghai

Scale of Miles

RIVER

FRENCH CONCESSION

CHINESE CITY

NANTAO

WHANGPOO

Shanghai North Railway Station

Shanghai South Railway Station

To Nanking

To Hankow

SITE OF MAIN MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

SITE OF MAIN COTTON MILLS & OIL MILLS

Japanese Consulate
American Consulate
German Consulate

British Consulate

Belgian Consulate

Swiss Consulate

Portuguese Consulate

Public Market

Central Police

Recreation Ground

Fire Station

Banking House

THE BUND





By courtesy of George and Rose Horowitz

PLAN OF SHANGHAI & ENVIRONS

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Legend

- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Alley
- Railway
- Canal
- River
- Harbor
- Park
- Cemetery
- Public Buildings
- Churches
- Mosques
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Government Buildings
- Consulates
- Embassies
- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Theaters
- Parks
- Cemeteries
- Public Buildings
- Churches
- Mosques
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Government Buildings
- Consulates
- Embassies
- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Theaters

Scale

1:50,000

1 inch = 1,250 feet

1 centimeter = 100 meters

M A P

SHOWING JEWISH SITES IN SHANGHAI, CHINA from Opium Wars to Communist takeover prepared by George & Rose Horowitz, assisted by Sydney Jonah and Leonard Fishman

Boundaries:

- - - International Settlement, formed by combining both British and American concessions, extended thereafter limits of Japanese domination, 1932 to Pearl Harbor day
- - - Japanese "designated area" for Holocaust refugees, 1943
- - - French Concession

Synagogues:

- 1 Earliest actual synagogue, "BETH EL" founded c.1887
- 2 larger synagogue, built early 1900's, "SHEERITH YISRAEL" -- both of these followed the Sephardic usage
- 3 first Ashkenazic synagogue, "OHEL MOISHE" 1927
- 4 congregation from "SHEERITH YISRAEL" moved to newly-built "BETH AHARON", late 1920's; this building remained in use to support Holocaust escapees from Polish yeshivoth
- 5 new congregation "OHEL RACHEL" established, also Sephardic, to accomodate westward move of community, adjacent to new school
- 6 new, greatly enlarged building to accomodate Ashkenazic move to French Concession, name remains same, "OHEL MOISHE"

Schools:

- 11 lower story of synagogue "SHEERITH YISRAEL" adapted for use as 3-room school for secular studies with volunteer teachers
- 12 SHANGHAI JEWISH SCHOOL full day-school from K-12 with added curriculum of Hebrew, religion and Jewish history, schooling English language textbooks
- 13 SJYA (Shanghai Jewish Youth Association) school for Holocaust refugees, education similar to above -- both buildings and major funding contributed by the Kadoorie family

Cemeteries:

- 21 earliest, once beyond city boundary, then encircled by later expansion -- founded 1862
- 22 newer, founded c. 1920, consisting of 2 sections, one each for Sephardim and Ashkenazim, separate Hevra Kadishas using same chapel facilities
- 23 newest to accomodate overflow from #22 after arrival of European emigrants, and
- 24 site of burial from "designated area" when permission was refused to allow funerals to go to #23

Hospitals:

- 31 B'nai B'rith Polyclinic, outpatient only, founded 1934
- 32 Shanghai JEWISH HOSPITAL full-care facility on same site completed early 1940's

Housing:

- 41 SHELTER HOUSE, home for aged, supported by Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society, founded c. 1920
- 42 Embankment Building, apartment complex owned by Sassoon interests, used as temporary reception facility for refugees from Nazis
- 43 HEIME for homeless during Second World War.

Clubs:

- 51 Maccabean Club meeting rooms, late 20's to early 30's
- 52 JEWISH RECREATION CLUB, leased former US Marines Club
- 53 Shanghai JEWISH CLUB built in early 40's to replace #52, used as community center by Ashkenazim

Food:

- 60 Kosher butcher' stall located in public market,
- 61 Kosher butcher stalls moved to western public market,
- 62 free kitchen offering hot meals daily within the "designated area", adjacent to #43 -- both supported by JDC funds

Thriftshop:

- 71 ORT outlet store in prime location, used also to sell items brought from Europe.

Streets"

named after local Jews highlighted thus

Chapter One: Pioneers

Why Shanghai?

The attraction of Shanghai to Baghdadi Jews was probably entirely due to its economic potential. The Treaty of Nanking in August 1842, which concluded the first Anglo-Chinese War, opened Shanghai and other Treaty Ports to British trade and residence, free from interference from the Chinese Government.¹ Most attractive to foreign merchants was the privilege of extraterritoriality, which conferred security of person and property and special advantages in business. It also exempted them from Chinese law which made no distinction between civil and criminal cases.² A foreigner could be sued and tried only by officials of his own country and under the provisions of his own laws. Land outside Shanghai was set aside as areas of foreign residence which evolved into the International Settlement and the French Concession.³ The Chinese city, the International Settlement, and the French Concession were separate administrative units, each with its own government, sets of laws and officials.

Shanghai may have been a good place in which to make a fortune, but by all accounts, until 1869 it was a dreadful place in which to live. The oppressively hot, humid summers were debilitating.⁴ The city was overcrowded with an estimated 100,000 people. At this time it was referred to as 'the dirtiest and filthiest spot on the face of the earth'.⁵ Canals intersecting the city were blocked with mud and refuse. Refuse was disposed of by depositing it on the Bund [embankment of a muddy waterfront].⁶ Not surprisingly, there were frequent epidemics of cholera,

¹ Betty Peh-T'i Wei, *Shanghai: Crucible of Modern China*, (Oxford, 1987), pp.1-2. As introductions to Shanghai see F.C. Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin*, and Rhoades Murphey, *Shanghai: Key to Modern China*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), especially Chap. 1.

² 'The Chinese Theory of Justice', *North China Herald*, [hereafter *NCH*], 4/2/1910, p.231; F. L. Hawks Pott, *A Short History of Shanghai*, (Shanghai, 1928), pp.15-16.

³ The British and American Settlements became incorporated into the International Settlement in 1863.

⁴ Kerrie Macpherson, *A Wilderness of Marshes: The Origins of Public Health in Shanghai, 1843-1893*, (Oxford, 1987), passim; 'The Health Question'; *NCH*, 26/7/19, pp.234-235.

⁵ *Israel's Messenger*, [hereafter *IM*,], 5/3/1909, p.11; *NCH*, 7/3/1898, p.359.

⁶ C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Shanghai*, (Shanghai, 1909), p.43.

smallpox and typhoid which resulted in an extremely high death rate.⁷ Death from starvation was common and life was cheap. Boys were sold as apprentices and girls as household slaves by their Chinese parents in order to save them from starvation.⁸

Negotiations to obtain land for foreign residence were protracted. As it was illegal to sell freehold land belonging to the Emperor, the land was sold leasehold 'in perpetuity' to foreigners, who would undertake to pay an annual land tax to the Chinese authorities.⁹ The tract of land selected by the British in 1842 was located north of the Chinese city.¹⁰ Within this area, British nationals were able to apply to their Consul for lots, which could then be procured from Chinese owners. The acquisition of lots was a harassing procedure between the Consul, merchants, mandarins and landowners. Many owners demanded exorbitant prices and often reneged on the agreement.¹¹ But it nevertheless provided a highly profitable investment and land, which cost some hundred dollars per acre, was sold in the 1920s for \$60,000 to \$100,000 per acre.¹²

Initially the commodities that most contributed to the growth of the city were tea, silk and opium. Cotton piece-goods were usually bartered for the silk and tea. Shanghai developed into a financial and industrial centre isolated from the bureaucracy, the political upheavals, and the civil wars of the rest of China. The Settlement and the Port of Shanghai were also neutral in times of international conflict.¹³ 'In the Treaty Ports it was business as usual, the international market was what mattered'.¹⁴ Above all, the International Settlement existed for the sake of businessmen and was organised for their benefit. It was totally a commercial

⁷ Medical Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council for 1865-1871 lists gonorrhoea, syphilis, dysentery and typhus in order of importance among foreigners, J.V. Davidson-Houston, *Yellow Creek: The Story of Shanghai*, (London, 1962), p.96; *The Celestial Empire*, [hereafter, *TCE*], 5/10/1887, p.181.

⁸ Montalto, *op. cit.*, pp.32-41; Wei, *op. cit.*, p.134.

⁹ Montalto, *op. cit.*, pp.32-41; Wei, *op. cit.*, pp.36-45.

¹⁰ The approximate boundaries of the Settlement were fixed in 1893, but extended in 1899 by an additional 5,584 acres, *Report of the Hon. Richard Feetham, CMG Judge of the Supreme Court of the Union of South Africa to the Shanghai Municipal Council*, Volume containing Parts I, II, and III, (Shanghai, 1931), p.4.

¹¹ Wei, pp.38-44.

¹² The rise of land prices in Shanghai is graphed in *Zhang Zhongli, and Chen Zengnian, Shaxun jituan zai jiu Zhonggno*, [The Sassoon Group in Old China], Shanghai, 1985, p.36; also in the Sassoon Archives B 7525 Shanghai, [by courtesy of Gong Fangzhen]; see also 'List of Renters of Land' in *Shanghai Almanac for 1855 & Miscellany*.

¹³ This neutrality was formally recognised in the wars between France and China in 1884-1885, between China and Japan in 1894-1895, between Russia and Japan in 1904-1905 and in World War I 1914-1918.

¹⁴ Irene Eber, *Passage Through China: The Jewish Communities of Harbin, Tientsin and Shanghai*, Beth Hatefusoth, (Tel Aviv, 1986), p.5.

community. The Shanghai Municipal Council [SMC], the self-styled working model of the League of Nations, was elected by ratepayers.¹⁵ It had legislative and administrative powers as well as control over taxation, finance and security. The stringent property qualification for franchise meant that the SMC was dominated by the wealthy, who naturally formulated policies which reflected their interests.¹⁶

Ignorant of the local language, customs and monetary systems, the pioneers entrusted their *compradores* to act as middle men in all their business arrangements with the Chinese.¹⁷ Foreign banks became established in Shanghai in the 1850s.¹⁸ The rate of foreign investment speeded up at the end of the nineteenth century and Shanghai outstripped other Treaty Ports to become the leading centre of foreign commerce in China.¹⁹ Foreign business, particularly import-export, banking, coal mining, modern transport, public utilities and to a lesser degree investment in cotton mills and light industry, played an essential role in generating a modern economy.²⁰ The history of Jewish business interests in Shanghai is one of development and diversification in trade, shipping, mining, transport, and finance. As bank credits became easily obtainable, many Baghdadi Jews launched businesses with very little

¹⁵ Article 2 of the New Land Regulation stipulated that the qualifications for membership of the SMC were owning land assessed at Tls 1,000 or paying taxes on a rental of Tls 300 per annum, *NCH*, 22/2/1881, p.169. The tael referred to a quantity of silver, a unit of currency. There were various taels, all different weights and qualities. For a detailed explanation see Wei, *op. cit.*, pp.147-148; for a good retrospective account of the changes in currency in China from the mid-nineteenth century see, E. Kann, 'Finance and Industry', *IM*, 17/12/1937, p.6.

¹⁶ Wei, *op. cit.*, pp.73-74. 'The Model Settlement run by the rich for the comfort of the rich', *NCH*, 30/1/1901, p.212; qualifications for membership of the SMC are listed in, *NCH*, 22/2/1881, p.169.

¹⁷ The name derives from the Portuguese '*compra*' which means 'to buy', 'The Lordly Compradore', Chap. 3, pp.32-46 in Carl Crow, *Foreign Devils in the Flowery Kingdom*, (London, 1941); Marie-Claire Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937*, (Cambridge, 1989), *passim*; Hao Yenping, *Compradore in 19th Century China*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); Motono Eiichi, 'A Study of the Legal Status of the Compradores during the 1880s with Special Reference to The Three Civil Cases between David Sassoon Sons & Co., and Their Compradores, 1884-1887', *Acta Asiatica*, Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture, Tokyo, No. 62 (February 1992), pp.44-70; Case of *compradore* Wong Ganying against D. Sassoon & Sons, *NCH*, 19/11/1884, pp.576-581, 622-623. Sassoon involvement in numerous Court Cases in Shanghai recorded in the *North China Herald* provides an insight into their extensive business activity in China.

¹⁸ The old Carolus dollar was the currency until displaced by its Mexican rival. In 1854-1855 the exchange rate for the old Spanish dollar was as high as 7s. 11d., *NCH*, 24/11/1893, p.818.

¹⁹ By 1932 it was recognised as the greatest city and port in Asia and the fifth largest in the world, *NCH*, 24/5/24, p.316; see also Wei, *op. cit.*, 'Shanghai Moves into the Modern Age', Chap. 6, pp.803-823.

²⁰ The phenomenal progress is recorded in *The Jubilee of Shanghai, 1843-1893. Shanghai: Past and Present and a Full Account of the Proceedings on the 17th and 18th November, 1893*, (Shanghai, 1893), reprinted in *NCH*, 24/11/1893, pp. 812-823; 'The Annual Report published by the Consular authority and monthly statement from the Chamber of Commerce', *The Chinese Recorder*, [hereafter *CR*], XVIII July 1849, No. 7, p.385; 'The Prosperity of Shanghai', 8/1/1902, p.1.

of their own investment.²¹ A large number of merchants became prosperous on the franchise that could usually be had for the asking.²² In an era when insurance was probably not available, however, there was always a big element of risk in the import-export business, where working capital could be tied up for months and piracy was rampant. For many Baghdadi Jews the economic attractions of Shanghai outweighed the health hazards and the financial and physical risk. Whereas most other foreign settlers were motivated to trade and settle in Shanghai solely for financial incentives, Baghdadi settlers were also responding to 'push' factors. Their economic position in Baghdad was threatened by the negative effects on commerce of a series of revolutions and by political harassment.²³ Above all there was no religious discrimination in Shanghai.

The Baghdadi Pioneers

It was only after Jardine Matheson and other British firms had secured a foothold in the Treaty Ports in 1843, that David Sassoon sent his second son, Elias, to China.²⁴ Although probably the first Jew to reach Shanghai (1844), he commuted between Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Bombay, making Shanghai his headquarters in 1850.²⁵ Foreign residents, some hundred men and seven ladies, had moved into the Settlement by 1849. Twenty-five mercantile firms were represented, three American

²¹ The original investment funds were probably derived from the sale of small quantities of opium imported from India. Many were known to make a one time 'killing' then set up an ongoing local source of income, i.e. commercial, property rental and light manufacturing, Rose Horowitz, correspondence with author, Los Angeles, 20/2/93.

²² Crow, *op. cit.*, pp.54-55.

²³ As a tolerated non-Muslim minority, the Jews were *dhimmi*s (People of the Pact) - protected subjects of the Islamic state. They were subjected to restrictions and humiliations as second class citizens, Lucien Gubbay and Abraham Levy, *The Sephardim: Their Glorious Tradition From the Babylonian Exile to the Present Day*, (London, 1992.), p.51; Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, (Paris, 1980, New Jersey, 1985), 'Aspects of the Dhimmi Condition', Chap.2, pp.51-75; for a good portrayal of the Jewish community in Baghdad see David Beth-Hillel, *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands: The Travels of David d'Beth Hillel: (1824-1832)*, (New York, 1973), cited in Marion Woolfson, *Prophets in Babylon: Jews in the Arab World*, (London, 1980), p.89; for a good description of Jewish social and economic life in Ottoman Times see Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jew of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, (London, 1991), pp.86-97.

²⁴ All eight brothers served their apprenticeship in Shanghai, Cecil Roth, *Sassoon Dynasty*, (New York, 1984), p.48.

²⁵ Stanley Jackson, *The Sassoons*, (London, 1968), p.24; in the inaugural issue of *North China Herald* D. Sassoon & Sons appeared on a list of foreign residents, *NCH*, Vol. 1, No. 1 3/8/1840. Elias remained in China from about 1844 to 1853, *NCH*, 11/5/1880.

and the rest British.²⁶ *The Chinese Recorder* lists only one Jewish resident in Shanghai in 1848 and in 1849, but four Jewish assistants of the firm of David Sassoon, Sons and Co. are included in the 1850 'List of Foreign Residents in Shanghai'.²⁷ 'The List of Foreign Hongs [firms] at Shanghai, September 1854' includes more merchants employed by David Sassoon and Co.²⁸ The China Directory for 1874 records the names of twenty assistants in the two Sassoon firms.²⁹ In 1889, when J.R. Elias arrived, Shanghai was still practically a village 'with hardly a *minyán* of Jews to keep themselves 'warm together'.³⁰ By 1908, however, there were about fifty Jewish families in the Settlement, most of whom had come to Shanghai in the employ of the Sassoons.³¹

The early Baghdadi pioneers required courage and determination to take advantage of the lucrative trading opportunities in Shanghai. They left their wives and families in India for very long periods and were undeterred by the arduous journey from Hong Kong to Bombay, which took seventy days on 'wretched old tramp steamers'.³² It was necessary to break the journey often, and to change to small sampans. The journey from Hong Kong was a catalogue of being grounded for days, cargo thrown on board, and passengers sitting through the night with guns ready in case of pirates.³³ Even so, Baghdadi merchants from India and Baghdad came in increasingly large numbers to take advantage of the amenities the city

²⁶ Pott, *op. cit.*, p.13; the *NCH*. unofficial census in 1860 showed a total of 569 foreigners, including 294 British, 125 Americans, 59 Indians and 91 'others'. The first Municipal census in 1865, gave the total resident foreign population as 2,235, of whom 1,329 were British, 360 American and 175 German. In 1900 the figure rose to 6,663, *Feetham Report*, pp.29-30.

²⁷ A.E. Moses and J. Reuben, E. Abraham, [a great grandson, son of David Sassoon and the father of D.E.J. Abraham], M.S. Mooshee, grandfather of Mrs. D.E.J. Abraham. Isaac Rubin took up residence at Shanghai in 1851, *CR*, January 1851, Vol. XX.

²⁸ Ezekiel Shellim, Solomon David, and A. Ezekiel. In 1857 they are joined by Judah & Co., Ezra Meyer, Feruge Heyem and Jacob Aaron Meyer Heyem, *Shanghai Almanac*, 1852-1854.

²⁹ *The China Directory for 1874*, (Taipei, 1971); see also Chiara Betta, 'Analisi della comunità ebraica di Shanghai dal 1845 al 1932: la figura di S. A. Hardoon (1849-1931)', Thesi di laurea, Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, 1990, basically a thorough compilation of secondary sources with the focus on Hardoon.

³⁰ *IM*, 5/1/1923, p.14.

³¹ After World War I Sephardi immigration spurted ahead, Yosef Ya'acov, interview by author, tape recording, Jerusalem, 12/4/1992.

³² *IM*, 20/3/1908, p.8.

³³ 'British trade in Canton was almost brought to a standstill by pirates and bandits who infested the trade routes', *NCH*, 13/6/1890, p.1085; "'Makers of Shanghai", Wetmore's Recollections of Life in the Fifties', *NCH*, 10/8/1894, p.240; 'Hunt for Pirates in Shanghai', *NCDN*, 27/11/22, p.11; a discussion on the 'most alarming' increase in piracy in 'Printed for the use of the Foreign Office', 24/1/1866, PRO, FO881/1424.

offered.³⁴ China's various programmes of modernisation, particularly in the industrialisation and the construction of railways and telegraph lines, which followed the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895), were a further attraction.³⁵ 'There is no doubt that the Baghdadi Jews helped Shanghai develop into one of the greatest import and export centres of the world'.³⁶ The mixing of cultures made Shanghai an exciting city with a cosmopolitan flavour.³⁷ By the turn of the century the Settlement had become an established society, despite its heterogeneous population, each following its own traditions. The British dominated the life of the foreign community.³⁸

The growth of the Settlement brought considerable changes in the life of the Baghdadi Jews. They were part of the privileged foreign population, and there appears to have been no restriction to their participation in the administration of the Settlement.³⁹ Understandably, there must have been tension between some Baghdadi Jewish customs and the highly diversified society in which these pioneers found themselves. Religious practice among some was relaxed as their interaction with their new social environment increased. The needs of the nascent Baghdadi community developed as association with the wider society became increasingly important to it. Changes which took place may be illustrated by focusing on the lives of three

³⁴ For the importance of the emigration of Jews from Baghdad see David Kranzler, the authority on the Refugee community in Shanghai, *Japanese Nazis and Jews, The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai 1938-1948*, (New Jersey, 1988), p.45 and see also Kranzler's account of the Sephardi Jewish Community, pp.45-56; Herman Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East: A Century of Jewish Life in China and Japan*, (New York, 1962), p.65.

³⁵ At this time the Sassoon firms swiftly established spinning and weaving plants and rice, paper and flour mills, making up for their losses in opium and cotton exports, Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107, 119; Roth, *op. cit.*, p.93; C.J. Dudgeon, Chairman *The China Association Shanghai Branch: A Memorandum upon the Present Conditions of Foreign Trade In China*, Supplement to the *NCH*, 30/1/1899, pp.2-9.

³⁶ Joan Roland, stresses their role as intermediaries, 'almost ancillaries' of the British, Roland, 'Baghdadi Jews in India and China: A Comparison of Economic Roles', Papers presented at the conference 'Jewish Diasporas in China: Comparative and Historical Perspectives', Harvard University, August 1992, [hereafter, Harvard Symposium], p.20; 'Baghdadi Jews in Indian Port Cities', in Thomas A. Timberg, *Jews in India*, (New York, 1986), pp.277-278.

³⁷ Most foreigners intended to make a quick fortune and leave the city, causing a constant flux in the population, Montalto, *op. cit.*, p.102; Shanghai the Hub of the Universe', *NCH*, 18/1/1922, pp.475-476. Shanghai: Past and Present 1843-1893: The Shanghai Jubilee', *NCH*, 24/11/1893, pp.812-818 and 31/5/1924, p.357.

³⁸ An excellent description of the early life in the Settlement, 'The Treaty Port Community', in John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842 - 1854*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp.155-161; see also the publication of H. Lang's lecture 'Shanghai Considered Socially', and J.W. Maclellan's 'Story of Shanghai', cited in *NCH*, 24/11/1893, pp.812-818.

³⁹ There was almost always at least one Jew on the SMC as representative of the large Jewish financial interests, Wei, *op. cit.*, p.86; S.Nathan, Marcus Ezekiel, Walter Ellis, Edward Ezra, Edward Shellim, D. Nissim, Silas Hardoon, A. Howard, M. Gubbay and S. Moses were councillors in the SMC. Edward Shellim was also an unofficial member of the Legislative Council, Justice of the Peace, and an elected member of the Licensing Board, *IM*, 4/1/1929, p.21; *NCH*, 24/5/1924, p.316.

monumental figures among the pioneers, showing the variance attached to preserving their Jewish and Baghdadi identities.

The earliest pioneer, Elias Sassoon [1820-1880] was an archetype of the traditionalists, intent on founding and maintaining a little Baghdad in the heart of Shanghai. He spared no effort to encourage the cohesiveness of the Baghdadi community. The second pioneer to be described, Benjamin David Benjamin, [1844 - 1888] thought that it was important to recognise and respond to the changed environment, and consequently forged links with the British. His monopolistic control of the markets, however, enabled him to make a vast fortune to the detriment of other shareholders both within and beyond the Jewish community. Silas Hardoon [1851-1931] could be judged as more far-seeing than Benjamin, insofar as he set his sights on building bridges with the British and the Chinese to achieve his ambitions. In striking contrast to Elias Sassoon, commitment to the Baghdadi community appeared to be eclipsed by Hardoon's interest in politics. His philanthropy was spread between the three communities, the Chinese getting the largest share. Indeed Hardoon's name passed into Chinese legend, as he was one of the few Baghdadi Jews who valued their culture and association.

Over time interaction between the wider society in Shanghai and the Baghdadi Jews became more intense. Their flexibility in adapting to their new environment is illustrated in the lives of these three pioneers.

Elias David Sassoon

...his many acts of noble philanthropy, and true piety which distinguished him, has reflected so much lustre upon the Jewish community at large - who by his universal charity has made his name a household word...the bright example...may prove an incentive to our rising generation...⁴⁰

The origin of the Shanghai Baghdadi community was due to the spirit of commercial enterprise sagaciously exercised by David Sassoon. He built up his prosperous and extensive business with the loyal co-operation of his eight sons, whom

⁴⁰ *JC*, 4/4/1865, p.5 and 20/11/1873, p.558.

he employed as agents.⁴¹ The history of the Baghdadi Jewish community of Shanghai is closely bound up with the Sassoon family. In Shanghai Elias Sassoon needed nothing from the wider community except to trade with it. He identified totally with Jews from Baghdad. Elias' life in the Settlement was disciplined according to the moral precepts of the Torah.⁴² In sharp contrast, his brothers, Reuben and Arthur, enjoyed a social life in Shanghai beyond the confines of their own community and were popular at the card tables and at the Paper Hunt Club.⁴³

Initially Elias Sassoon traded in opium and textiles, and later in dried fruits, metals, tea, Chinese gold, silk, cotton, muslin, hides and skins, spices and camphor-goods. Within five years David Sassoon and Co. was established in Hong Kong and along the entire China coast, notably in Guangzhou, Tianjin, Hankou and Yantai. Branches were established in Yokohama and Nagasaki after 1858, when the country opened trade with the West.⁴⁴ His firm directed the most lucrative part of the trade from British India to China and later much of the direct trade from England to the Far East. The *Israel's Messenger* records that the Sassoon reputation for fair trading became a byword.⁴⁵

More flexible than many larger and older established foreign traders, the firm quickly diversified. Elias paid over £2,000 for shares in the China Steam Navigation Company and the firm became shippers and commission agents, buying and selling cargoes for others.⁴⁶ Rising land values in the Treaty Ports in the 1870s led David Sassoon and Sons to increase their investments in land. They built warehouses in some of the best wharves in the Far East, and the firm acted as brokers and bankers to smaller traders in need of capital.⁴⁷ Elias was among the first to invest in the housing estates which were developed to accommodate the vast numbers of Chinese who flocked into the Settlement to escape exorbitant taxation levied by the

⁴¹ Israel Cohen, 'With the Jews in Modern China', Part I, 'Hong Kong and Shanghai', *JC*, 24/2/1922, p.4.

⁴² Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.26-27.

⁴³ Davis, C. Noel, *A History of the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club, 1863-1930*, (Shanghai, 1930), *passim.*; it was formally organised in 1864, Wei, *op. cit.*, p. 120. An account of Cross country paper-chases in 1866, in Davidson-Houston, *op. cit.*, p.82; Records of the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club are to be found in the British Library.

⁴⁴ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.23-24; Roth, *op. cit.*, pp.48-49; *IM*, 21/2/1908, p.4.

⁴⁵ *IM*, 6/3/1908, p.5.

⁴⁶ Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.29.

⁴⁷ Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.24.

warlords.⁴⁸ He bought up sites on the Shanghai mud flats at prices sometimes as low as £90 an acre which soared to £1,000,000 by 1939.⁴⁹ By 1900 the Sassoon family owned in Shanghai twenty-nine allotments with a total area of 64.4 acres.⁵⁰ After his father's death in 1864, Elias branched out on his own and called his new firm E. D. Sassoon and Co.⁵¹ It was referred to by the local traders in China as *Sin-Sassoon* [new] to distinguish it from the *Kau-Sassoon* [old] firm.⁵² Both firms had parallel interests and over time business competition put a strain on the relationship between Elias and his brothers and social contact between them gradually ceased.⁵³ E. D. Sassoon and Co., which had the advantage of owning some of the best property sites in Shanghai, extended its business interests, through subsidiaries, to public tramways, insurance, laundries and breweries. The firm shipped large quantities of textiles, wheat, oilseeds, yellow metal ingots and Batavian sugar to China.⁵⁴

As Christopher Knowles has observed, impoverished Baghdadi Jews found work in the great companies founded by fellow Jews. 'This loyalty, and the cohesiveness it engendered, was one of the secrets of Jewish success in Shanghai'.⁵⁵ It was important for the Sassoon firms to attract employees from the Jewish communities of Baghdad and India, as the business accounts and correspondence were conducted in Judeo-Arabic.⁵⁶ The policy of the firms until 1919 was to encourage many young Jewish clerks to enter their employ. After being trained in India they were sent out to the various Treaty Ports of China.⁵⁷ Some were subsequently

⁴⁸ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.26-29; there was a periodic influx of impoverished Chinese refugees into the Settlement during: the Taiping Rebellion 1820-1864, the Franco-Chinese War 1884-1885, the Boxer Rebellion 1900, the Japanese attack on Shanghai 1932 and 1937.

⁴⁹ The Sassoon investment in real estate in Shanghai is examined in Chapter Four.

⁵⁰ Joan Roland, *op. cit.*, p.24, note 38. Lawsuits in which David Sassoon and Co. was involved give an insight into their real estate dealings, for example, *NCH*, 6/6/1863, p.90, and 20/6/1863, p.93.

⁵¹ *NCH*, 11/5/1880, p.416; E.D. Sassoon & Co was established at Bombay in 1872. Details of its stock holdings are to be found in the Sassoon Archives, Shanghai B 7525.

⁵² Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.48, 51.

⁵³ Jackson, *ibid.*; Roth maintains that there was no association whatsoever between the two firms except that of name, their reciprocal relationship having long been that of bitter rivals rather than of colleagues, Roth, *op. cit.*, p.97. This is not borne out by the voluminous correspondence to the Foreign Office in which both the Sassoon firms jointly sought to protect their trade in opium, see for example China Association Circular Correspondence for the General Committee, [available in SOAS library].

⁵⁴ Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.137; Roland, *op. cit.*, pp.15-16.

⁵⁵ Christopher Knowles, 'The Sephards of Shanghai', *China Review*, 1992, p.8.

⁵⁶ Judeo-Arabic was written in a cursive Hebrew script; P.G. von Mollendorf, 'Die Juden in China', in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, Vol. 39, 1895, p.331.

⁵⁷ The large number of Bahgdadi Jews who received their education and employment from the Sassoons is evident in *NCH*, 16/5/1884, p.566.

promoted to managers, preference being given to relatives and those who had married within the circle of the large family.⁵⁸ Until the 1870s, when the Settlement was scarcely developed, the Sassoons provided living accommodation for their managers and clerks, and facilities for worship and the observance of dietary laws, and so perpetuated Judaism.⁵⁹ As the business developed, more young men were sent out from India.⁶⁰ Many branched out on their own and became eminently successful, notably Elly Kadoorie and Silas Hardoon.⁶¹ The self-employed Baghdadi Jews were mostly merchants dealing in cotton, wool, silk and opium. Others were shopkeepers, import and exporters, retailers, property agents and stockbrokers. Several made fortunes as money-changers, buying and selling silver currency on a large scale.⁶² They were quick to exploit the opportunities of the rapidly growing demands of a consumer industrial society. By 1887 many Baghdadi Jewish merchants had set up offices in Shanghai.⁶³ It would appear that although the Sassoon firms exercised control over their staff there was an expectation that they would become self-employed in time.⁶⁴

The Sassoons' gift of the Jewish cemetery in Mohawk Road, in 1862, suggests the existence of a small community and demonstrates the significance the Sassoons attached to preserving the Jewish identity of the settlers.⁶⁵ Particularly during the nineteenth century, the business and personal lives of the Sassoon employees were influenced by the Sassoon tradition of strict adherence to the practices of Judaism.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ *JC*, 24/2/1922, p.4; In the 19th century the Sassoons shared with the Rothschilds in London respect for the rigid observance of the Sabbath and the Jewish festivals, *IM*, 6/3/1925, p.5.

⁵⁹ For a retrospective account see Rev. Mendel Brown, 'The Modern Jews of China', *IM*, 4/12/1936, p.10.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.10.

⁶¹ *IM*, 16/1/1908, p.7.

⁶² Crow, *op. cit.*, p.86.

⁶³ For example Maurice J. Nathan, A.E.J. Abraham, J. David, R.S. Raphael, Isaac Ezra, Benjamin David Benjamin, D.H. Silas, R.J. Solomon, Moses Elias, and R.E. Toeg were commission agents, the addresses of their firms are listed in *The China Directory for 1887*, pp. 432, 435, 442, 443, 444, 447, 448.

⁶⁴ It was generally felt that it was unfair for an employee to go into competition with the firm that had brought him out to China and trained him, and he was regarded as a social outcast, Crow, *op. cit.*, pp.26-27; majority of Baghdadi Jews were employed in family firms and in firms of their co-religionists, *The China Directory for 1874*, pp.28 J; *The China Directory for 1887*, pp.446, *The Directory of China for 1906*, p.741.

⁶⁵ At the entrance there was an inscription 'Jewish Cemetery Presented to the Jewish Congregation of Shanghai by David Sassoon Esq. A.M. 5622 A.C. 1862', C.E. Darwent, Shanghai: a Handbook for Travellers and Residents, (Shanghai, 1920), p.30; Mendel Brown, 'The Jews of Modern China', *Jewish Monthly*, Vol.3, No.3, June 1949, p.160-161; Betta, *op. cit.*, pp.42-45.

⁶⁶ 'The society [community] numbers between thirty and forty members in all, and ... would long since have ceased to exist if it were not for the liberality of the Sassoon family', S. Adler Stern, *Jottings of Travel in China and Japan*, (Philadelphia, 1888), p.155.

No work was conducted on the Sabbath and Festivals, instead religious services were organised which closely adhered to the Baghdadi *minhagim*. Each employee was taught how to perform *shehita* on poultry to ensure that they had *kasher* food when they travelled.⁶⁷ The use of Judeo-Arabic at home and at work preserved their cultural distinctiveness, setting them apart from the other settlers. Probably more than any other, Elias Sassoon was responsible in mid-nineteenth century for safeguarding the identity of Baghdadi Jews who had settled in Shanghai.

Benjamin David Benjamin.

Despite the dearth of documentary material on the pioneers, it is possible to piece together something of the life of the early Jewish settlers from the frequent and prolonged court proceedings⁶⁸ that centred around the maverick Benjamin David Benjamin.⁶⁹ Like many of his co-religionists Benjamin left his birthplace, Baghdad, in search of employment. After several jobs in India, in the early 1870s he acted as agent to E. D. Sassoon in Tianjin and became a share broker in Shanghai in 1874. By 1879 fortune favoured him making him 'the lion of the local stock exchange'.⁷⁰ It was rumoured that because of the large number of shares he held in the China Coast Steam Navigation Company, Jardine Matheson, the reputable British trading firm, fearing that Benjamin would take control, took steps to establish in its place the Indo-China Company.⁷¹

Yet this general mistrust did not discourage Shanghai bankers who 'reposed confidence in the champion of the Baghdad contingent', and who 'loaned him as much as he requested'.⁷² Security was of secondary consideration so long as they had his business. In December 1883 Benjamin had accounts in almost all the

⁶⁷ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.47-48.

⁶⁸ For example Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank v. Benjamin, *TCE*, 23/5/1884, pp. 1-6, 13/6/1884, p.1-9, 16/5/1884, pp.1-3, and 23/5/1884, pp.1-6; H. Abraham v. Benjamin, *TCE*, 11/7/1884, pp.30-31; London, Bombay and Mediterranean Bank v. Benjamin, *TCE*, 26/1/1887, pp.42-43, 2/2/1887, p.53, and 17/11/1886, pp.289-90; Mrs. Benjamin v. R.E. Wainwright, *TCE*, 28/5/1888, pp.252-256 and 15/6/1888, pp.279-256.

⁶⁹ J.G. Thirkell, *Some Queer Stories of Benjamin David Benjamin and Messrs. E.D. Sassoon & Co., Wealth Fraud and Poverty "Les Juifs Entre Eux"*, (Shanghai, 1881), provides a rare, if subjective, glimpse, at the impression the Baghdadi Jews made on some members of the foreign community. Apart from the fact that Thirkell was a British subject, little is known of him, *TCE* 2/11/1887, p.233.

⁷⁰ Thirkell, pp.1-2; the China Directories indicate that many Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai were stock-brokers.

⁷¹ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.5; Maggie Keswick, ed., *The Thistle and the Jade: A Celebration of 150 years of Jardine, Matheson and Company*, London, 1982, *passim*.

⁷² Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.2.

Shanghai banks.⁷³ The largest shareholder of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank [HSB hereafter] in 1883,⁷⁴ he boasted that ‘from twelve to a quarter past of the large clock in the corridore [sic] was his property’.⁷⁵ From 1879 to the end of 1883 ‘he could rig the market’ at will. The markets in property, kerosene oil, straw, braid, lead, opium, tea, silk and shares were boosted considerably, creating a short period of artificial prosperity which led to subsequent years of depression.⁷⁶ Benjamin was one of the largest resident property holders, and according to common report, owned more than one quarter of the International Settlement.⁷⁷ Thirty-six lots in his name are recorded in the British Consular Land List of 1884. He acquired a total area of nearly two hundred and fifty *mu* [0.0667 hectares] from 1879 to 1883, probably with money advanced by the Agra Bank and the HSB, ‘all just and lawful speculations for a man who has the nerve, cheek and ability to run so (sic) enormous risks’.⁷⁸ Benjamin was mainly responsible for the boom in the real estate market and also the ensuing crash.

Unlike Elias Sassoon, Benjamin made efforts to acculturate to the British. He was not a member of the Shanghai Club, perhaps because his English was not fluent. Nevertheless, between 1879-1883, he frequently entertained his friends at the Astor House running up bills of \$70-90 which he paid willingly. ‘His features and general physique indicated that he enjoyed a good dinner and good wine’.⁷⁹ Although not given to public display, he did once cock a snook at the Shanghai gentry with a special turnout of a pair of iron greys, landau and liveried servants but soon tired of this ‘tomfoolery’.⁸⁰ According to Thirkell socially Benjamin was not popular; quiet, meditative, almost morose, ‘he left the impression that the almighty dollar was the god he worshipped’.⁸¹ Yet:

⁷³ He could get a limit of six and a half lacs, a credit surpassed by few, *NCH*, 13/6/84, p.687, and 20/6/1884, p.711.

⁷⁴ *NCH*, 13/6/1884, p.682.

⁷⁵ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.5.

⁷⁶ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, pp.2-3, 7, 18.

⁷⁷ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.3. There are, however, no reliable figures to substantiate this claim. He built the first *North China Daily News*, [hereafter *NCDN*], building which was demolished in 1921, *IM*, 2/10/1921, p.24.

⁷⁸ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.5.

⁷⁹ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.7. Of course, the food was not *kasher*.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.7.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.7.

...though a Jew, he was a man with a large and liberal heart when appealed to in cases of distress, or to render his assistance in any good undertaking. Though a Jew he gave his Tls.500 towards the building fund of the Union Church⁸² on the Soochow creek, and innumerable cases in which he has given most substantial relief....All things considered Benjamin was a good and noble citizen...⁸³

From evidence in court it seems likely that Benjamin was charitable towards his co-religionists. The destitute immigrant Hillel Joseph Abraham, who arrived in Shanghai in 1881, was given food, accommodation and was employed as watchman in Benjamin's *godowns* [warehouses].⁸⁴

Benjamin's relationships with his friends and business associates, and in particular with Raphael Sidka Raphael,⁸⁵ appear to have been mercurial. Gone were the days when the Exilarch and the Nasi in Baghdad would settle disputes within the Baghdadi community. In Shanghai their quarrels in the 1880s were often settled in HBM Supreme Court in the glare of publicity.⁸⁶ It demonstrates one of the ways the Baghdadi Jews became reliant on the wider community. From court proceedings it is possible to gather details about Benjamin's unorthodox bookkeeping which may have been typical of Baghdadi Jews.⁸⁷ He wrote things down on slips of paper and pasted them in a book, but trusted more to his memory.⁸⁸ A characteristic of Baghdadi Jews is their prodigious memory displayed in their ability to recite *tehillim* [psalms] and the *Zohar* by rote.⁸⁹ The account books were kept by Benjamin in

⁸² The British non-conformist Protestant church.

⁸³ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, pp.5-7.

⁸⁴ *NCH*, 11/7/1884, pp.46-49; the highest degree of charity is to aid a man in want by providing work for him, so that he may become self-supporting', Maimonides, 1135-1204.

⁸⁵ Born in Baghdad [1843-1902], Abraham arrived in Shanghai in 1862 in the employ of David Sassoon and Co. and later branched into the tea trade, *NCH*, 13/7/1878, p.38 and 20/7/1878, p.67; details of Raphael's background in White Cooper & Co., to Sidney Barton, Consul General, Shanghai, 30/5/26, PRO, FO671/462/c/3/5223/27/397.

⁸⁶ This trend can be observed in several court cases at the Shanghai Supreme Court: notably in Raphael v. Benjamin, *NCH*, 20/7/1878, p.67; 'The Ezra Brothers at Law', *NCH*, 26/11/1921, pp.597-601; there are exceptionally few cases of violence involving Shanghai Sephardim on record in HBM Police Court, for example: Sassoon Reuben assault, *NCH*, 11/9/1899, p.540; Mrs. Katie Abraham v. Mrs. E. Cox, *NCH*, 22/7/1904, pp.221-207; 'A Jewish Family Quarrel: Sisters' Wordy Warfare at Ten to One Odds: Free-for-all Amongst Relations', *NCH*, 2/10/1926. Sephardim were involved in traffic offenses notably, SMC v. Maurice Benjamin for reckless driving of a horse and trap, *NCH*, 20/3/1899; C. R. Judah for driving without a licence, *NCH*, 19/7/19, p.194; Fred and Edward Elias were each fined \$5 for driving their cars over the forty mile speed limit, *NCH*, 15/8/1925, p.178.

⁸⁷ Often accounts were written on shirt cuffs, Eze Nathan, *The History of Jews in Singapore 1830-1845*, (Singapore, 1986), p.9.

⁸⁸ Benjamin's memory was too good to make mistakes', Thirkell, *op. cit.*, pp.20, 33-34; Part 2, p.16.

⁸⁹ This was confirmed in separate interviews with Rifka Toueg, [née Toeg], Flegg, Abraham and Horowitz by the author.

Arabic as he was unable to write in English. His brother-in-law, David Hai Silas, his clerk from early 1882, translated his English letters.⁹⁰ The court proceedings furnish rare details of how the Shanghai Baghdadi Jews had been able to continue the tradition of speaking Judeo-Arabic which was crucial to the preservation of their distinct identity. For example, Silas had learnt his 'Hebrew Arabic' at David Sassoon's school in Bombay, and had used it for 'anything to do with business'.⁹¹ The responsibility that the early settlers felt towards the Baghdadi Jews who followed in their wake, and to their less fortunate co-religionists, reinforced the identity of the community.

The failure of Benjamin's business at the end of 1883, resulting from over speculation, jeopardised the financial position of several of his associates.⁹² The HSB sued Benjamin for appropriating the proceeds of 10,000 cases of kerosene oil, which had been stored in his godowns at Pudong, on which the Bank had granted a loan to R. E. Toeg.⁹³ With many of its prominent members involved in the court proceedings at HBM Supreme Court in June 1884, the Baghdadi community became the focus of public scrutiny.⁹⁴ R. E. Wainewright, Benjamin's solicitor, objected that the oath sworn by R. E. Toeg was invalid, because his head was uncovered and an ordinary Bible was used; 'the witness being a Hebrew'.⁹⁵ Subsequently all the Jewish witnesses were sworn on the Old Testament with heads covered in 'the Hebrew way'.⁹⁶ Toeg and Gubbay alleged that Benjamin had confessed to them that he had taken the proceeds of the oil because he was pressed for money. Benjamin's clerk, David Hai Silas, however, maintained that Benjamin took no part in the management of the godown which was supervised by his property agent, Moncrieff, who had disappeared when a warrant for his arrest was issued.⁹⁷ Wainewright

⁹⁰ *NCH*, 18/4/1890, p.481.

⁹¹ *NCH*, 23/5/1884, p.598.

⁹² Thirkell, p.9.

⁹³ *NCH*, 16/5/1884, pp.564-567; Supplement to *TCE*, 16/5/1884, pp.1-3, 23/5/1884, pp.1-6, and 13/6/1884, p.1-9,

⁹⁴ These included R. E. Toeg, Louis Moore, an Ashkenazi Jewish auctioneer popularly known as Rabbi, and an employee from Benjamin's godown Habel Joseph Abraham, *NCH*, 27/6/1884, p.756.

⁹⁵ *NCH*, 13/6/1884, p.684 and 16/5/1884, p.566-567; 'David Hai Silas was then called and sworn in Hebrew style', *NCH*, 23/5/1884, p.595; Silas was 'sworn in on the Five Books of Moses, with his hat on his head', *NCH*, 11/7/1884, p.48.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p.48.

⁹⁷ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, pp.9-13.

convincingly argued that it was not credible that the largest shareholder in the HSB should have assisted his employee to steal a paltry ten thousand taels.⁹⁸

As soon as it became known that Benjamin was unable to meet his commitments there was a general scramble between the banks to seize all they could of his estate to cover his debts. Speculators from Hong Kong, who had suffered serious loss, rushed to Shanghai, accompanied by their legal advisers. It was the popular impression in Shanghai that an influential Hong Kong syndicate, supposed to include three wealthy Jews, speculating in bank shares, engineered Benjamin's downfall.⁹⁹ Benjamin speculated very largely in opium. Part of his security to the HSB were E. D. Sassoon and Co. *Compradore* orders relating to opium imported from India which was stored in the Sassoon receiving hulk 'Corea' captained by W. C. Law. In summer 1885 Benjamin was informed by Law that he had written proof that Benjamin had been 'done' on his opium deals by Sassoon for some Tls 200,000. Wainwright and Law went to Hong Kong to prefer a claim against E. D. Sassoon and Co.¹⁰⁰ At the hearing at HBM Police Court on 6 October 1885, Simeon Abraham Nathan, the Shanghai representative of the firm and member of the SMC, was sued by Benjamin for stealing one hundred and twenty-eight chests of opium.¹⁰¹ Edward Elias Sassoon, [father of Sir Ellice Victor Sassoon], was reluctant to let the case go to court and settled for Tls 120,000 in what the foreign community dubbed 'The Treaty of Peace'. These events did not escape the notice of a local dramatist. The *Shanghai Mercury* published part of a play entitled *Three Black Crows*, which referred to 'the chosen people shield[ing] themselves and their belongings from the shafts of fate'.¹⁰² A parody in the *Cathay Post* insinuated that Sassoon had used Nathan as a scapegoat.¹⁰³

Benjamin's bankruptcy triggered the collapse of the property market, and many speculators lost heavily in the severe depression that ensued.¹⁰⁴ Benjamin's

⁹⁸ *NCH*, 20/6/1884, p.711.

⁹⁹ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.6 .

¹⁰⁰ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.29.

¹⁰¹ Thirkell, *op. cit.*, pp.28-33.

¹⁰² 'You might have learnt the lesson from those Jews Who in your island home grow fat Through slaughter of the innocents', cited by Thirkell, *op. cit.*, p.27.

¹⁰³ *Cathay Post*, 24/10/1885 and 31/10/1885; Thirkell, *op. cit.*, pp.31-33, 37-38.

¹⁰⁴ He had a judicial separation from his wife Luna and five children in 1885, and paid her a monthly alimony of Tls 150. He died aged 44 years from dropsy and was buried in the Mohawk Road Jewish cemetery, in the presence of some forty mourners, *The China Press*, [TCP, hereafter], 11/1/1888.

temporary fortune provided a glimpse of the immense economic power of the wealthy. His life highlights many factors which reinforced the Baghdadi identity of the early settlers. Immigrants from Baghdad and India were employed by their co-religionists. In this way they remained a close-knit enclave in which the religious customs and the tradition of speaking Judeo-Arabic was kept alive. Clearly religion played a considerable role in the lives of these pioneers, as demonstrated when they were sworn in court on the Jewish Bible with their heads covered. It is significant that this is what the wider society demanded. They perceived the Baghdadi Jews as a people apart, with their own laws and traditions which they respected. On the other hand, there are also indications of an erosion of their identity. Socialising with their business associates led some like Benjamin to disregard the Jewish dietary laws. Instead of appealing to the community elders to resolve their disputes, some resorted to the law courts, where personal and business feuds came under full public glare.

The selection of pioneers here is not intended to place them on pedestals. Benjamin was unquestionably generous in his contributions towards both Jewish and non-Jewish charities. In this respect he showed foresight in building bridges with the wider community. Benjamin's association with the British went beyond business; he socialised with and entertained them. This was undoubtedly breaking new ground. But he is also an example of a pioneer who had feet of clay. He was responsible for the financial disasters the foreign community suffered as a result of his speculation, and arguably brought disrepute on the Baghdadi community with his numerous court cases.

Silas Aaron Hardoon 'Baghdad Caliph of the Far East',¹⁰⁵ and 'Western Buddha',¹⁰⁶

... Hardoon was a symbol of the white man's position in the Far East... Hardoon was individualistic, if nothing else. He was a blend of all faiths and hopes, a talented man who lived his life in an exotic setting as he thought best.¹⁰⁷

Hardoon was born in Baghdad probably in 1851 and five years later emigrated with his father to Bombay.¹⁰⁸ Local gossip has it that after a brief spell in Hong Kong in 1874, he was sacked from his job and landed penniless in Shanghai. Sassoon Jacob Solomon, who took pity on him, persuaded his employer, E. D. Sassoon and Co., Ltd., to give Hardoon a lowly position of godown minder, a job usually reserved for Eurasians. He often spoke about his pitifully small weekly salary of twelve shillings, of which he always saved a shilling.¹⁰⁹ By 1919 he became self-employed starting on a modest scale in real estate, he soon became famous for his uncanny foresight and intimate knowledge of China and her people.¹¹⁰ He saw Shanghai grow from a village to a major international city with the consequent increase in land values. He sold properties on which the rentals were small, to buy others which produced a greater revenue. These transactions ultimately placed him at the forefront of the Eastern merchants and financiers.¹¹¹ When he died his estate

¹⁰⁵ *TCP*, 10/11/1931; this title is also used in *IM*, 1/12/1931, p.6.

¹⁰⁶ His appellation in the numerous scrolls he was presented by Chinese, Gong Fangzhen, interview by author, Shanghai, 11/3/1992.

¹⁰⁷ 'China Loses Unique Character Through Death of S. A. Hardoon', series of articles by Herbert C. Lewis, *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury*, 23/6/1931; cited in *IM*, 3/7/1931, p.15.

¹⁰⁸ Details of Hardoon's early life in *NCH*, 24/2/37, enclosure in Shanghai Despatch to Peking No.63, 1/3/37, pp.1-6, PRO, FO676/291/184707; Betta, *op. cit.*, pp.106-107; Judge to Foreign Office, 12/12/32, PRO, FO917/3107/186/32.

¹⁰⁹ Knowles, *op. cit.*, p.8. His misdemeanour was hushed up, but nevertheless precluded him from being employed among 'gentlemen'. The Solomon family felt badly about Hardoon's ingratitude in not providing for them in his will. Hardoon believed that he had fulfilled any debt he owed the Solomons by donating the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue to the Sephardi community, Rose Horowitz, correspondence with author, tape recording, Los Angeles, 2/2/1993.

¹¹⁰ *NCH*, 23/6/31, p.407; His name does not appear among the employees of E.D. Sassoon in *The China Directory for 1919*; Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.65-66, 100, 156.

¹¹¹ *NCH*, 23/6/31, p.407; examples of his property deals in *The Cantonese Guild v. Hardoon*, *NCH*, 3/10/14, p.71; *IM*, 4/10/1929, p.6, 7/2/1930, p.5; 'Mr. Hardoon and His Chinese Tenants', *NCH*, 19/11/1921, p.508; 'Hardoon Wins Rent Suit', 18/12/35, p.494; 'Throughout his long life Hardoon was dominated by the idea of collecting rents', Crow, *op. cit.*, pp.61-62; Betta, *op. cit.*, pp.156-160.



In His Britannic Majesty's Supreme Court for China.

PROBATE JURISDICTION.

SHANGHAI, Monday the 6th day of July 1937

CITATION FOR PROBATE.

In the goods of Silas Aaron Hardoon deceased.

In virtue of an Order of His Majesty's said Court, bearing date this day, I do hereby monish and cite all and all manner of persons to appear in the said Court in ten days from the date hereof, and show cause, if any they have, why the last will and testament of Silas Aaron Hardoon deceased, should not be proved, approved, and registered, and letters executorial thereof granted to Liza Hardoon, named therein, as, in default thereof, the Court will proceed to grant the same accordingly.



Signature of Registrar

LIZA HARDOON No. 1273, Bubbling Well Road, Shanghai, Widow, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I am the person applying to this Court for Probate of the Will of the above named Silas Aaron Hardoon...

Declared at Shanghai, the 6th day of July 1937. Before me, Liza Hardoon, J. I. Nigam, Chief Clerk

To Foreign Office

Estate of Silas Aaron Hardoon consists entirely of land and buildings in Shanghai no personal estate or estate in any other country stop local duty estimated roughly at £400,000 or Dollars 9 Million three hundred thousand Executor cannot obtain loan from Banks to pay duty stop owing to present depression real estate market difficult to make sales to meet duty without disorganising market and except at sacrifices stop Executor asks that duty may be paid (according to provisions of) Finance Act 1894 section six subsection eight substituting seven per cent for three per cent for the rate of interest stop first instalment would probably be paid in January.

Recommend for application subject to it not being considered a precedent. Please telegraph reply.

Judge

cover cost in Hongkong Ref. of 11/20/37 Await further information before replying. Judge

Table with columns: Tel. No., Name, Address. Includes YMYSA, IDIAN, BROWA.

Metric Setrag Nalikian ADVOCATE

Y.M.C.A. Buildings Boplaide Madras 16th November 1936

To The High Commissionery of the Foreigners Settlers Shanghai - China

Dear Excellency, Re: Estate of Mr. Silas Aaron (Aaron) Hardoon, Deceased

I have the honour to inform you that I an Advocate practicing in Beyrouth-Liban and have come here to contest a testamentary suit in the High Court of Madras, India. Taking in advantage of my presence here, some heirs of the above deceased have requested me to investigate into the above estate and enjoy on their behalf in the claiming on the matter. I learnt that the above deceased, from England, formerly a Turkish subject, died without issue in or about 1931 and was buried in his own property at Shanghai, leaving a considerable estate with a Will as to the disposal of his properties.

Therefore, it will be highly desirable to enlighten me the existing circumstances in detail (a) Will (b) Properties, (c) the Status de Personal situation during his life and death of said deceased and (d) whether which courts are in their jurisdiction or competent authorities have been or should be administered or settled the matter?

So, I beg to request you to be kind enough to refer the above and let me know the results furnishing me the extract copy of the Will and inventory particulars of the estate at your earliest convenience for which I shall feel highly grateful and obliged to you.

Thanking in anticipation for Your kind attention and interest in the above.

I have the honour to be Yours very obedient servant J. Nigam

which included most of the prestigious sites in the Settlement, was estimated to be worth \$150 million.¹¹²

His marriage to a Eurasian Buddhist, Luo Jialing, Liza, (1864-1941) reputedly in 1886, was censured by the community who feared the erosion of their Jewish identity through intermarriage.¹¹³ Hardoon was highly acculturated to the Chinese. He was reputed to have had eight hundred employees, ten accountants, and seventy caretakers. His large pagoda roofed home at 1273 Bubbling Well Road was modelled on the famous *Da Guang-Yuan* of the Ch'ing novel, the *Dream of the Red Chamber*.¹¹⁴ It incorporated in a forty acre garden, Aili Park, a Buddhist temple, retreats for Buddhist nuns, several villas and all the usual trimmings of a traditional Chinese garden. In some ways it was Shanghai's version of the Forbidden City in Beijing, particularly when after the overthrow of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1912, the eunuchs expelled from the Imperial Palace found refuge there.¹¹⁵ Unlike the majority of his co-religionists, Hardoon became involved with Chinese political figures and began to have dealings with those who had fallen from power.¹¹⁶ He took in Chen Zhang Xun, formerly Viceroy of Guangzhou, and other dethroned personages, companions of Cixi, the Emperor's widow who was absolute ruler of China for sixty years. There was a period in which bombs, intended for Chen Zhang Xun and the other provincial tyrants, were thrown over Hardoon's garden wall. Egon Kisch, however, cynically commented that Hardoon did not worry himself about the political popularity of his guests; he had not taken them in out of human sympathy, but with a view to buying up their castles and estates cheap.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, the *Israel's*

¹¹² The total was put as high as \$200 million, *IM*, 1/10/1931, p.6; *NCH*, 23/6/31, p.407; 'Hardoon Will Case', *NCH*, 24/2/1937, pp.1-6; see also copy of the will, enclosure in Shanghai Despatch to Peking No.62, 1/3/1937, PRO FO676/291/184707; See Illustration, p.33.

¹¹³ Liza [1864-1941] of a French father and Chinese mother, Knowles, *op. cit.*, p.13; She was a disciple of Zong-Yang, the celebrated Buddhist monk, poet and artist, active in nationalist politics. He settled in Hardoon gardens and was financed by Liza. He was the Chinese Educational Society's chief fund raiser, Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp.16-17. She was probably a prostitute, Crow, *op. cit.*, pp.127-128; see also Xu Zhuchen, *Biography of Hardoon*, [Chinese] (Shanghai,1986), passim.

¹¹⁴ Wei, *op. cit.*, p.90.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*; Knowles, p.9.

¹¹⁶ A good account of Hardoon's involvement in Chinese politics in Chiara Betta, *op. cit.*, pp.146-151 and Betta, 'S.A. Hardoon (1851?-1931): An Intercultural Intermediary in Shanghai', Unpublished paper submitted for the Harvard Symposium; Wei, *op. cit.*, p.179; Hardoon was accompanied by an armed Irish bodyguard, Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.201; several attempts on his life recounted in Pan Ling, *In Search of Old Shanghai*, (Hong Kong, 1982), pp.71-76.

¹¹⁷ Egon Erwin Kisch, *Secret China*, English translation of the German volume *China Geheim*, (London, 1934), pp.65-75.

Messenger hailed him as the best known Jew throughout China; 'he enjoys the complete confidence of the men who hold China's reins of government'.¹¹⁸

The Hardoons entertained many famous guests, both Jews and non-Jews during the 1920s and early 1930s, notably the Chasgchia Buddha of Mongolia.¹¹⁹ They hosted the largest ever assembly of Shanghai Jewry in 1929. Four hundred guests filled their ballroom to hear the Zionist emissary Ariel Bension's address on the new Jewish renaissance.¹²⁰ Their residence in Beijing was the former palatial home of Chen Zhang Xun. It had more than two hundred rooms which were lavishly decorated.¹²¹ Intriguingly, Hardoon combined extreme parsimony with a grand style of living. His office was very cheaply furnished. There was no rug on the unpainted floor and no heating. On a cold day he would sit bundled in his overcoat. He was unresponsive to appeals for the usual charities.¹²²

Hardoon actively identified with the growth and development of Shanghai. He won the distinction of being on the Councils of the French (1892-1901) and Foreign Settlement (1900-1903) at the same time.¹²³ Because of his enormous wealth, the SMC, which was in the main controlled by the British merchant community, felt obliged to offer him the prestigious position of councillor.¹²⁴ Incensed by the fact that he was a 'Jewish parvenu married to a Chinese woman of brothel origin', they were determined to make him pay a high price for his new social and political status. Local rumour has it that, as a price for his election, Hardoon had to contribute the astronomical sum of \$4 million for paving the road from the Bund to Defence Creek.¹²⁵ In a conspicuous display of generosity, Hardoon provided food and accommodation to the first units of the British Defence Forces in 1927. The British Military Hospital, was stationed in his garden, under the

¹¹⁸ *IM*, 4/2/1927, p.4.

¹¹⁹ *The Shanghai Gazette*, 14/11/1919; 'Living Buddha a Guest of Mr. and Mrs. Hardoon', *IM*, 8/1/1926, p.12.

¹²⁰ *IM*, 15/5/1929, p.8; Bension to Hardoon, 11/5/1930, Central Zionist Archives, [CZA, hereafter], KH4/9861.

¹²¹ *IM*, 26/9/1924, p.11.

¹²² Crow congratulated himself for twice doing what everyone said was impossible in getting Hardoon to make liberal donations to the American Red Cross, Crow, *op. cit.*, pp.62-63.

¹²³ *JC*, 6/3/1903, p.23.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.23.

¹²⁵ Wei, *op. cit.*, p.86; See also 'SMC v. S.A. Hardoon', at H.M. Supreme Court', regarding land tax, *NCH*, 21/6/1918, p.240-241.

supervision of thirteen nursing sisters and twenty-five officers.¹²⁶ While it is probable that he hoped for a knighthood,¹²⁷ he was unaware that the Shanghai Municipal Police recorded their suspicions of his involvement with Chinese political figures.¹²⁸

Regarding China as his permanent home, Hardoon expressed his intention of using the fortune he had amassed there for the benefit of the Chinese people and his name became a household word among them.¹²⁹ He contributed vast sums to the sufferers in the famine districts of the country.¹³⁰ At meetings held in Hardoon's garden several million Chinese dollars were raised, from the sale of goods, for the victims of the Wuxing floods in 1910, the Beijing and Manchuria Flood in 1912 and the Hunan-Shanxi flood in 1917.¹³¹ Hardoon was renowned for his enthusiastic promotion of education for the Chinese people, a demonstration of his concern for them.¹³² He spent the vast sum of 150,000 yuan to publish a complete set of 8416 volumes of the Buddhist *Binjie Tripitaka* [Canon], edited by Huang Zongyong and printed in 1913¹³³ for distribution to universities throughout the world, including the Hebrew University.¹³⁴ With the co-operation of Ji Juemei, his private secretary, Hardoon launched a movement to translate all the Holy Scriptures of the World into Chinese (1926), starting with the Chinese edition of the Jewish Scriptures. He printed a literary series of twenty-four books on Chinese classics, history and literature mainly written and edited by the Chinese scholar, Wang Guowei. He founded the *Chuang Sheng Ming Zhi* Middle School, where students were taught ancient Chinese grammar and Buddhism, and also the *Chuang Shen Ming Zhi* Girls' School and four primary schools. The *Guang Chuang* Society instituted by him in 1916 catered to some five thousand scholars interested in Chinese antiques.¹³⁵

¹²⁶ *IM*, 4/3/1927, p.11 and 1/4/1927, p.9.

¹²⁷ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 2/2/1993.

¹²⁸ Liza was seen as 'a great intriguer' and violently anti-British, 'The Secret Abstract of Intelligence Transmits for the Straits Settlements for February 1920', cited by Betta in 'S. A. Hardoon 1851?-1931', p.4.

¹²⁹ *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.10 and 3/7/1931, p.14.

¹³⁰ 'Hardoon contributed \$20,000 to the flood relief fund of Kiangsu Province', *IM*, 13/1/1922, p.21.

¹³¹ Li En-chi, Ailiyuan mengying lu. [Chinese], *Memoirs of Hardoon Garden*, (Beijing, 1984), pp.37-38.

¹³² *IM*, 3/6/1927, p.9 and 3/7/1931, p.14.

¹³³ It is housed at the Academy of Social Science, Shanghai, Gong Fangzhen, correspondence with author, 20/4/1992; Li En-chi, *op. cit.*, p.45.

¹³⁴ Hugo Bergmans, librarian, to Hardoon, 17/2/1926, cited in *IM*, 7/5/1926, p.10 and 3/7/1931, p.15.

¹³⁵ *IM*, 3/7/1931, p.14. The *Wen Hai Ge* library in Hardoon's garden housed some 30,000 books. Gong Fangzhen, who owns sixteen of them, correspondence, Shanghai, 20/6/1993 Betta, *op. cit.*, pp.174-178.

For his philanthropic work he was awarded the highest decoration the Chinese Government ever bestowed on a non-Chinese citizen, The Order of *Zhaowu* With Big Belt (1924) and the Military Order of the 1st Class *Dashou Jiahe*. At the same ceremony Liza Hardoon became the first woman to receive a decoration extolling her virtue and charity.¹³⁶ The courtyard of Hardoon's residence was festooned with scrolls sent by Chinese civil and military officials including the President and the boy ex-Emperor.¹³⁷ He was also appointed Advisor to the Tuchun (war lord) of Jiangsu and to the Governor of Anhwei. The 'Social and Personal Columns' of *Israel's Messenger* were replete with his social engagements in the 1920s: an invitation from the Chinese Government to visit Beijing where he was accorded an armed guard; lunched with the President, Boy Emperor and the Empress in the Forbidden City; dined with Sir Ronald Macleay, British Minister at Beijing.¹³⁸ *The North China Daily News*' claim that all shades of opinion were reflected among his friends and politics mattered very little to him, is questionable.¹³⁹

Placed in a most advantageous position to help his co-religionists, Hardoon did comparatively little for the Baghdadi community other than his gift, in June 1927, of the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue at the cost of \$300,000.¹⁴⁰ A further Tls 25,000 towards the funds of the synagogue was made contingent upon the seat holders raising a similar sum.¹⁴¹ Considering his vast wealth, his critics emphasised that he could have done far more for world Jewry at a time when contributions to Zionist funds were crucial.¹⁴² Nonetheless, 'he had a racial pride' and was outspokenly critical

¹³⁶ *IM*, 16/12/1921, p.9, 8/9/1922, p.26, and 1/11/1924, p.12; see Illustration, p.38.

¹³⁷ *JC*, 4/7/1919, p.11.

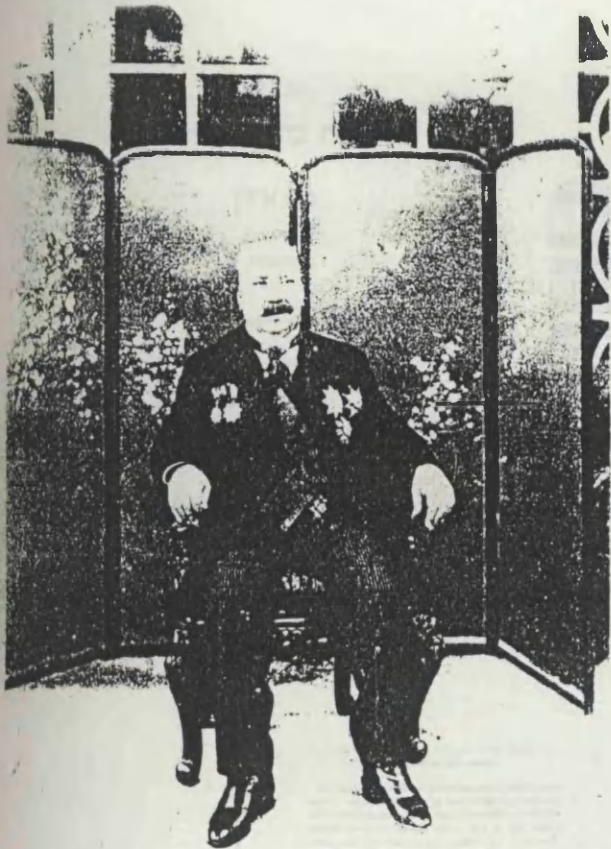
¹³⁸ *IM*, 4/7/1924, p.8.

¹³⁹ Cited in *IM*, 4/7/1924, p.8 and 3/7/1931, p.14.

¹⁴⁰ Hardoon was involved in founding the *Beth El* Synagogue in 1887, he was a member of the *Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews* in 1900, *IM*, 18/5/1906, p.13; he had 'taken a leading part in founding and supporting the Shanghai Jewish School', *IM*, 24/12/1909, p.11; see Illustrations, pp.38, 39.

¹⁴¹ 'Considering his vast wealth, this contribution is a trifle', *IM*, 1/6/1934, p.23 and 4/9/1931, p.19.

¹⁴² *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.19 and 3/1/1936, p.16.



Sincere Congratulations to

Mr. and Mrs. S. A. HARDOON
 FOR THEIR GENEROSITY IN
 DONATING THE BETH AHARON
 SYNAGOGUE TO THE WHOLE OF
 SHANGHAI JEWRY.

Mr. and Mrs. N. E. B. EZRA

哈同先生佩帶章綬之像
 Silas Hardoon displaying his medals

ISRAEL'S MESSENGER MAY 6TH 1927.

Beth Aharon Synagogue Number

The next issue of ISRAEL'S MESSENGER will be dedicated to the new Synagogue, to be known as BETH AHARON, which will be consecrated for the service of the MOST HIGH during Shabuoth Festival with solemn ceremony. The Synagogue which was built at the entire expense of Mrs. S. A. HARDOON at a cost of over \$300,000.00 will be a monument to her liberality to Shanghai Jewry. The special edition of ISRAEL'S MESSENGER next month will contain a history of the Synagogues in Shanghai and other contributions suitable for the occasion. It will also be profusely illustrated.

Messages and greetings will also be published from the following noted Rabbis—Hachmey Yisrael—local and abroad:—

The Very Rev. Dr. MOSES GASTER, Ph.D., London. (Chief Rabbi of the Sephardim Congregations in the British Empire)

Rev. Dr. DAVID DE SOLA POOL, New York. (Rabbi of the Ancient Sephardic Synagogue of New York City).

Rabbi Dr. HERBERT S. GOLDSTEIN, New York. (President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America).

Rabbi W. HIRSCH, B.A., Pretoria, South Africa.
 Chief Rabbi Prof. Dr. J. L. LANDAU, Ph.D., M.A., Johannesburg

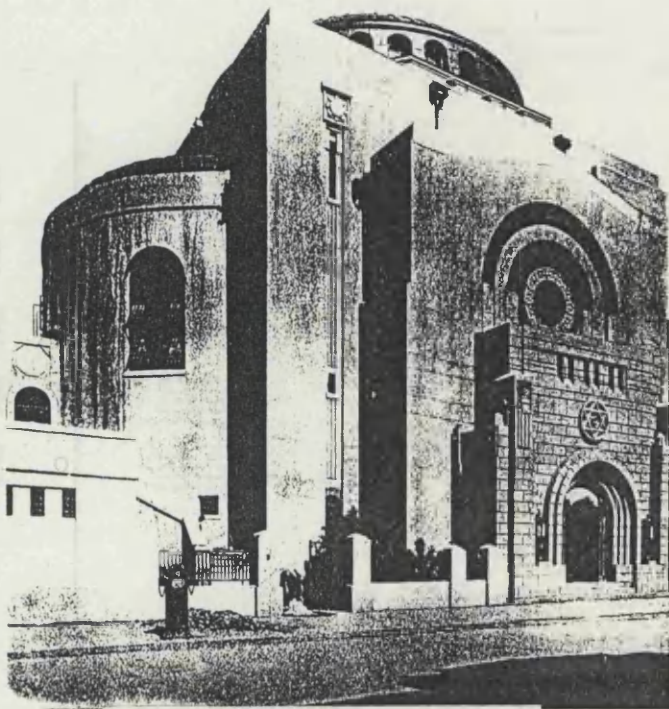
Rabbi Dr. SALIS S. DAICHES, M.A., Edinburgh.

Rabbi S. M. ASHKENAZI, Shanghai and others.

THERE WILL ALSO BE ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF GREAT INTEREST TO THE READERS. THE SPECIAL EDITION WILL IN EVERY RESPECT BE WORTHY OF THE MEMORABLE OCCASION AND SHOULD BE OF VALUE AS A RECORD OF THE UNIQUE CEREMONY

Advanced Orders Should Be Made. Single Copies \$1.00

Notice of the Consecration



Beth Aharon Synagogue

בית אהרן

שאננה.

Order of Service

at the Consecration of

Beth Aharon Synagogue

Synagogue

30th Sibson 5087 (30th June, 1927)

God save the King!



The Reader takes the Scroll of the Law, and says the following Prayer for the King and the Royal Family —

He who gives salvation unto kings and dominion unto princes, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, who delivered his servant David from the burful sword, who maketh a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters,—may be bless, guard, protect, and help, exalt, magnify, and highly aggrandize our Sovereign Lord, King GEORGE, our gracious Queen MARY, EDWARD Prince of WALES, and all the ROYAL FAMILY

May the supreme King of kings in his mercy preserve the King in life, guard him and deliver him from all trouble, sorrow, and hurt. May he make his enemies fall before him; and in whatsoever he undertaketh may he prosper. May the supreme King of kings in his mercy put a spirit of wisdom and understanding into his heart and into the hearts of all his counsellors, that they may uphold the peace of the realm, advance the welfare of the nation, and deal kindly and truly with all Israel. In his days and in ours may Judah be saved, and Israel dwell securely; and may the redeemer come unto Zion. O that this may be his will, and let us say, Amen.

Save, we beseech thee, O Lord.
Save, we beseech thee, O Lord.
We beseech thee, O Lord, send prosperity.
We beseech thee, O Lord, send prosperity.

The Reader takes the Scroll of the Law, and says the following Prayer for the King and the Royal Family —

נמון משהו לאלים וקטלה למלכות. סלכותו סלכות
למעולם. הנהוה אהודו עבוד סוכר דעה.
המון כס דרך יבסום עומ נחיה. ויה יקדו ויסמו.
ונתנו יהוה ויחסם ויעל ויהא לקטלה את יבמות
המלך

Our Sovereign Lord, King GEORGE, our gracious Queen MARY, EDWARD Prince of WALES and all the ROYAL FAMILY

יהוה יהוה: קלך סלתי האלנים ברחמי וימנה ויספרה
ואכל עדה נהן עמך האלוה וימנה וימנה וימנה
אשר יהוה יהוה: קלך סלתי האלנים ברחמי וימנה ויספרה
נמון כס דרך יבסום עומ נחיה. ויה יקדו ויסמו.
המלכות והלכות עמך וימנה וימנה וימנה
קטלה וקטלה וימנה. וימנה וימנה וימנה וימנה
למנו וימנה: נן יהוה רחמן וימנה וימנה וימנה וימנה

אמן יהוה יהוה יהוה: אמן יהוה יהוה יהוה:
אמן יהוה יהוה יהוה: אמן יהוה יהוה יהוה:

5. And while upon the Highway that
Leaves the suburbs Gate,
And from the side Zion's proper
Highway proceed:—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

6. O while the pure Bands of her eyes
Play for her People's plight,
And Zion's Daughter shall rejoice
And sing the Song of High—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

7. O while through wide his mountains
The bright blood passes fit,
And in her Father's name shall give
The day when men are—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

8. Bear Zion, Zion, where thou art,
The Truth by Peoples' word:
Why then our Hope shall come to be
With Israel's last and—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

למנו יהוה יהוה
קטלה וקטלה וימנה
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך

קטלה וקטלה וימנה
והמלכות והלכות עמך
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קטלה וקטלה וימנה
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך

HATIKVAH

1. O while white a Jewish breast,
Beats true a Jewish heart,
And Jewish glasses loving cast,
To love freely said,—
O thus our Hope — He not dead,
Our nation hope and love,
Again the sword will be laid
Where David's banner died.

2. O while the stars are down again,
And in his Father's name shall give
The day when men are—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

3. And while upon our water fit,
Plashes the Gey's wall,
And in the Father's name shall give
The day when men are—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

4. O while the Jordan's post-up set,
Large Jerusalem ready,
And with his glorious name shall give
Through Galilee's blue sea—
O, thus our Hope, etc.

המקנה

קטלה וקטלה וימנה
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך

קטלה וקטלה וימנה
והמלכות והלכות עמך
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קטלה וקטלה וימנה
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך
והמלכות והלכות עמך

of the 'cowards and imbeciles' who sought to conceal their Jewish origins.¹⁴³ He was honorary President of the synagogue and attended services on the Festivals together with his adopted children.¹⁴⁴ It is significant that Hardoon employed E. S. Jacob to teach his children Hebrew and Judaism twice a week, and provided transport for him in his Rolls Royce.¹⁴⁵ His determination to preserve the core of his Jewish identity while striving to become a 'Confucian gentleman' and acculturate to the Chinese is remarkable.

When Hardoon died in June 1931 at the age of 84, his funeral on Sunday, 21 June, caused a furore within the community. Many members were aggrieved because he was not buried in the traditional manner in the Jewish cemetery but in his garden, with both Buddhist and Jewish officials performing their own rites.¹⁴⁶ Buddhist monks were very much in evidence among the two thousand mourners. One observer described the scene in the spacious ballroom of 'Hardoon's semi-pagan mansion where the elderly *hazan* [Jacob] fervently eulogised Hardoon for his philanthropy, while the children were 'subjected on bended knees to kowtow to the dead body of their adopted deceased parent'.¹⁴⁷ The funeral procession was more Chinese in character than Jewish, with hundreds of burning joss-sticks deposited around the grave while *kaddish* [Jewish prayers for the dead] was read by two of Hardoon's adopted sons.¹⁴⁸

For weeks the correspondence columns of the local papers were inundated with letters from readers criticising the *hazan* and the *Hebra Kadisha* for not walking out when the 'Jewish rites were being transgressed'.¹⁴⁹ Charles Gubbay, President

¹⁴³ *IM*, 3/7/1931, p.14.

¹⁴⁴ *IM*, 3/7/1931, p.14; one of the adopted children, George, was converted to Judaism, the others were born Jews, *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.10.

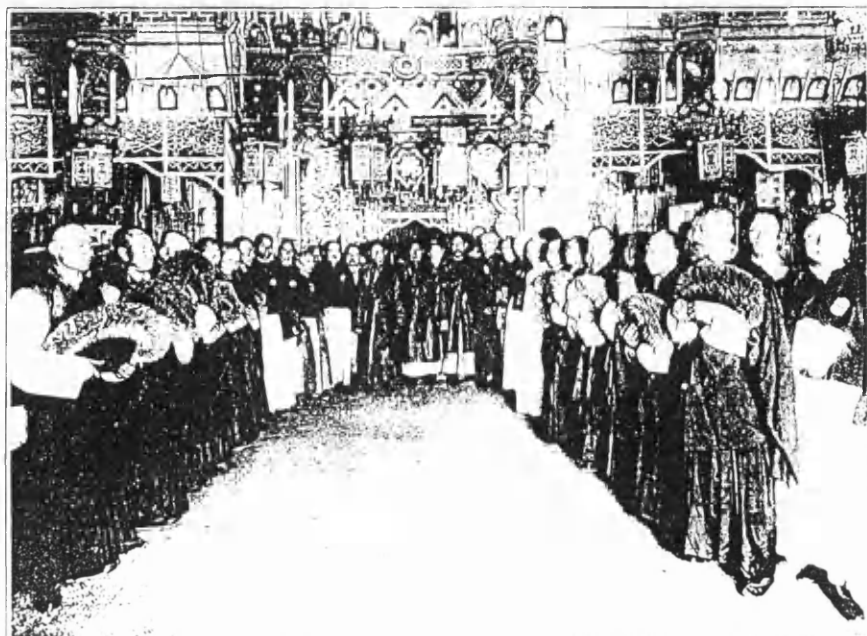
¹⁴⁵ During the 1932 Sino-Japanese hostilities Hardoon housed the Jacob family for two months, Sassoon Jacoby, interview by author, tape recording, Jerusalem, 2/4/1992.

¹⁴⁶ *North-China Daily News*, [hereafter, *NCDM*], 22/6/1931, p.12; *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.2; 'Mausoleum of the late Mr. S.A. Hardoon', in *IM*, 1/1/1934, p.17; photographs of his funeral in *Hatong Xiansheng Rongailu (Commemoration of S.A. Hardoon)*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII; see Illustration, p.41. After 1949 Hardoon's gardens were the property of the State and became the site of the Soviet Government's gift to the people of the Republic of China. His heirs were ordered to remove the graves of Hardoon and Liza to a lot outside the city, Lucian Taire, *Shanghai Episode: The End of Western Commerce in Shanghai 1949-1951*, (Hong Kong, 1958), p.79.

¹⁴⁷ Hazan Eliahoo Isaac of the *Ohel Rachel* was assisted by Hazan S. E. Abraham of the *Beth Aharon*, Omar Sabagh, [pseudonym] to the Editor, *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.19.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.19.

¹⁴⁹ 'The whole thing was a mess and it should not pass without a protest on the part of the Jewish community', *IM*, 1/8/1931, p.12.



The funeral of Silas Hardoon

of the *Hebra Kadisha* tendered his resignation.¹⁵⁰ One irate reader asked, ‘Under the circumstances how can one recognise these *hazanim* as spiritual leaders and respect them?’¹⁵¹ ‘Is Liza Hardoon going to bring the kids up as Jews? What steps is the Jewish community going to take in the matter?’¹⁵² These became the pressing questions of the day. It is difficult to exaggerate the indignation felt by some members of the Baghdadi community when they discovered that Hardoon had left his entire fortune of \$150 million to Liza.¹⁵³ Although the will stipulated that the adopted children be brought up in the Jewish faith, no provision was made for any other relative or Jewish charity. The *Israel’s Messenger* proclaimed it a terrible tragedy and a warning to others against emulating Hardoon’s example of ‘selfishness’, and concluded: ‘Today instead of his name being cherished in Iraq, here and elsewhere, he is almost forgotten’.¹⁵⁴ Significantly, the Shanghai Jewish Communal Association, representing both the *Ohel Rachel* and *Beth Aharon* Synagogues strongly disapproved of, and dissociated itself from, N. E. B. Ezra’s strident criticism of the deceased.¹⁵⁵ Rumours persisted that Hardoon’s will had been signed under undue influence, on 10 February, 1931 a week before his death, when he was critically ill.¹⁵⁶ The vast fortune was coveted by obscure relatives: ‘From Bagdad [sic] to Bombay to Basra to Jerusalem to Shanghai wires were kept hot with claims of relatives’.¹⁵⁷

Focus on the ‘Hardoon Will Case’ highlights the fact that the Baghdadi community could not isolate its affairs from the wider community of Shanghai.¹⁵⁸ The immense sum involved created the erroneous impression that the Baghdadi community was generally wealthy, whereas for every Hardoon there were a hundred

¹⁵⁰ ‘Strange Burial Service in Shanghai’, *IM*, 3/7/1931, p.7.

¹⁵¹ *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.19.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p.19.

¹⁵³ *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.6; Liza had difficulty in obtaining a loan from banks to pay the duty, some £400,000 [\$ 9,300,000], and owing to a depression in the real estate market she would have had to accept ‘sacrificial prices’ for the sale of the property, ‘Liza Hardoon application for Probate of the will’, 6/1/31, PRO, FO917/3107/186132 and 6/1/31, FO917/3107/186098; Judge to Foreign Office, 12/12/32, FO917/3107/186132.

¹⁵⁴ *IM*, 1/10/1932 and 3/1/1936, p.16.

¹⁵⁵ The resolutions passed at meeting on 8/11/1932, *IM*, 2/12/1932, p.12; for some examples of Ezra’s trenchant criticism of the Hardoons see *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.11, and 1/1/1932, p.15; he referred to Mrs. Hardoon as ‘*obedeth aboda zara*’, [an idol-worshipper], *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.6.

¹⁵⁶ *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.6, and 1/10/1931, p.6; it was alleged that Hardoon was ‘mentally incapable of making a will’, *IM*, 1/1/1932, p.15 and 12/3/1932, p.27; *NCH*, 15/12/1931, p.293.

¹⁵⁷ *IM*, 1/12/1931, p.6 and 1/10/1932, p.1.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Hardoon Will Case’, see Appendix One, pp.364-367.

poor Baghdadis.¹⁵⁹ 'The majority were of the poorer class of the non-Chinese society of Shanghai, both financially and socially'.¹⁶⁰ The lengthy court proceedings from June 1932 to February 1933 dominated the columns of the local press and were also of interest in Baghdad, in *Eretz Yisrael* and in Britain. During the months of the trial feelings ran high among Shanghai Baghdadi Jews.¹⁶¹ Arguably the fact that they did not benefit from Hardoon's vast fortune had an impact on the Jewish identity of the Baghdadi community. It illustrated that by intermarriage and by loosening his ties with his co-religionists in the pursuit of wealth, Hardoon had reversed the policy of Elias Sassoon of ensuring that the unique identity of Jews who had emigrated from Baghdad was preserved in Shanghai.

N.E.B. Ezra blamed his inability to raise the money to contest Hardoon's will on prejudice against the claimant, and the support given by elders of the Jewish community to Liza as a *quid pro quo* for her looking after the community's interests.¹⁶² He hinted to Zionist authorities that the legacy Hebrew University had been cancelled in a new will a week before Hardoon's death.¹⁶³ Ezra's keen interest in the case led them to suspect he had ulterior motives, and his offer of a donation of part of the benefits to the Jewish National Fund and *Keren Hayesod* was seen as a rather naïve attempt at extracting money.¹⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the Executive welcomed a gift for Palestine, and conducted the negotiations with the barrister Norman Bentwich, to go out to China and contest the case.¹⁶⁵ They censured the vitriolic criticism of Hardoon in the *Israel's Messenger*, emphasising that it was ill-becoming for an official Zionist paper to strongly champion purely private financial

¹⁵⁹ Knowles, *op. cit.*, p.8.

¹⁶⁰ Kranzler *op. cit.*, pp.51-52.

¹⁶¹ *IM*, 1/10/1931, p.6; The entire court proceedings were printed in the *NCH*.

¹⁶² Liza Hardoon had pledged Tls 20,000 to the *Beth Aharon*, *IM*, 1/4/1934 and 1/6/1934, p.23; Ezra to M. Ettinger, Jerusalem, 8/1/1932, CZA, KH/1978; Ezra's expectations of receiving contributions to Jewish institutions are recorded in Ezra to Cohen, 30/6/1931, CZA, Z4/3225/II; Z. Solokolov to Liza Hardoon, 22/7/1931, CZA, KH4/1978.

¹⁶³ Bension to Silas Hardoon, 11/5/1930, CZA, KH4/9861; The Board of Directors to Liza Hardoon expressing sympathy on his death, 22/7/1931, CZA, KH4/1978; Ezra to Cohen, 30/6/1931, CZA, Z4 3225 II.

¹⁶⁴ 'In the long run we shall find that the whole business is a wild goose chase', Ettinger to Herrmann, 4/2/1932, CZA, KH4/1978; Ezra suggested that the Zionist Organisation should form groups of five people willing to advance £200. Each group would receive a commission of five percent of the money received by the claimant, E. A. Hardoon, Ezra to Ettinger, 18/1/32, CZA, KH4/1978; Ezra to Bentwich, 14/1/1932, CZA, KH4/1978; Ezra to Herrmann, 6/10/1932, KH4/B/1977.

¹⁶⁵ Ettinger to Herrmann, 4/2/1932, CZA, KH4/1978; Ezra to Bentwich, 14/1/1932, KH4/1978; Ezra to Herrmann, 7/4/1932, KH4/1978; *IM*, 1/4/1932, p.6.

interests.¹⁶⁶ Israel Cohen, the Zionist leader, reflected on how much Hardoon might have done for the benefit of Jews, ‘if he had been properly influenced and wisely advised’.¹⁶⁷

One of the longest and most important judgements ever given in HM Supreme Court for China was delivered by Judge Penrhyn Grant Jones on 19 February 1933. Judgement was given in favour of the defendant, with costs. This decision annoyed some members of the Baghdadi community, and in particular Ezra, who emphasised that Great Britain had ‘garnered the colossal sum of £500,000 as death dues from the estate of an Iraqiian’.¹⁶⁸ The case had an important bearing on the Baghdadi community which was split into pro and anti-Hardoon groups led by D.E.J. Abraham and his son Reuben against Ezra.¹⁶⁹ The Committee of the Shanghai Jewish Communal Association strongly disapproved of, and dissociated itself from, editorial comments in the *Israel’s Messenger* criticising the judgement given in the Hardoon Will Case.¹⁷⁰ Feelings ran high and the rift it caused never completely healed.¹⁷¹ To this day Silah Hardoon, one of the twelve Baghdadi claimants, who came to Shanghai in 1931 at the age of sixteen to contest the will, maintains that Reuben Abraham supported Liza Hardoon because of his vested interest as a trustee of Hardoon’s estate.¹⁷² It is plausible, however, that Abraham’s friendship with Liza Hardoon hinged around his total devotion to the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue.

¹⁶⁶ Herrmann to Ezra, 9/3/1932 and 7/4/1932, CZA, KH 4/1978.

¹⁶⁷ Cohen to Ezra, 13/2/1924, CZA, Z4 3225 II.

¹⁶⁸ *IM*, 1/10/1932, p.1; Mrs. Hardoon raised a loan of \$18 million through E.D. Sassoon and Co., Ltd., in order to pay \$9 million in death duties, *IM*, 2/3/1934, p.22; Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.230; E. O. Hauser, *Shanghai: City for Sale*, (New York, 1940), p.238.

¹⁶⁹ Ezra referred to ‘the uncalled-for moral support [to Mrs. Hardoon] given from a totally unexpected local Jewish quarter’, *IM*, 1/10/1932. p.4.

¹⁷⁰ *IM*, 2/12/1932, p.12 and 26/7/1931. For further examples of Ezra’s scathing criticism see *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.20 and 1/11/1924, p.7.

¹⁷¹ Cecilia Colgan, (née Ezra), correspondence with author, Los Angeles, 20/10/1992.

¹⁷² ‘One prominent member of our community’ attended every court session, ‘whispering to her counsel’, *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.6; Silah Hardoon, interview by author, New York, 10/4/1893. Liza Hardoon died aged 78, leaving a fortune of some \$40,000,000. She spent her last four years in total blindness, *The New York Times*, 4/10/1941; ‘The Hardoon Estate Should be Donated to Shanghai’, *China Weekly Review*, 98, No.8, 25/10/1941, pp.217-218; Pang Ling, *In Search of Old Shanghai*, (Hong Kong, 1982), pp.77-78.

Conclusion

The direction of change in the Baghdadi Jewish community is illustrated by the perception and experience of the three pioneers. Elias Sassoon fulfilled David Solomon Sassoon's prediction never to forget the 'Rivers of Babylon'. In the next generation,¹⁷³ Benjamin David Benjamin, who also made his mark in society by amassing a vast fortune, set his sights beyond the community while still maintaining his links with it. In the third generation, Haroon built bridges with both the British and the Chinese, and so secured his own political position. His wealth and status gave him power in the Jewish, the British and the Chinese communities. The very different characters of these pioneers exemplify the groups within the community. Their lives symbolised the fact that over time interaction between Jews and the wider society became more intense, and this in itself suggests their flexibility in adapting to a new environment.

Elias Sassoon had a strong sense of identity at every level. He did not appear to have the need to conform socially to his new environment in Shanghai. A great traditionalist and defender of the Mosaic Code of Law, and like his father David the acknowledged leader of the clan, he regarded his wealth as a reward for being religiously observant, and was determined to use it responsibly in the performance of *mitzvot* which promoted the interests of the community. He used this power and wealth to consolidate the Baghdadi community by laying the foundations for the preservation of its Baghdadi identity. His only interest with the wider society was economic.

Benjamin's life illustrates the changes in Baghdadi identity in one generation of settlement in Shanghai. Clearly Jewish culture and religious practice were compromised by economic realities. While maintaining his links with the Baghdadi community, he recognised the necessity of responding to social and economic changes as a member of the Jewish and of the wider society. He therefore set his sights beyond the Jewish community and attempted to forge links with the foreign population in the Settlement and particularly with the British.

¹⁷³ A generation has been defined here as approximately thirty years, according to the Oxford dictionary.

Hardoon exemplifies greater flexibility than Benjamin, and in even more striking contrast to Elias Sassoon, built bridges with both the Chinese and the foreign community to secure his own political and economic position. A radical revisionist, he used his wealth and the status it conferred as a means of achieving personal political goals. He acknowledged his membership of the Jewish community, but withheld his sole allegiance to it. Notwithstanding his weak communal ties, and the fact that he was a universalist, both philosophically and practically, he brought up his adopted children as Jews.¹⁷⁴ Significantly, Hardoon insisted that the ritual of the *Beth Aharon* should be orthodox and no deviation was to be permitted from the *minhag* of Baghdad.¹⁷⁵

It would appear then that the advances of Benjamin and Hardoon into the wider society were not made at the expense of their Jewish identity. Their belief in God and the values of Judaism remained firm for the most part. What they discarded were forms of Baghdadi culture, mostly secular, which is understandable in terms of the change in their economic and social experience. The issues raised by the lives of these three pioneers will now be explored through the community as a whole.

¹⁷⁴ They attended synagogue and read the *Kaddish*. *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.11. Liza Hardoon donated large sums towards the relief of the refugees from Nazi Europe who settled in Shanghai, Jacob Alkow, interview by author, tape recording, Herzlia, 1/6/1993.

¹⁷⁵ *IM*, 3/6/1927, p.14.

Chapter Two: Identity

Baghdadi, Arabian or Sephardi?

This chapter addresses the questions why, by the turn of the century, the Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai chose to call themselves ‘The Sephardi Jewish Community of Shanghai’, why they consistently referred to themselves and were referred to as such, and whether they had any genuine claim to this title. In its strictest sense the term Sephardi designates only those Jews whose ancestors lived on the Iberian peninsula, specifically to *Spaniolim*, who, after their exile in 1492, preserved Spanish customs and the Judeo-Spanish language.¹ It was only when they later settled in countries such as Morocco, Italy and Palestine, that they were called ‘Sephardim’ to denote their geographical origin.²

The roots of Spanish Sephardi tradition can be traced to Babylon, where Jews were transported from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia, in 598 and 586 BC when he conquered the kingdom of Judah.³ Babylonian Jews were proud of their rich heritage and their cultural hegemony over world Jewry for some 1000 years. The Babylonian Talmud was compiled, and the structure of modern Judaism was laid, in the great academies of Pumpedhita and Sura. Their *Geonim* were the supreme religious authorities for world Jewry until the decline of their institutions in the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁴ The unity of the Sephardic world was forged by regular communication between the Sephardi communities from Afghanistan to the Atlantic Ocean, and the Babylonian Jews, in the form of *she’elot* and *teshuvot*. In

¹ In fact *Sfard* mentioned in the Bible, refers not to Spain, but to Lydia in Asia Minor, *Obadiah*, Chap. 20; Daniel Judah, Elazar *The Other Jews : the Sephardim Today*, (New York, 1989), ‘The Ashkenazi-Sephardi Encounter; Past Experiences’, Chap. 8. p.96. ‘Sepharad’ is first applied to Spain in the *Radak, targum* Jonathan, [first century Aramaic translation of the prophetic books of the Bible] where it is translated ‘Ispamia’ or ‘Spamia’.

² Rabbi Solomon David Sassoon applied the term Sephardi not only to those communities which were founded by Iberian Jews after their expulsion from Spain and Portugal, notably in Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and North Africa. He applied it also to older Jewish communities that became dominated by Iberian Jews, Solomon David Sassoon, ‘The Spiritual Heritage of the Sephardim’, *Le Judaïsme Sephardi*, New Series, No.15, October, 1957; Laredo and Maeso, *El nombre de Sefarad*, 4, 1944, pp.349-363.

³ 11 Kings 24:14. and 25:11; Lucien Gubbay and Abraham Levy, *The Sephardim: Their Glorious Tradition From the Babylonian Exile to the Present Day*, (London, 1992), pp.14,18; see also Henry Shaw, *The Sephardim: Their Origin, History, Traditions and Culture*, (Melbourne, undated), passim.

⁴ The Babylonian academies began to decline after the death of Sa’adia ben Yusef, Gaon of Sura, in 942. Raphael Patai, a distinguished anthropologist, *The Seed of Abraham Jews and Arabs in Contact and Conflict*, (Utah, 1986), pp.53-66.

this way the basic *halakhic* data was transmitted from Babylon westwards to Egypt, North Africa and Spain.⁵

The Sephardim of Spain were mainly descendants of Jews who reached the Iberian peninsula from the Mediterranean world probably after the destruction of the second Temple in 70 A.D.⁶ After the Arab conquest of Spain in 711, Spanish Jewry established close contact with the centre of Jewish life in Babylon, and became an integral branch of the Babylonian tradition.⁷ In the eleventh century Babylon's supremacy in Jewish scholarship was eclipsed by Spain.⁸ The Golden Age of Spanish Jewry ended with the outbreak of persecution in 1391,⁹ culminating in a decree of expulsion in March 1492 of some 250,000 Jews who refused to convert to Christianity.¹⁰ Jewish exiles from Spain moved eastward to the Ottoman empire, which became the centre of the Sephardi world in the sixteenth century.¹¹ At first the Iberian exiles formed their own congregations alongside the indigenous Jews but soon dominated the existing Jewish communities.¹² A common Sephardi *halakhah* was observed in South Eastern Yugoslavia, Southern Bulgaria, and European Turkey including Babylonia and Yemen and beyond to the Jews of India.¹³

There are opposing views as to whether or not the Oriental Jews should be included among the Sephardim.¹⁴ Itzhak, Ben-Zvi, President of the State of Israel [1952-1963], called for a more accurate definition of the terms Sephardim and

⁵ Daniel J. Elazar, *The Other Jews: The Sephardim Today*, (New York, 1989), pp.10, 20-21.

⁶ By 4 A.D., the large numbers of Jewish settlers in Spain prompted the Church Council of Elvira to pass special laws to check the friendly relations between Jews and Christians, Ruth Samuel, *Pathways Through Jewish History*, (New York, 1977), p.193.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.8.

⁸ Richard Barnett, (ed.), *The Sephardi Heritage*, Vol. I, (London, 1971), p.7; Albert Shulman, *Gateway to Judaism, An Encyclopedic Guide to the Doctrine, Ceremonies, Customs, Language and Community Life of the Jews*, Vol II, (New York, 1972), p.21.

⁹ Patai, *op. cit.*, pp.67-105; Spain produced the statesman Hisdai ibn Shaprut, the halachist Samuel ha-Nagid, the poets Moses ibn Ezra, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi and Moses Maimonides the physician, philosopher and halakhist.

¹⁰ Zacutto's estimate in *Sefer Yohasin*; estimates vary between 250,000 and 150,000. This edict officially remained in force until 1968.

¹¹ Marc Angel, *The Sephardic Journey, 'Aspects of the Sephardic Spirit'*, 1492-1992, *Catalogue 13/11/90-31/12/92* accompanying the exhibition Yeshiva University Museum, (New York, 1992).

¹² In Morocco this process was delayed many centuries, Isaac Sassoon, correspondence with author, New York, 28/8/93.

¹³ Elazar, *op. cit.*, p.20; Isaac Sassoon emphasises that in many of these countries Jews were already followers of the Babylonian traditions, with the exception of Greece which had its unique *minhagim*, Sassoon, correspondence with author, 28/8/93.

¹⁴ Issachar Ben-Ami, (ed.), *The Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage Studies*, (Jerusalem, 1982), *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago, 1971), Vol.20, pp.227-228.

Oriental Jews. He maintained that it was wrong to confuse the Jews who spoke Ladino [Judeo-Spanish], whose origins were in the Iberian peninsula, with the Oriental Jews whom he referred to as 'Jews from Islamic countries', whose vernacular was Arabic, Aramaic, or Persian.¹⁵ On the other hand, Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool, Haham of the Sephardi Jews of America, emphasised that although many of the non-Ashkenazi Jews¹⁶ of Asia had no lineal connection with Spain, their synagogue liturgy is often overwhelmingly Sephardi, and they regarded themselves as part of the Sephardi world.¹⁷ They adopted the codification of Jewish law by Rabbi Josef Caro, a Spanish refugee who settled in Sephad, *Eretz Yisrael*. Similarly, Rabbi Elie Eliachar, Vice President of the World Sephardi Federation, proclaimed before the Committee of the United Nations that: 'the denomination Sephardi, includes all Jews using the same prayer book and following the same rituals, therefore all Jews of the Oriental and Middle Eastern countries'.¹⁸ It may be argued that the label 'Sephardim' describes the entire Jewish world of Western Asia and the Mediterranean basin because historically they shared the same patterns of *halachic* expression and a common cultural base.¹⁹ This would indeed appear to be the crux of the matter.

Probably the most important distinguishing characteristic of Sephardim - including practically all Oriental Jews who lived in North Africa, Asia and the Near East and also the Yemenites - is not the specific culture acquired in any particular country of exile, but the broader issues of *halakhah* and *mishpat*, [Jewish law] community organisation, and common cultural patterns and synagogue ritual.²⁰

¹⁵ Similarly Raphael Patai traces the origins of Oriental Jews to those who, following the Assyrian or Babylonian or Roman exile from Palestine, settled in the Middle East and North Africa. Historians Cecil Roth and Joseph B. Schechtman, argue that it is misleading to use the terms Sephardim and Oriental indiscriminately and interchangeably, Henry V. Besso, 'Recent Theories on the Origins of the Sephardim', Sol Beton, (ed.), *Sephardim - A History of Congregation Or Vehshalom*, (Atlanta, 1981), p.16; Joseph Schechtman, 'Melting Pot or Cultural Synthesis', *The Alliance Review*, Winter 1962, p.14.

¹⁶ Originally applied to Jews living in Northern France, Germany, and later Scandinavian and Slavic countries. Now refers to Jews who follow the ritual developed in these regions, Theodore Reinach, *Histoire des Israélites depuis leur dispersion jusqu'à nos jours*, (Paris, 1872), *passim*.

¹⁷ Besso, *op. cit.*, pp.13-19; see also Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool, *The World of the Sephardim. A Personal Survey*, (Hertzl Institute Pamphlet No. 15), (New York, 1960), pp.5-21.

¹⁸ Besso, *op. cit.*, p.16.

¹⁹ Elazar, *op. cit.*, pp.14-17.

²⁰ Besso, *op. cit.*, pp.13-19. Sephardim have several distinctive terms in common notably *Ribbi* as opposed to the Ashkenazi, Rabbi; *Hekhal* [Aron *Hakodesh*], *Tebah* [Bimah], 'Sephardim', *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol.13, p.1171; 'The Other Jews, Sephardim and Ashkenazim: Myth and Reality', pp.14-19, 29; see also Herbert C. Dobrinsky, 'Selected Laws and Customs of Sephardic Jewry, A Teacher's Resource Manual on the Ritual Practices of the Syrian, Moroccan, Judeo-Spanish, and Spanish and Portuguese Communities in North America', Ph.D Thesis, Yeshiva University, New York, September 1980.

The Jewish Merchants of Arabia

Turkish rule in Baghdad was generally liberal towards the Jews, although there were some reverses which depended on the whims of particular Pashas.²¹ Until the early nineteenth century, a leader of the Jewish community of Baghdad was appointed Chief Treasurer *Saraf Bashi* of the local government and *Nasi* - Prince of Captivity. Under Ahmet Pasha in the reign of Abdul Hamid 1 (1773 - 1789), the office of *Saraf Bashi* was filled by Sheikh Sassoon (Sason) ben Saleh ben David (1750 - 1830), father of David Sassoon, the founder of the Sassoon dynasty in India.²² Fluent in Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic and Persian, Sheikh Sassoon supervised the Jewish community, including the funding of its religious education and provision for its many destitute. The reign of terror under Suleiman's successor, Daud Pasha, (1817 - 1831) and the persecution of the Jews prompted Sheikh Sassoon to arrange for the flight of his family to the port of Bushire on the Persian gulf.²³ An increasing number of Jews from Baghdad, Basra, and Aleppo emigrated to escape political pressures, religious persecution and to avoid conscription.²⁴

Since the late eighteenth century, Jewish traders from Mesopotamia and Syria became involved in overseas trade.²⁵ The manifest stability in the colonies under British rule and their rich trading potential, encouraged many Baghdadi Jews to settle in the East. Jews from Baghdad and Basra, a trading centre of the East India Company since 1760, played an important role in British commerce, conspicuously in the Indian trade and in the distribution of British goods in the Middle East.²⁶ David Sassoon, the founder of the Sassoon commercial empire, arrived in Bombay in 1833. In India, prominent Baghdadi families notably Sassoon, Ezra, Gubbay,

²¹ Marion Woolfson, '*Prophets in Babylon: Jews in the Arab World*', (London, 1980), p.87.

²² For a detailed record of the Sassoon family see Abraham ben Jacob, *Perakim v Toldoth Yehoudi Babel*, [Chapters and Generations of Babylonian Jewry],[Hebrew], (Jerusalem, 1989).

²³ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.6-9.

²⁴ Sassoon, *History of the Jews in Baghdad*, pp.206-207. Daud Pasha was removed from power in 1831 after which, till the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, there were some 42 *Walis* [rulers] several of whom oppressed the Jews, Myer Samra, 'Yisrael Rhammana, *Constructions of Identity among Iraqi Jews in Sydney, Australia*', Ph.D Thesis, University of Sydney, 1987, p.54 and Chap. 3.

²⁵ Baghdadi Jews traded in Manchester piece-goods. From 1850 in Manchester and London there were over 20 Baghdadi Jewish firms trading in groceries, drugs, iron, coffee, tin, loaf sugar, soft sugar, copper. They exported wool, skins, gum, carpets, Elie Kedourie, *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies*, (London, 1974), p.268.

²⁶ Thomas A. Timberg, *Jews in India*, (New York, 1986), p.28.

Abraham, Kadoorie and Elias soon became wealthy 'merchant princes', as Timberg calls them,²⁷ or acted as middlemen for the large cotton, jute and tobacco processing plants.²⁸ Initially, they traded with the Persian Gulf ports in horses and precious stones expanding to British commodities particularly wool and opium, indigo, rugs, rose water, and virtually an unlimited range of merchandise.²⁹ They eventually established economic empires with centres in Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, the Straits Settlements, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and in the West, notably in Manchester and Vienna.³⁰ Historians emphasise the business acumen of Sephardim notably of the Sassoons, around whom the economic, social, educational and religious life of the Baghdadi Jewish community revolved.³¹

Historical influences had indelibly impressed certain distinguishing characteristics on Babylonian Jews which remained wherever they settled. In Baghdad, Jews who were discriminated against as dhimmis, maintained a very strong identity as a distinct people by their religious observance.³² There were of course semblances of common culture with the Muslims notably in their dress, names and superstitions.³³ Baghdadi Jews who emigrated chose their wives from the country of their origin, an obvious way of preserving both Jewish and Baghdadi identities. However far removed from Baghdad, they continued to turn to the Baghdad Rabbanim for guidance in religious matters, ritual practice and business ethics.³⁴ Certainly until 1914 they addressed their *she'elot* to Baghdad, seeking authoritative

²⁷ They numbered fewer than 40 families among a community of some 5,000, Timberg, *op. cit.*, p.274.

²⁸ Cecil Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty*, London, 1941, p.58.

²⁹ Timberg, *op. cit.*, pp.28; 272-281.

³⁰ Elie Kedourie, 'The Jews in Baghdad in 1910', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1971, p.265; see also Kedourie, *Arabic Political Memoirs*, (London, 1974), *passim*.

³¹ Notably Benjamin J. Israel, *The Jews of India*, (New Delhi, 1982).

³² *IM*, 25/10/1937, p.15; Raphael Patai, *The Vanished Worlds of Jewry*, (New York, 1981), p.145. Also Roth, *op. cit.*, p.20.

³³ Professor Goiten argued that the symbiosis produced not merely a Jewish culture in Arabic, it was a Judaeo-Arabic or Judaeo-Islamic culture, cited in Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, London, 1981, pp.76-78 and 'The Judaeo-Islamic Tradition', Chapter 2, pp.67-106 particularly pp.77-78. In Baghdad the Muslim and Jewish dialects differed most distinctly in the phonology, morphology and vocabulary. Jews appear to have preserved the ancient local Arabic vernacular while the Muslims were influenced by other dialects notably the Bedouin. There was no migration of the Jewish population and consequently no change in its language. Moreover, whereas the Muslims took pride in the Classical Arabic language, the Jews deviated from the classical mode, Jacob Mansour, 'The Jewish Baghdadi Dialect', *Nahardea*, No.4, April 1990, pp.23-24.

³⁴ Joan Roland, *Jews in British India Identity In a Colonial Era*, (Brandeis, 1989), p.69. Abraham Ben-Yaacob, 'The Immigration of Babylonian Jews to India and Their Integration There: seen chiefly through the medium of the local Judeo-Arabic press', Ph.D., Thesis Hebrew University, Jerusalem, April 1986, [Hebrew].

pronouncements on questions of Jewish law.³⁵

Baghdadi Jews who settled in Bombay and Calcutta formed a close-knit group and preserved both Jewish and Baghdadi identities. In Baghdad the Jewish community was homogeneous as Jews from Yemen, Persia, Syria and Turkey merged with them.³⁶ In Bombay for the first time they were confronted with Jews of different traditions.³⁷ In order to distinguish themselves from the other two Jewish communities, the *Bene Israel* and the black Cochin Jews, they called themselves the 'Jewish Merchants of Arabia, inhabitants and residents of Bombay'.³⁸ An examination of their relationship with the indigenous Jewish communities clarifies why they later chose to be labelled 'Sephardim'.³⁹

Unlike their co-religionists, the Baghdadi Jews seem to have been unaffected by the culture or creed of their Indian neighbours. Baghdadi Jews had misgivings about the purity of descent and religious observance of the *Bene Israel* in Bombay and discouraged intermarriage with them.⁴⁰ As Dr. Joan Roland has observed, certain aspects of the 'Indianness' of the *Bene Israel* with regard to their customs, dress and colour contributed to the Baghdadi Jews doubts about them.⁴¹ Ironically, the religious issue proved to be the most divisive, particularly since the Baghdadi Jews maintained that they had strengthened the *Bene Israelites'* attachment to Judaism.⁴²

³⁵ The fact that they did not have a rabbi or Beth Din at this time did not prove an obstacle because they were prepared to 'write home' for a ruling, Ezekiel Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga - The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta*, (North Quincy, Mass., 1975), pp.269, 255-262.

³⁶ The term 'Baghdadi' included Jews from Syria and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, Aden and Yemen, all of whom were Arab-speaking, and even Jews from Persia and Afghanistan who were not, Roland, *op. cit.*, p.15.

³⁷ Compare A. T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia, The Background to Exclusion 1896-1923*, (Melbourne, 1964), pp.141, 163.

³⁸ David Beth-Hillel, *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands: The Travels of Rabbi David Beth Hillel 1824-1832*, (New York, 1973.), pp.119-120; Roland, *op. cit.*, p.16; Barbara Johnson, "'Our Community" in Two Worlds: The Cochin Paradesi Jews in India and Israel', Ph.D diss., (Mass., 1985); see also David Mandelbaum, 'Social Stratification among the Jews of Cochin, India and in Israel', *Jewish Social Studies*, 17:2 (1975): pp.165-209; Katz, Nathan and Goldberg, Ellen S., *The Last Jews of Cochin, Jewish Identity in Hindu India*, (South Carolina), 1993.

³⁹ *The Jewish Tribune*, [hereafter *TJT*], April 1933, p.21. It is very likely Baghdadi Jews while living in Baghdad considered themselves superior to the other Middle Eastern Jewish communities, notably in Aleppo and Morocco.

⁴⁰ Roland, *op. cit.*, pp.67-68; *TJT*, April, 1933, p.21. reprinted from the *Jewish Chronicle*, London [hereafter *JC*], 10/2/1933; D. J. Samson, 'The Purity of Descent of the *Bene Israel*', *The Israelite*, January-February, 1919, Vol. III, Nos. 1-2, and March-April, 1919, Vol. III, Nos. 3-4, pp.32-33.

⁴¹ Roland, *op. cit.*, p.65; *TJT*, April, 1933, p.21, reprinted from the *JC*, 10/2/1933; *The Israelite*, Vol. I, No. VIII, pp.149-152; D. J. Samson, 'The Purity of Descent of the *Bene Israel*', January-February, 1919, Vol. III, Nos 1-2 and March -April, 1919, Vol. III, Nos. 3-4, pp.32-33.

⁴² Memorandum by Emanuelsohn of Afghanistan, 1928, Board of Deputies of British Jews, [hereafter *BDBJ*], ACC3121/E3/512; Benjamin J. Israel, *The Jews of India*, (New Delhi, 1982), p.49.

There were also political considerations, as the racial barriers that colonialism seemed to encourage, led Baghdadis to fear that, if they were associated with the *Bene Israel* they would lower their status and hinder their own acculturation to the British.⁴³

The Sephardi Jews of Calcutta

A similar situation arose in Calcutta, the British Indian Empire's capital until 1911. Here the Baghdadis, unlike those who settled in Cochin and in Bombay, formed a dominant majority of the Jewish community.⁴⁴ In 1885 the Jewish community in Calcutta suddenly discovered that under a new government ruling only those of Armenian and *Portuguese* origin would be given European status. Identification as Sephardim, with its European connotations, held the key to Baghdadi Jews being classified as 'European'. This granted them tangible benefits: salary scales were higher than for natives, and Europeans had more business opportunities, notably bank credits.⁴⁵ In its bid to gain European status the Calcutta Baghdadi community urged the government, in June 1919, not to force them to submit to legislation intended for Indians. They argued that their lifestyle, habits, customs, traditions and aspirations were foreign to India, and asked for their status to be considered equal to that of Jews in other parts of the British Empire.⁴⁶ Sir David Ezra, a community leader, emphasised that, in common with the pure Europeans, the Jews of Bengal were foreigners in India and consequently not permanently domiciled in the country. While conceding that Jews of Middle Eastern origin were not of European origin they claimed that they did belong ethnologically to a white race.⁴⁷

Clearly then, there were strong political motives for the Baghdadi Jews not to identify with the *Bene Israel* and the Cochin Jews. As far as it was possible to do so,

⁴³ Roland, *op. cit.*, pp.65-69; 'The *Bene Israel* and the Iraquian Jew: their relationship 50 years ago', *TJT*, April, 1933, p.21; see also J. W. Gregory, *The Menace of Colour: A study of the difficulties due to the association of white and coloured races, with an account of measures proposed for their solution, and special reference to white colonization in the tropics*, (London, 1925), *passim*.

⁴⁴ In Bombay there were roughly four *Bene Israel* to every Baghdadi. In Calcutta the proportion was reversed, T.V. Parasuram, *India's Jewish Heritage*, (New Delhi, 1982), p.92.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.117.

⁴⁶ For extensive correspondence on this subject from Edward Judah to the British Board of Deputies see BDBJ, ACC3121/E3/512/1; Roland, *op. cit.*, p.115.

⁴⁷ Sir David Ezra to Sir Samuel Hoare, 27/4/32, BDBJ, ACC3121/E3/512/1; S.N. Zunian, 'A Note on the Petition of the Calcutta Jewish Community for Special Electoral Rights', suggested that to extend these privileges to them would incite the envy and hatred of the Indians and provoke anti-Semitism, 27/9/33, ACC3121/E3/512/1; Political Classification of the Sephardi Jewish Community in the India Bill Amendment Proposed by Sir Walter Smiles, 7/5/35, ACC3121/E3/512/1.

they wished to identify with their British rulers in the hope of achieving political security and social privilege.⁴⁸ After all, they had arrived in India when Britain was politically dominant and all that was Western seemed worthy of emulation. Given the close blood relationship with their co-religionists in Bombay and Calcutta, it is probable that Shanghai Jewry chose to be classified as Sephardim for similar reasons and at about the same time, around 1885.

Sephardi - Ashkenazi Divide in Shanghai

...When we associated with other Jews we thought of ourselves as the upper crust...⁴⁹

... At one time, we held the view that Shanghai was the only place where sharp divisions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim are practised...⁵⁰

The Baghdadi Jews were among the first foreign pioneers in Shanghai in the 1850s.⁵¹ There was no other Jewish community in the Treaty Port until 1905,⁵² when there were sufficient Ashkenazim, composed mainly of Russian exiles, to form their own congregation.⁵³ Although the host Jewish community allowed the newcomers to use their synagogue, and set up a fund for their relief, the entirely different cultural and socio-economic background of these Ashkenazi Jews gave them little in common with the Sephardi community, who were at pains to emphasise the distinction between them.⁵⁴ It is likely that the generic term Sephardim was employed to differentiate them from their Ashkenazi co-religionists, 'mainly because

⁴⁸ 'The stress and strain to appear as Anglified as we could be was the undercurrent that made us reject affiliation with any of the others', Rose Horowitz, correspondence with author, Los Angeles, 12/5/93.

⁴⁹ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

⁵⁰ *IM*, 3/2/1933, p.20; for the evolution of the terms Ashkenazi and Sephardi to denote respectively German/French Jews and 'Sephardi' Jews see, Samuel Kraus, '*Hashemos Ashkenaz Usfarad*', *Tarbiz* III (1932), pp.423-435.

⁵¹ There were 175 Baghdadi Jews in China in 1895, probably not including women and children. They were merchants dealing in thread, cotton, opium and brokerage, Jacob b. Abraham b. Sudea, '*Qissat Millat Yahud Bilad Arab fi Matarih al-Chin*', cited by Norman Stillman, in *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, New York, 1991. p.206.

⁵² The first wave of Russian Jewish refugees to China was from 1895-1904, *Kranzler, op. cit.*, p.57.

⁵³ Several continued to pray in the Sephardi synagogues, Alan D. Corre, 'The 60 Percent Minority', *The Sephardic World*, 1,2, pp.18-20.

⁵⁴ See for example, 'Sephardim and Ashkenazim Compare Notes', *IM*, 1/10/32, p.19; 2/9/32, p.14; Heskell M. Haddad, *op. cit.*, Chap.8, p.95; Edward Ezra was Chairman of the Committee for the Relief of Russian Jews. There were notable donations from the two Sassoon firms, *IM*, 1/12/1905, p.13; compare the problems encountered by the United Synagogue with the vast influx of European Jewish immigrants to the East End of London, Aubrey Newman, *The United Synagogue 1870-1970*, (London, 1977), pp.66-75.

they were poles apart culturally, and considered themselves racially superior'.⁵⁵ 'An Open Letter to Shanghai Jewry' from Conrad Levy, one of the leaders of the community, provides an insight into the prejudices which in the early 1920s threatened to become the 'latest farce of Shanghai':

... a section of our Community draw a distinction between European and Eastern Jews, labelling the former Ishkinasi and the latter Arabians. Ishkinasi used in a sense of superiority seems to have been based entirely on what has recently been termed the colour line. On the other hand, Arabian Jews retort, with more vehemence than sagacity, on the laxity of ethics and lack of moral fibre among European Jews...⁵⁶

In fact the Sephardim do not differ in the basic tenets of Judaism from the Ashkenazim who hailed from northern Europe, both groups officially recognise the Babylonian Talmud as their ultimate authority. In Jewish law and practice, however, there are notable divergences. The Sephardim follow Rabbi Joseph Caro's [Maran] *Shulhan Arukh*,⁵⁷ in matters of religious law. By the late sixteenth century their interpretation of it became more liberal than the rigid interpretation of Moses Isserles [Rama] adhered to by the Ashkenazim.⁵⁸ There are also differences in the synagogue liturgy, melodies and in the pronunciation of certain Hebrew vowels; the Sephardim keeping closer to the original.⁵⁹ In Ottoman Palestine in the nineteenth century non-Ashkenazim were classified as Sephardim, in a sweeping simplification, to distinguish between the Eastern and Western communities.⁶⁰ This separation became accentuated when the Sephardi Chief Rabbi in Jerusalem, the *Rishon le-Sion*, was

⁵⁵ *IM*, 19/1/1921, p.36, 2/11/28, p.5, and 1/10/1931, p.15. Samuel Mosieff refers to their 'snobbishness', *TJT*, March 1938, p.8. The distinctions between them range from anthropological and sociological to differences of custom in the observance of religious laws. There is almost no department in which they do not differ, Rabbi Dr. H.J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim their Relations, Differences and Problems as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa*, (London, 1958), pp.2-9; Jacobs, Louis, 'The Responsa of Rabbi Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad', in Arthur A. Chiel (ed.), *Perspectives on Jews and Judaism, Essays in honour of Wolfe Kelman*, (New York, 1978).

⁵⁶ *IM*, 11/2/1921, p.13. The impact on Sephardi identity made by the Russian Jewish immigrants will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

⁵⁷ First printed in Venice, 1565, a widely known and popular codification of the Talmud by Rabbi Josef Caro, [1488-1575].

⁵⁸ 'The Rise of the Ashkenazi Tradition, Gubbay, *op. cit.*, p.22; R. Caro who hoped to unite Jewry based his codification on the writings of Maimonides (Spain), Alfasi (Morocco), Asher (Germany). Yet it entrenched divisions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The latter attacked it until Isserles added a glossary distinguishing between Sephardi and Ashkenazi practice, Samra, *op. cit.*, p.80.

⁵⁹ These differences became widespread from the 15th century, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol.13, columns 1128-1130.

⁶⁰ Gubbay, *The Sephardim*, p.10.

recognised officially as the *Hakham Bashi* in 1842. The establishment of a dual Ashkenazi-Sephardi Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem by the British after World War I, prompted all non-Ashkenazi oriental communities to affiliate with the Sephardi Chief Rabbinate. Arguably this was a crucial factor in substantiating Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews' classification as Sephardim.⁶¹ The distinction between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was compounded with the affiliation of Shanghai Sephardim to the Zionist Organisation in 1903. The Zionist authorities clearly classified Shanghai Baghdadi Jews as Sephardim.⁶²

Decline of Baghdad as a Centre of Judaism

...Baghdad to us is no longer a centre of inspiration...we dare not take our cue from Baghdad, without imperilling our spiritual status...Our roots are not there any longer... We must therefore, look elsewhere for inspiration...⁶³

The adoption of the generic term Sephardim by Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews may have been promoted by the decline of Baghdad as a centre of Judaism after the death of one of its most illustrious rabbis, Hakham Josef Hayeem in 1909.⁶⁴ The religious and spiritual centre after the Great War moved to Jerusalem.⁶⁵ By the mid-1920s rabbis in Baghdad lost their role as leaders of the community in all but name. This was attributed by some observers to the spread of Western education in the city.⁶⁶ The real leadership was in the hands of small groups of propertied men whose political influence enabled them to assist their co-religionists.

Shanghai Jews watched the situation of their relatives in Baghdad with intense

⁶¹ Leon Fram, 'Why do Sephardic Jews refuse to unite themselves with Ashkenazic Jews', cited from the *Detroit JC, IM*, 2/11/28, p.5; 'Initiative Taken by the Ashkenazi Community', *IM*, 2/9/1932, p.14 and 'Sephardim and Ashkenazim - An Unnecessary Distinction', 3/3/33, p.20.

⁶² This is discussed more fully in Chapter Seven

⁶³ *IM*, 1/6/34, p.5.

⁶⁴ 'The Struggle in Baghdad', *TJT*, December, 1937, p.6.

⁶⁵ Dr. Zvi Yehuda, an authority on Baghdadi Jews, argues that what was perceived as a spiritual decline in Baghdad, was related to the moving of the Rabbinical Centre from Baghdad to *Eretz Yisrael*, and also to the attempts at modernising the organisation of the Jewish community. It was not connected with political reasons. The *Rishon Le-Sion* were all of Baghdadi origin, even today - Haham Obadiah Yosef, Zvi Yehuda, interview by author, Or Yehuda, 8/10/93.

⁶⁶ H.J. Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860-1972*, (New York, 1973), p.160. For an insight into the way the Baghdadi Jewish community first addressed itself to the question of acculturation to the West see Zvi Yehuda, 'Babylonian Jewry and Cultural Changes in the Educational Activities of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*' [AIU hereafter], *Babylonian Jewry I*, Autumn 1993; Elie Kedourie, *op. cit.*, pp.73-80.

interest: 'to us Baghdad is semi-Zion'.⁶⁷ The *Israel's Messenger* augured the spiritual decline of Baghdad Jewry when the Chief Rabbi, Ezra Dangoor, was ousted in 1926, and the new 'Law of the Jewish Community' in 1931 sanctioned non-religious persons to assume leadership. The anti-religious campaign was conducted by Sassoon Murad with the full support of the Chief Rabbi Sassoon Khedoury who assumed leadership of the Jewish community.⁶⁸ The *Israel's Messenger* urged Shanghai Jews to turn to the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Hertz, to the Haham Dr. Gaster,⁶⁹ or to Dr. Leo Jung, of the United States to 'remove the cursed *inferiority complex* from our midst'...[author's emphasis].⁷⁰ Israel Cohen, the Zionist leader, remarked: 'Undoubtedly the rabbis of Baghdad have caused incalculable mischief and great harm to the cause of Judaism and the solidarity of Israel'.⁷¹

It is significant that in 1919 Shanghai Sephardim approached Rev. Dr. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of England, to choose a suitable rabbi for their community.⁷² In 1923 when his nominee, Rabbi Hirsch, resigned, Dr. Hertz was asked to find a replacement. Little heed was paid to the one member of the committee who suggested that a rabbi should be 'imported from Palestine or Baghdad'.⁷³ The efforts of Shanghai's Sephardim in 1933 to arrange for Jewish youth from Iraq to go to London or New York to be trained as rabbis are indeed significant.⁷⁴ This probably reflects their desire to become acculturated to the British as much as their belief that Baghdad was no longer a religious centre.

⁶⁷ 'Our Baghdad Letter is always read with interest', *IM*, 6/11/25, p.17, and 2/10/21, p.18.

⁶⁸ *IM*, 7/2/30, p.16, and 1/8/31, p.1; Nissim Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq: 3,000 years of History and Culture*, (London, 1985), pp.219-220..

⁶⁹ The Rumanian born head of the Sephardi community in London, 1867-1918.

⁷⁰ *IM*, 1/5/33, p.1; 'A Crisis in Baghdad Jewry : Betrayal of Confidence by Chief Rabbi', *IM*, 6/9/29, p.13 and 7/2/30, p.16. David Kazzan, a Baghdadi-born psychiatrist, argues that the sense of pride and self confidence that the Baghdadi Jews felt *vis-à-vis* the Arabs was replaced by a feeling of inferiority when they came in contact with technically educated and sophisticated Europeans. Feelings of inadequacy led them to disclaim their original identity and culture, leaving later generations little pride in their roots, 'Self-Identity of the Iraqi Jews in Iraq and Israel', *Nehardea*, No.4, April 1990, pp.17-18.

⁷¹ *TJT*, November, 1935, p.12; Khedoury in 1929 notified the Iraqi leaders that the rabbis of Baghdad were ardent supporters of Zionism, whose chief aim was to overthrow the Arab Government and to destroy the Muslims. The official institutions of the Jewish community had to be detached from the underground Zionist movement in Iraq to ensure its safety, Davide Sala, 'Rabbi Sassoon Khezuri, President of the Iraqi Jewish Community', *Nehardea*, No.3, June, 1988, pp.29-30; Shanghai Sephardim naturally were strongly opposed to Iraq's rapprochement with Nazi Germany in 1934.

⁷² *IM*, 4/7/1919, p.7.

⁷³ *IM*, 8/6/23, p.1 and 9/11/23, pp.12-13.

⁷⁴ In 1923, J.S. Abraham left Shanghai to study for the Rabbinate at the Jews' College. After an intensive training he took up a position with the Egyptian Government, much to the disappointment of the community, *IM*, 1/7/1933, p.1.

The World Confederation of Sephardic Jews

...to unify the traditions and stimulate interest in the ancient glory of Sefardi Judaism we need Western Jewry to co-operate with Eastern Jewry...⁷⁵

Several contemporary publications erroneously referred to the Sassoons as being descendants of the Ibn Shoshan family who emigrated in the twelfth century from Toledo to Baghdad.⁷⁶ It is nevertheless true that several Shanghai Sephardi families did have some ancestors of Spanish origin.⁷⁷ When the Spanish Consul in Shanghai published King Alphonso's decree of December 1924 permitting Sephardi Jews to become Spanish subjects,⁷⁸ four Shanghai Baghdadi Jews, with their families, were registered on the direction of the Spanish Minister at Beijing.⁷⁹ It was expedient for Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews to assert a European pedigree and to be associated with the Spanish community. After World War I Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews travelled frequently to England, and many attended the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Bevis Marks, where members of the Sassoon family held office.⁸⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century its prayer books were used by several Shanghai Sephardim in preference to those from Baghdad.⁸¹ There were only slight differences in their respective liturgy and intonation.⁸²

Curiously the *Israel's Messenger*, replete with references to the Golden Era of the Sephardim in Spain, seldom refers to the past preeminence of Babylonian

⁷⁵ *IM*, 1/6/1935, p.1; see also 'Sephardi Jewry's Opportunity', *The Jewish Advocate*, February, 1933.

⁷⁶ For example *IM*, 1/5/32, p.2; *TJT*, November, 1939, p.3, and Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.2; 'Pedigree of the Sassoon Family', *JC*, 17/5/12, p.23.

⁷⁷ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

⁷⁸ The offer remained open until December 1930, *IM*, 5/3/1926, p.10. The Spanish government even offered land and money for a European Jewish University and sent delegates to Sephardi Jews. 'Spain and Jewry', *IM*, 3/4/1925, p.1. Professor Herman Salamon and Isaac Sassoon have pointed out that this fact was not generally known to scholars of Spanish Jewish history, Isaac Sassoon, correspondence with author, New York, 2/2/93.

⁷⁹ N.E.B. Ezra's registration as a Spanish protégé is dated 30/1/23, *IM*, 15/2/25, and 7/5/26, p.14; Alphonso requested Jews to return to Spain, Julio Palencia, [Consul for Spain in Shanghai from October 1916 - August 1920 and then from June 1923], to the editor, *IM*, 10/3/25, p.18.

⁸⁰ For example Reuben Sassoon, *JC*, 10/3/1905, p.10; see also retrospective article in *TJT*, November, 1939, p.3.

⁸¹ With the spread of prayer books printed in Europe especially in Leghorn [Livorno] Italy, communities not of Spanish origin, became in effect Sephardim in their liturgy, A. C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, (Melbourne, 1974), p.345; Samra, *op. cit.*, p.80; 'It will come as a surprise that our [Baghdadi] ritual differs from that of Haham Gaster's which we were wont to follow and look upon as our own', *IM*, 6/4/1923, p.7; H. Pereira Mendes, [Minister of the Sephardi Synagogue in Central Park West, New York, grandson of Rev. D.A. de Sola, minister of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, London], *Ruach Hayim (The Spirit of Life) or Jewish Daily Life Ethically Presented*, (New York, 1917), Book No. 960, Shelf D.4, in the Shanghai Jewish Library, *Ohel Rachel Synagogue*, by courtesy of H. Rabinowitz.

⁸² Toueg, interview by author, Herzlia, 2/5/93.

Jewry.⁸³ Not surprisingly, the community warmly welcomed an invitation to affiliate with the Union of Sephardic congregations, launched at a Conference at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York in 1929 to promote the unification of the Sephardim throughout the East. A uniform Sephardic prayer book, trained Sephardic rabbis, and competent *hazanim* were among the immediate goals of the union.⁸⁴ This invitation is indicative of the enthusiasm with which world Sephardim welcomed the Baghdadi Jews to their fold.⁸⁵ Shanghai's Sephardim hailed the formation of a World Confederation of Sephardic Jews in 1932, as an opportunity to restore the glories of Sephardic Jewry and its prominence in world Jewry. Its President Moses de Picciotto and Vice-President, Dr. N. Ovadio, Grand Rabbi of the Sephardic community in Paris, appealed for unity among the isolated Sephardi communities, and more active participation in the activities of world Jewry.⁸⁶

It has been shown above that there is justification in referring to the Baghdadi Jews of Shanghai as 'Sephardim'. In Bombay they adopted the title 'Jewish Merchants of Arabia, inhabitants and residents in Bombay', and later 'Sephardim', in order to be differentiated from the other two Jewish communities in their bid to acquire European status, and the important political, legal, economic and social benefits which it conferred.⁸⁷ They aspired to achieve a status on a par with Jewish subjects in other parts of the British Empire. Similarly, in the milieu of the International Settlement, where Europeans were the elite, they believed that it would be more prestigious to be linked with the illustrious Jews of Spanish origin, notably Montefiore and Mocatta.⁸⁸ Indeed, some Shanghai Sephardim recall being called

⁸³ *IM*, 6/6/1924, p.6; 'Sephardim Jews, Wake Up! Let not the Glory of the Golden Era in Spain be eclipsed and fade forever', *IM*, 4/2/1927, p.1; *IM*, 4/10/1929, p.18; 'To Restore Glory of Sephardi Judaism', *IM*, 2/9/1932, p.5 and 1/6/1935, p.1.

⁸⁴ *IM*, 4/10/29, p.18. Attempts to unify Sephardi Jews throughout the East began in 1924, *IM*, 5/12/1924, p.6.

⁸⁵ Dr. David de Sola Pool was elected President. Perhaps their awareness of the eclipse of Sephardi Jewry led them to believe that by joining forces the Sephardim could stem the decline, *IM*, 4/10/1929, p.18. 'An invitation to Shanghai Jewry from abroad'; 'The Re-awakening of Sephardi Jews', *IM*, 12/1924, p.6.

⁸⁶ *IM*, 2/9/32, p.5; Sir Elly served as President of the Union Sephardite in Paris, W.J. Blackie, *Kadoorie: Agricultural Aid Association 1951-1971*, (Hong Kong, 1972), p.2.

⁸⁷ Beth-Hillel, *op. cit.*, pp.119-120. In 1935 the Indian Government defined European as 'a person whose father and any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is of European race and who is not a native of India as defined in Section Six of the Government of India Act, 1870.

⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie made a donation of £2,000 for a synagogue in Oporto, 'Upholding Family Traditions', *IM*, 1/5/33, p.20; Gubbay, *op. cit.*, p.39.

'Arabian' pejoratively by their Russian co-religionists.⁸⁹ By 1905 there were enough Ashkenazim, mostly Russian, to form their own congregation. Their vastly different cultural, socio-economic backgrounds, compounded by distinctions in Jewish law and practice, reinforced their adoption of the generic term 'Sephardim'. Furthermore, the Zionist authorities categorised the Baghdadi Jews as Sephardim in distinguishing between the Sephardi-Ashkenazi contribution to *Eretz Yisrael*. Probably the term Sephardi was adopted also because of the decline of Baghdad as a centre of Judaism, after the death of Hakham Joseph Hayeem in 1909. Most importantly the Union of Sephardi Congregations welcomed Shanghai Sephardim to affiliate with them and hailed the formation of a World Confederation of Sephardic Jews in 1932. The term Sephardi has developed in its meaning so that it can now legitimately allude to Jews who, though not of Spanish origin, adopted Rabbi Caro's religious code, or to all non-Ashkenazi Jews. Its usage indiscriminately traverses the accepted ideas of race, culture and region.⁹⁰

Kaifeng: The Orphan Colony

...Notwithstanding the fact that we love the country in which we dwell, and feel grateful for the shelter given us, we have nevertheless not adopted 'Chinese practice' nor 'imbibed Chinese culture'. We are, as we were, Jewish to the core.⁹¹

Shanghai Sephardim had before them the examples of the Kaifeng Jews who had become assimilated and lost to Judaism because of isolation from the other centres of Jewish life, a lack of religious teachers and above all, intermarriage.⁹² Clearly, assimilation gained a foothold in a genial host community, as no defensive response was necessary: 'what a responsibility for our communal elders to shoulder! The fate of the ancient Kaifengfoo Jewish community will surely overtake ...the Shanghai Jewish colony'.⁹³

⁸⁹ 'The Russians labelled us '*Arabski Yevrei*' [Arab Jews] which infuriated the Sephardim', Sassoon Jacoby, 'Jews in Pre-Mao China', *Jerusalem Post*, 20/2/76.

⁹⁰ Samra, *op. cit.*, pp.80-86.

⁹¹ *IM*, 1/12/1922, p.10.

⁹² *IM*, 6/6/1924, p.6.

⁹³ *IM*, 2/9/1932, p.1.

Of the many Jewish enclaves which were once dispersed throughout China, only the settlement of Kaifeng [Pien-liang] in Henan [Honan] province survived as a structured community of some 1,000 to 2000, who had come to Asia.⁹⁴ The respect of these merchants for tradition, scholarship and age struck a common chord with the tolerance and cult of ancestor worship of the Chinese.⁹⁵ They were differentiated as members of an Islamic sect *T'iao-chin-chiao* [the religion which plucks the sinews].⁹⁶ Fortified initially by their religious teachers and scriptures they had brought with them, they retained their faith and culture.⁹⁷ The community boasted a synagogue, [the Temple of the Pure and True]⁹⁸ which probably explains why it preserved its identity after the disappearance of some other Jewish enclaves in Hangzhou and Ningxia. In the synagogue precinct were to be found ritual baths, a slaughtering-ground, classrooms, a kitchen and several apartments for the community's religious leaders, all essential for the preservation of their religion. As late as the sixteenth century the synagogue ritual was identical with that followed by Yemenite Jews, laid down by Maimonides in *Yad Hachazaka*. Concurrently they adopted the Chinese mode of preparation for worship. To the side of the altar stood an inscription of a prayer for the Emperor and there were stelae similar to those found in the Chinese places of worship.⁹⁹ Shanghai Jews believed that the total isolation of the Kaifeng Jews from the important centres of Judaism since the sixteenth century, when China was cut off from the West by the Ming dynasty, augured the demise of the small Jewish community. A community has to be able to

⁹⁴ An inscription of 1512 indicates that the Jewish immigration on a large scale into China took place during the Han Dynasty, second century B.C. The Kaifeng colony possibly came into existence in the middle of the eleventh century. Donald Daniel Leslie, is the world authority on the Kaifeng Jews. For an overall history of the community see Leslie, *The Survival of the Chinese Jews: the Jewish Community of Kaifeng*, (Leiden, 1972); Michael Pollak, *Mandarins, Jews and Missionaries, The Jewish Experience in the Chinese Empire*, (Philadelphia, 1983); Joseph Dehergne and Donald Daniel Leslie, Dehergne, *Juifs de Chine: à travers la correspondance inédite des jésuits du dix-huitième siècle*, (Rome and Paris, 1984).

⁹⁵ For a comparison between Confucius 'Five Ching' and the Pentateuch see Jacob Alkew, *In Many Worlds*, (New York, 1985), p.150;

⁹⁶ Genesis, 32:25-33, relates Jacob's struggle with the Angel at Peniel, commemorated by not eating the thigh muscle; part of the laws of *Kashrut*. The spelling was *Tiao Jing Jaw* in Li's account, [undated] in Philip Cowan Papers, [hereafter PCP].

⁹⁷ Irene Eber, 'The Jews of Kaifeng: Their Implantation into Chinese Culture and Adherence to Jewish Identity', [Hebrew] *P'e'amim*, 4 1 (1990), pp.65-89; Burton Padoll, 'A Study of the Liturgy of the Jews of Kai Feng Fu', M.A. Thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1957.

⁹⁸ Constructed in 1163, the synagogue was rebuilt in 1289 and again in 1654, N.E.B. Ezra, 'The Remnants of the Jews in China', (Shanghai, 13/1/1903), Unpublished, p.20, PCP, NCH, 7/6/24, p.371.

⁹⁹ Emanuel M. Cohen, 'The Jews in China: With Particular Attention to the Colony at Kaifengfu', BDBJ, ACC3121/C11/12/5, Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.22.

generate theological interest in religion or its traditions become empty. There were other erosive factors: the Kaifeng Jews lived in an open and tolerant society, with an absence of political and economic restraints.¹⁰⁰ Jews were appointed to the country's most prestigious posts in education, the civil service and in the armed forces, which required intensive study of the classic texts of Confucius, at the expense of Judaic studies.¹⁰¹ Perhaps, most importantly, their *Torah* and prayer books were not translated into Chinese and, as their knowledge of Hebrew declined, they lost access to the Mosaic Law:

...the wonder, indeed, is not that the Chinese Jews have virtually lost their racial identity but that they have withstood the process of assimilation so long...¹⁰²

The astonishing resilience of the small community was shown by the fact that it had been in existence for at least ten centuries.¹⁰³

The Mongol conquest of China marked an important stage in the assimilation of the Kaifeng Jews into Chinese society.¹⁰⁴ Even the Ming dynasty, which succeeded the Mongol, granted the Jews all the rights of Chinese citizenship. Foreign males, however, were required by law to take Chinese wives. In 1421 the government recognised the Jews' right to adopt Chinese surnames and by 1489 all of them had done so. Judah became Chou; Levi, Li; Benjamin, Chin; Nehamia, Nish. An inscribed stone pillar in 1481 reveals the extent to which the Kaifeng Jews

¹⁰⁰ Further reasons for their assimilation are suggested in, D. Macgillivray, 'The Jews of Honan', *The Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (Shanghai, 1928); compare Barbara Johnson, 'Cochin Jews and K'aifeng Jews: Some Thoughts on Caste, Clan, 'Communities and Conversion', Unpublished paper submitted for the Harvard Symposium, August, 1992.

¹⁰¹ Michael Pollak, *The Jews of Kaifeng, The Sect Which Plucks Out the Sinews*, Beth Hatefusoth, (Tel Aviv, 1984), pp.1-5; Wendy Robin Abraham, 'The Role of Confucian and Jewish Educational values in the Assimilation of the Chinese Jews of Kiaifeng,' Ph.D. Thesis Columbia University, N.Y., 1989.

¹⁰² Charles Levermore, quoted in *IM*, 4/6/26, p.11, from Sopher's preface dated 3/3/25 to Edward Ezra's 75-page publication, *Chinese Jews*, (Shanghai, 1926); the *Israel's Messenger* regretted that the book was 'consigned to flames at the eleventh hour'. Sopher was rebuked for allowing his 'personal feeling to be injected when the publication was passing through the *China Press*', of which he was Managing Director. It was hoped that the Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews would pay for the book to be published, 'Scribe' to the editor, *IM*, 2/7/26, p.14. Note the title of Leslie's work *The Survival of the Chinese Jews*. [author's emphasis].

¹⁰³ 'The more one thinks of it the more one feels what a miracle their continuous existence has been,' Bishop White, 'The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng', *Church Missionary Review*, June, 1921; cited in David A. Brown, 'Brown Meets the Chinese Jews', *CZA*, A213/8/126, p.199; they maintained a separate existence for 18 centuries, White cited in J. Preuss, *The Chinese Jews of Kai feng-fu*, p.30.

¹⁰⁴ Song Nai Rhee, 'Jewish Assimilation: The Case of the Chinese Jews', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 15(1973), pp.115-126.

assimilated Chinese values. They venerated Confucius as a great moral teacher and emphasised the similarities in the ethical principles of Judaism and Confucianism.¹⁰⁵ They adopted the Chinese custom of ancestor worship, and from Taoism a belief in evil spirits.¹⁰⁶ In striking contrast, in the early seventeenth century Kaifeng Jews resisted efforts to convert them by the Italian Jesuits, Matteo Ricci and his successors and attempts to remove the scrolls from the synagogue.¹⁰⁷

Shanghai's Jewry's interest in the Kaifeng Jews was stimulated when a letter from Rev. Timothy Richard, 28 December, 1898, informed E. M. Ezra that a *Sefer Torah* purchased by the Jesuits had been housed in their mission at Zikawei [Hsu-chia-wei].¹⁰⁸ The spectacle of this precious scroll 'in the hands of those that are not of the seed of Israel', galvanised the Sephardi Jews into taking immediate steps to rescue the remnant of the Orphan Colony. The Boxer Uprising made travel to the interior of China dangerous and stymied their efforts to establish links with Kaifeng.¹⁰⁹ 'Some energetic members' who volunteered to go to Kaifeng¹¹⁰ were warned that foreign feeling was too strong and that their 'presence would rouse anger, and excite the gentile among whom you dwell'. Significantly, Kaifeng Jews appeared to be 'afraid to avow themselves Jews', possibly because they feared their Muslim neighbours.¹¹¹ The lack of funds was a crucial consideration, as heavy expenses

¹⁰⁵ G.P. Von Mollendorf, 'Das Chinesische Familienrecht', notes the striking similarities between 'Family Customs of the Chinese and the Jews', cited in *IM*, 18/9/1908, pp.10-11.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, 'The Jews in China', BDBJ, ACC3121/C11/12/5.

¹⁰⁷ Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.19; interesting contemporary articles on the Kaifeng Jews appeared in *NCH*, 3/10/1879, p.321, 18/1/1851, p.111, 8/2/1851, p.98 and 12/7/1851, p.198.

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of meeting, 14/5/1900, p.2, and Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.32, PCP; M. Pollak, *The Discovery of a Missing Chinese Torah Scroll*, (Dallas, 1973) and 'Looking for Lost Books', *Points East*, [hereafter *PE*], 1.1 (January, 1986), p.2; For a detailed account of the visits to Kaifeng by foreigners between 1850 and 1902 see Edward Ezra, 'Chinese Jews', *The East of Asia Magazine*, 1902, pp.278-296; Perlmann, 'The Jews of China', printed in *NCH*, 2/1/1909, pp. 35-38; Address by Dr. D. MacGillivray, reported in *NCH*, 10/12/27, p.446; E.M. Berthel, letter to the editor, Shanghai, 19/5/24, *NCH*, 24/5/24, p.305. Chinese delegates were sent by Anglican Bishop Smith from Shanghai to visit the Jewish community in Kaifeng, Leslie, *Survival*, pp.56-59, 186-188, and pp.61-66. In 1851, two Kaifeng Jews visited Shanghai, Hyman Kublin, (ed.), *Jews in Old China: Some Western Views*, (New York, 1971), p.247.

¹⁰⁹ *IM*, 1/11/24, p.10. 'Foreign clothing...calls forth nasty expressions', Robert Powell to S. J. Solomon, 2/4/1900, cited in Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.5. PCP; 'Kaifengfu was not then quite [sic] safe place to travel in, Powell's address to the meeting of the Society, Minutes, 25/8/1900, PCP.

¹¹⁰ G. Shekury, a committee member postponed his trip to Kaifeng because political troubles made travel in Henan unsafe, Sion A Levy, Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews, Report [undated], PCP. For a good description of the strength of anti-foreign feeling in Henan see 1909-1910 in Sir Meyrick Hewlett, *Forty Years In China*, (London, 1944), pp.59-71.

¹¹¹ Ezra, *Remnants*, p.32. Deep hostility of the Muslims towards the Jews is described in Oliver Bainbridge, 'The Chinese Jews' cited in *IM*, 19/10/1906, pp.8-9; 12-13, [particularly p.9.]; 'Bainbridge at the Lyceum Theatre', 20/10/1905, pp.12-13; Bainbridge, *National Geographic Magazine*, (Washington, October 1907).

would have been incurred in sending a delegate from Shanghai.¹¹² Moreover, the inordinately long time it took to communicate with the Kaifeng colony dampened the ardour of the Sephardim.¹¹³ Powell reported that the ‘representatives of your Most Ancient Nation’, were indistinguishable from their Muslim neighbours. There were eight families bearing seven names: Li, [two families bore the name Li] Ai, Chao, Suh, Shih, Kao; comprising one hundred and fifty persons, living in some forty houses. At one time the most influential people in the town, they were now poor and their numbers had dwindled because of internal dissension. ‘They bear anything but an honorable name, being for the most part fortune tellers and gamblers’.¹¹⁴

A letter to Powell dated 1 May 1900 requested him to persuade three or four of the Kaifeng Jews to visit Shanghai. Enclosed was an historic letter, written in Hebrew, addressed to the Jewish community of Kaifeng, brethren in faith, dated the ‘3rd of the week, the 12 day of *Adar* II 5660’¹¹⁵ signed by S.J. Solomon, D.E.J. Abraham and forty-four members; ‘almost all the members of the Jewish Community of Shanghai.’¹¹⁶ It records their enthusiasm to do all in their power to help their co-religionists. They begged them not to part with their *Sifrei Torah*:

...now verily sorrow and anxiety filled our hearts when we read these evil tidings, that affliction and want have brought you to this pass, so that *Shabbaths* and Festivals are forgotten, and that you are becoming mixed up with the heathen around you, and that you forsake the covenant and the way your forefathers have walked for two thousand years in this land of your settlement...¹¹⁷

¹¹² The ‘one great factor’ which prevented the committee from sending a mission to Kaifeng was ‘insufficiency of funds’, Lewis Moore, a Jew who hailed from Birmingham, to the members of the Society, 23/6/1902; see also Simon A. Levy, [undated] Report, PCP.

¹¹³ *IM*, 1/1/1933, p.8; Shanghai Jews sent a letter by a native messenger to Kaifeng about the middle of August 1899 received a reply from Li King Sheng [spelling taken from the document, Li Ching-sheng] and Li En Ting addressed ‘To the Elders of the Same Race’, on 24/10/1900, cited in a report by S. J. Solomon, 30/10/1900 and in Ezra, *op. cit.*, PCP; The letter of 13/11/1900 received a reply on 5/4/1901, Robert Powell’s address to the Society, 25/8/1900, p.10, PCP.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.10.

¹¹⁵ Solomon to Cowan, 1/5/1900, PCP. The Hebrew date was used in all their correspondence with the Kaifeng Jews, stressing the solidarity of Jewry. Ironically, for the Kaifeng Jews it was a useless exercise. Donald Leslie points out that the Hebrew date [of creation], which they used, was not a date ever used by the Kaifeng community, which had used the Seleucid calendar, starting in 326, B.C., Leslie, correspondence with author, Curtin, Australia, 15/1/94.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of Meeting, 14/5/1900, PCP; Copy of the confirmation of signatures to the Hebrew letter in PCP. See Illustration, p.67. The letter was translated into Chinese by Rev. Dr. J. Edkins of the IM Customs.

¹¹⁷ See an English translation of Solomon’s letter, 13/3/1900, in PCP, also in Kublin, *op. cit.*, pp.116-117; Michael Pollak, *Mandarins*, pp. 210-211; *JC*, 22/6/1900, p.21; for an English translation of the reply to their letter from Li-Ching-sheng, see *JC*, 7/6/1901, p.11.

There could be no more positive proof of the strong Jewish identity of these forty-four Sephardi signatories. They believed that the Kaifeng Jews were also Sephardim, 'descendants of the same stock'.¹¹⁸ Their offers of help were undeniably sincere and generous. They were willing to collect money to rebuild the synagogue, to send a teacher to instruct them, and to help them to come to Shanghai where they would be taught a trade:

...all that you may require we will endeavour to supply you with, for there are in this city men of our faith-great and wealthy, men of affairs and business, who can help you to maintain yourselves and your sons and daughters.¹¹⁹

It was at the suggestion of Solomon that the Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews came into being, [*Haverath Lezrath Benai Israel ha Sini*].¹²⁰ The Society's objectives were to bring back to Judaism 'our forlorn and forsaken brethren in Kaifengfu', to study their origins, development and history, and to preserve their sites and monuments. A subscription was fixed at one dollar per month to be paid by each member either monthly or quarterly in advance.¹²¹ Dr. Herman Adler Chief Rabbi of England, [1891-1911]¹²² who 'very much appreciated' all that had been done¹²³ considered the Hebrew letter 'most appropriate' and hoped that it would be met by their brethren in the 'same spirit of brotherly love and loyalty with which it has been sent'.¹²⁴

On Saturday 17 Nisan 5661 (6 April, 1901), the Chinese messenger who

¹¹⁸ *IM*, 3/6/1927, p.32.

¹¹⁹ The letter dated 13/3/1900 was destroyed by Boxers. A reply to the second reached Shanghai on 24/10/1900, PCP; Copy of letter in Ezra *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹²⁰ Marcus Adler, who in his lecture on 17/6/1900 had used words similar to the title, convinced the Society that the Hebrew was correct, despite criticism from S. Joseph of Hong Kong, Minutes of the meeting of the Society, 15/8/1900, p.7, PCP; seventeen members had agreed to serve on the committee, but at Edward Ezra's suggestion the number was limited to seven: L. Moore, [President], Simon A. Levy, [Vice President], D.E.J. Abraham, E. Ezra, J. Judah, G.I. Shekury, [Hon. Treasurer], S.J. Solomon [Hon. Secretary], Minutes of the second ordinary General Meeting, 1/7/1902, p.3, PCP; Solomon to Kaifeng Jews, 13/11/1900, informed them that the Society had been formed, [Letter translated by Dr. J. Edkins], PCP.

¹²¹ Minutes of meeting, 14/5/1900, p.5, PCP. By January 1925 membership fees were reduced drastically to \$5.00 per annum presumably to attract more members. *IM*, 1/11/1924, p.10.

¹²² Solomon to Adler, 26/7/1900, 2/5/1900 and 7/5/1900, PCP; Solomon sent Adler Jerome Tobar's, '*Inscriptions Juives de K'ai-fong-fou*, Varieties Sinologues No.17, published by the Catholic Mission at the Zikawei Observatory, Moore to Adler, Shanghai, 2/5/1900, PCP.

¹²³ Minutes of the meeting of the Society, 20/8/1900, p.6, PCP.

¹²⁴ Handwritten minutes of a meeting on 14/5/1900, PCP; Grand Rabbin, M. Zadoc Kahn, Paris to Solomon and H. Adler to Solomon, 19/6/1900, PCP; Solomon to H. Adler, 2/5/1900, 7/5/1900, 26/7/1900; Moore to H. Adler, 1/5/1900; H. Adler to Solomon, 19/6/1900; Marcus Adler to Solomon, 22/6/1900, PCP; Gaster to Solomon, 31/12/1900, cited in Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.29.

carried their letter to Kaifeng returned to Shanghai accompanied by Li King Sheng, a Chinese Jewish flour seller, about fifty-two years old and his son Li [Samuel] Tzung-mei, about twelve years old.¹²⁵ They stayed in Shanghai during the Festival of Passover and were shown a 'good deal of Jewish life', witnessed Jewish ceremonies, attended synagogue frequently and visited several Jewish homes.¹²⁶ This is probably one of the boldest statements of Jewish identity made by Shanghai Sephardim. Although committed to absorbing British values, they were nonetheless willing to hurdle the racial barrier and take these 'Chinese' into their homes.¹²⁷ The historian, S. Perlmann, a visitor to Shanghai, records an interview with some Kaifeng Jews. The Chinese domestic servants were astonished to see these poor Chinese Jews being treated as guests.¹²⁸ Perlmann expressed his disillusionment to find that they were generally of low intellect and lacked education, yet they were able to read the Bible 'thanks to the instructions they had received at Shanghai'.¹²⁹ Li was willing to instruct the Jews in Kaifeng and to later return with his wife and children and other Jews.¹³⁰ Li left for Kaifeng on 26 April 1901 with his son carrying a letter entreating the Kaifeng Jews to send a few of their youth to Shanghai for a few months to receive religious instruction: 'Our *sole aim* is to see you restored to the religion of our forefathers so deplorably lost to you' [author's emphasis].¹³¹ There nonetheless was another important consideration, 'what a great sensation it will create all the world over'.¹³²

¹²⁵ Undated letter from Solomon to 'Brethren in faith at Kaifeng-fu', pp.2-3, 5, [translated into Chinese by Rev. Timothy Richard]; cited in Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.32, PCP.

¹²⁶ 'They have attended synagogue and witnessed several religious ceremonies', Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.32.

¹²⁷ Bickers described the official attitude of the British towards foreigners associating with the Chinese. Class prejudice was used to articulate race prejudice - all Chinese were socially inferior, Robert Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese, 1928-1931, Ph.D., University of London, 1992, p.112. Other foreign communities also kept their distance from the Chinese, James Huskey, 'Americans in Shanghai: Community Formation and Response to Revolution, 1919-1928', University of North Carolina, Ph.D., 1985, pp.22-24; Françoise Kreissler, *L'action culturelle allemande en Chine: de la fin du XIXe siècle à la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, (Paris, 1989), pp.192-198.

¹²⁸ Perlmann, *op. cit.*, p.11; Kublin, *op. cit.*, pp.141-142.

¹²⁹ Perlmann, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13; A Hebrew teacher was engaged to give them lessons, Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.32.

¹³⁰ Solomon to Kaifeng Jews, undated letter, p.4, PCP.

¹³¹ Solomon to 'Our Brethren in faith in Kai-Feng-Fu', 13/11/1900, cited in Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.32. and in the Minutes of the meeting on 14/5/1900, p.2, PCP; translated into Chinese by Rev. Timothy Richard, p.6. PCP; printed in *JC*, 7/6/1901, p.11; 'One of the fundamental laws of our religion is that we are responsible for each other', Circular letter from Moore, 4/7/1902, PCP.

¹³² Minutes of the second ordinary General Meeting of the Society, 1/7/1902, PCP; recorded in M. Brown, 'The Ancient Jews of China', p.23; articles on the Kaifeng Jews appeared frequently in the *Jewish Chronicle*, for example, 22/6/1900, pp.21-22, 3/8/1900, p.11 and 7/6/1901, p.11.

The Third Ordinary General Meeting of the Members of the Society will be held at the residence of G. I. Shekury, Esq., No. 7 North Szechuen Road, on Thursday, the 9th Adar, 5664 (25th February, 1904), at 6.30 p.m., for the purpose of passing the Committee's Report and the Hon. Treasurer's Account; for electing a new Committee; and for transacting any other business which may be brought forward before the Meeting.

By order of the Committee,

S. J. SOLOMON
Hon. Secretary

SHANGHAI, 5th ADAR, 5664 (15th FEBRUARY 1904)

Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews

COMMITTEE

SIMON A. LEVY, *Vice-President* G. I. SHEKURY
WALTER ELLIS E. M. EZRA, *Hon. Treasurer*
D. E. J. ABRAHAM S. J. SOLOMON, *Hon. Secretary*

Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT from 24th June, 1902, to 21st February, 1904

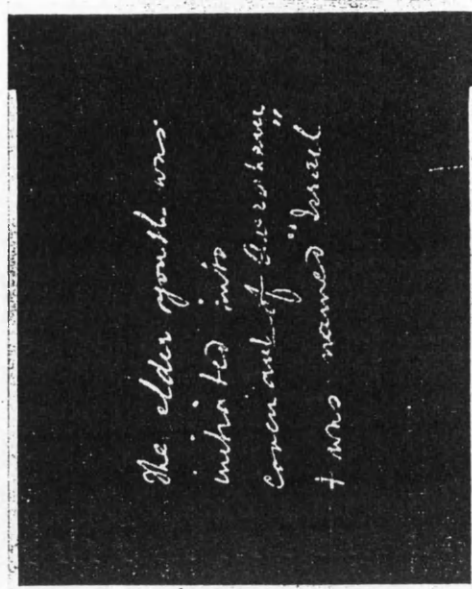
	Dollars	Cts.	Expenditure	Dollars	Cts.
To balance brought forward from past account	5	06	By Printing and Stationery	21	63
To Subscription			Postage	96	00
From Nagasaki	\$ 376.08		Collector's Fee	30	75
From Wuhu	10.08		Travelling Expenses	154	00
To Donations	428	00	Food, clothing, house rent and sundry expenses	803	65
From London, Sir Samuel Montague, Bart., £10 @ 2/4 = Tk. 85.71 @ 74.30	115.35		Hebrew scholar's salary and school fees	57	88
San Francisco, Rev. Mr. Moore, \$100	100.00		Funeral Expenses of Li King Sheng	11	30
San Francisco, Rabbi Zadoc Kahn, francs 960 @ 2/19 = Tk. 71.68 @ 74.10	96.73		Balance in Hand	420	90
Frankfurt, Messrs. Goldreich Brothers 250 sh. @ 1/10 = Tk. 250.00	250.00				
Nagasaki, Community Per S. D. Lesser, Esq., 210.00	210.00				
Do. M. Mess. Esq., Per G. I. Shekury, Esq., 117.00	117.00				
Do. Yes 100	100.00				
Do. M. Gindburg, Esq., Per G. I. Shekury, Esq., 117.00	117.00				
Singapore, Congregation	200.81				
Portland, Oregon, Per Rev. Dr. Stephen S. Wise 24 @ 3/14 = Tk. 57.28 @ 74.90	49.78				
Alliance Israélite Universal, London, £10 @ 7/6 = Tk. 75.00	75.00				
San Francisco, District Grand Lodge No. 4 43.37	43.37				
Independent Order Baai Birth, 28 sh. 11d. @ 2/3 = Tk. 72.25 @ 75.20	96.73				
Shanghai, the late L. Moore, Esq.	50.00				
Shanghai, the late L. Moore, Esq.	50.00				
Shanghai, the late L. Moore, Esq.	15.04				
Bank Interest	1635	38			
	2	39			
	\$2070	83			
Subscriptions in course of collection					
From Shanghai	\$ 78				
From Hongkong	84				
	\$162				

Audited and found correct—
S. J. SOLOMON,
N. E. B. EZRA,
Hon. Treasurer.

E. & O. E.
5th Adar, 5664,
Shanghai, 21st February, 1904.

צב"ב מאיר ליאו דוד חיים יוסף יוסף חמים אליהו דוד חוק"ל יאנושוע אברהם דודי
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו
 צלח אתר הדודן האנבנ'ח אליהו סאימן אברהם לוי ענדא מאיר חמים מוס"ח ט"ן
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו
 יאנושוע ליאו יאודה אהרן עזריא חיים גברי' יצחק שכטר יעקב'ה אברהם צדק'ה
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו
 יאודה בן בנמן חיים בן יוסף אהרן בנמן עירא יצחק ענדא סלימאן מני
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו
 משה בן פתס יצחק בן רופ כולמן גרשון בן נחום מרדכי יצחק סתולנג'ן שר
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו
 מרים בן מאיר אריה בן מאיר אברהם בן מרדכי אלוז' בן קטן ששון יחוק"ל אנ
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו
 אברהם יחוק"ל אברהם יוסף בן יוסף מנלם נתנ"ל יצחק רבין
 יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו יצ"ו

Signatures of the members of the Community



Certificate of Circumcision

Li returned with his son and six other Kaifeng Jews by 10 March, 1902.¹³³ The eight members of the Kaifeng Orphan Colony received instruction in Hebrew and English at the Shanghai Jewish School and attended synagogue daily.¹³⁴ But the funds of the Society dwindled. In April 1907 'it was not only penniless but involved in debts and the Hon. Secretary Solomon was 'out of pocket to the extent of about \$600, or more' and was forced to send them back to Kaifeng.¹³⁵ Two remained and were engaged as office boys in Jewish firms.¹³⁶ The *Israel's Messenger*, censured the affluent Shanghai Jewry whose lack of support had caused the Rescue Society to stop functioning in March 1904. They had not reimbursed Solomon for the \$30 he had paid each month to support their Kaifeng guests in Shanghai.¹³⁷ Neither was world Jewry absolved from part of the blame.¹³⁸

... Jewry throughout the world in general, and the Shanghai Jewish community in particular, cannot say with a clear and calm conscience 'Our hands did not destroy this community, nor have our eyes seen who did it'.¹³⁹

Li Tzung-mei and his father remained in Shanghai and after his father's death, Li was raised by Abraham who enrolled him in the Shanghai Jewish School. He worked in Abraham's office for almost fifty years, until World War II when he returned to Kaifeng.¹⁴⁰ As an adult, however, he showed very little interest in Judaism. Abraham's grandson, Joseph Hyeem Abraham, noted that Li never observed any religious practices and did not attend the synagogue even on *Yom*

¹³³ Pollak, *Mandarins*, pp.211-216; Perlmann, *The Jews in China*, p.11.

¹³⁴ Ezra, *op. cit.*, p.259, Perlmann, *op. cit.*, p.11; Kublin, *op. cit.*, pp.141-142.

¹³⁵ Expenses for the maintenance of the Kaifeng Jews in Shanghai amounted to some \$30 a month, a total of over \$600, which Solomon defrayed, *IM*, 19/10/1906, pp.12-13, and 19/4/1907, p.6.

¹³⁶ Li King Son, [Li Ching-sheng] who was the first native Jew to come to Shanghai in 1900, was given a Jewish burial and buried in the Jewish cemetery, several members of the Jewish community attended his funeral. It was then discovered that he had been circumcised, Report by Simon A. Levy, Vice President, [undated], PCP. Donald Leslie points out that Muslims in Kaifeng would have been circumcised too, Leslie, correspondence with author, 15/1/94.

¹³⁷ After his death Solomon's widow and spinster daughter were almost destitute, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 20/8/93.

¹³⁸ Moore, sent an appeal to world Jewry on 4/7/1902, PCP; *PE*, 3.2, (June 1988), p.7; British Jews were overwhelmed by the Russian and Rumanian Jewish immigration at this time.

¹³⁹ *IM*, 9/9/1913, p.10.

¹⁴⁰ His sixteen year old brother was circumcised in Abraham's home and named 'Israel' on 27/5/1902, Certificate in PCP, see Illustration, p.67; it was hoped that his younger brother would follow his example, Moore to the members of the Society, 23/6/1902, PCP; R.D. Abraham, letter to the editor, *JC*, 12/10/62, p.20, [by courtesy of Wendy Abraham]; Minutes of the second ordinary General Meeting, 1/7/1902, p.2. PCP; *PE*, 3.2 (June 1988), p.7.

Kippur.¹⁴¹

Extreme poverty had forced the Kaifeng Jews to dispose of the stones and timber of their synagogue.¹⁴² The site was mortgaged in 1905 to the Canadian Mission Society, headed by the Anglican Bishop, William C. White, for £1200 with the proviso that it would be returned to the Jews upon repayment of the sum.¹⁴³ Ironically, the Orphan Colony appeared to be receiving more relief from the Christian missionaries than their co-religionists:

...a good Christian Bishop [White] is looking after them [Kaifeng Jews] for they are the forerunners in China of Christianity as well as of Judaism. He has taken them to his heart and is bringing them back to Judaism. But the Jews of China [Shanghai, Harbin and Tienjin, Guangzhou mainly] are silent, they can do nothing...Perhaps they are even ashamed of these forerunners of ours.¹⁴⁴

It appears paradoxical that these missionaries should have expended so much effort towards saving the remnants of the Kaifeng Jews.¹⁴⁵ Donald Leslie emphasises that some missionaries felt a genuine sympathy for these isolated Jews, closer to their Christian beliefs than other Chinese, even though most of their attempts to revive the community were undoubtedly linked to the possibility of later converting them to Christianity.¹⁴⁶ There also appears to have been concern among some missionaries that these Jews were becoming 'zealous idolaters'.¹⁴⁷ Bishop White and Rev. Blackstone tried unsuccessfully to unite the Chinese Jews.¹⁴⁸ Their

¹⁴¹ Joseph Hayeem Abraham, interview by Dr. Wendy Abraham, 30/4/1987, [by courtesy of Wendy Abraham]; 'Their only recognition of Judaism was that they received gifts on Purim instead of on the Chinese New Year!', Mrs. R.D. Abraham to the editor, *JC*, 12/10/62, p.20.

¹⁴² The soil had been dug out and sold by the Jews, leaving a stagnant pool of filthy water, while the higher places were covered with 'indescribable filth', Bishop White, 'The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng', *Church Missionary Review*, June, 1921, cited in David A. Brown, 'Brown Meets the Chinese Jews', copy in CZA, A213/8/126, p.199; White, 'The Jews of Kaifeng', in CZA Z/4/1224.

¹⁴³ *IM*, 1/1/33, p.8; 'Brown meets the Chinese Jews', CZA, A213/8/126; a laver from the synagogue had been sold as a baptismal font, *IM*, 4/6/26, p.11; their manuscripts and Torah scrolls were lodged in museums and libraries all over the world, *IM*, 4/7/24, p.18; Leo Gabow, 'The Artifacts of the Kaifeng Jews: Where are they now?' *PE*, 3.2 (June 1988), pp.9-11.

¹⁴⁴ *IM*, 4/7/19, p.11; 'White, in China and Canada, was perceived as a gentle, kindly man who meant well'. When the Japanese neared Kaifeng in 1937 he shipped many items to the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

¹⁴⁵ Professor Bankier of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, suggests that they could have been millenarians who believed that the second coming of Christ would take place only after the Jews were gathered together in one place to accept Him, Bankier, interview by author, London, 10/8/90.

¹⁴⁶ Donald Leslie, correspondence with author, Curtin, Australia, 25/1/94.

¹⁴⁷ William. C. White to Ezra, printed in *IM*, 4/7/19, p.30.

¹⁴⁸ White to Ezra, 23/10/18, CZA, Z4/1224; Blackstone was a 'strong Zionist', *IM*, 4/7/19, p.30; Leslie, *The Survival*, pp.69-70.

lectures on Judaism and Zionism met with no response.¹⁴⁹ The extinction of the Orphan Colony appeared to be complete and it was decided to erect a hospital at the cost of \$30,000, to perpetuate the memory of the once flourishing community.¹⁵⁰ Shanghai's appeal to world Jewry for funds proved futile.¹⁵¹ Schiff, one of the major American financiers in the first quarter of the twentieth century, refused three requests from N.E.B. Ezra in 1918-1919 for a contribution.¹⁵² Schiff reminded Ezra that American Jews shouldered the burden of assisting Jews in the European war zones and in Palestine. Schiff emphasised that Bishop White's request had been addressed to the Jews of Shanghai and China, several of whom were wealthy: 'it would be really a reflection upon the Jews of China, if they permitted the privilege, which is thus offered them to go unsatisfied'.¹⁵³ Lewis Moore the president of the Society urged Shanghai Jewry to contribute the £5,000 necessary to build a *Beth Hamedrash* and send efficient teachers *mohellim* and *shohetim* to put the congregation upon a 'footing to do credit to our religion...let us now become parents and guardians to these poor brethren'.¹⁵⁴ Arguably, if there had been concentration on re-education first, then other things might have followed.

The *Israel's Messenger* was often vitriolic in its condemnation of Shanghai Jewry as it attempted to whip up support for the Rescue Society. Evidence implies that, initially, Shanghai Sephardim were very emotionally involved and committed to saving the dying colony.¹⁵⁵ But much of their ardour was cooled by the inaccessibility of Kaifeng. Moore highlighted their difficulties; the delay caused through political troubles, the very awkward position of having to keep up a correspondence between 'natives who are of a strong conservative nature and foreign, although both be akin in race', and above all 'the daunting task of convincing a

¹⁴⁹ See White's letter to the *IM*, 4/7/19, p.30; White to Ezra, 23/10/19, *CZA*, Z/4/1224.

¹⁵⁰ 'Do the Jews of Shanghai hesitate to give this paltry sum in such a worthy cause and at such a glorious time in their history?', White to Ezra, 23/10/18, *CZA* Z/4/1224; *IM*, 5/8/21, p.34.

¹⁵¹ The *Israel's Messenger* promised that the name of a donor would be recorded by a tablet erected to his memory, 4/7/1919, p.11.

¹⁵² He was decorated by the Meiji Emperor of Japan with the second order of the Rising Sun Medal in 1906 because of his loan of ¥50,000,000 during the Russo-Japanese war, motivated by the Russian Government's treatment of the Russian Jews, *IM*, 29/10/20, pp.42-43 and 4/7/1919, p.34.

¹⁵³ Schiff to Ezra, 11/12/18, cited in *IM*, 29/10/20, pp.42-43.

¹⁵⁴ Moore to the Members of the Society, 23/6/1902 and 4/7/1902, *PCP*.

¹⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that in a retrospective account Rev. Mendel Brown observes that 'records disclose that the only considerable effort to save them was made by the Jews of Shanghai', Mendel Brown, 'The Ancient Jews of China', *IM*, 6/12/1936, p.23.

celestial of the truth of anything suggested by foreigners'.¹⁵⁶ These factors put a great strain on the committee. Nonetheless, the fact that the money for the hospital was not subscribed led one correspondent to conclude that, 'there was some truth in the allegation that we had degenerated from the Chosen People of God into mere merchants of the mart'.¹⁵⁷ This is an extreme view. Arguably, the rescue of the Kaifeng Colony did not depend solely on donations. The evidence suggests that interest in Judaism among them waned to the point of extinction, and few were willing to be educated in a religion long dead to them: 'these are Jews no longer. They are Chinese. Absorbed, assimilated, rendered indistinguishable'.¹⁵⁸ For several years Shanghai Jewry gave up all hope of rescuing the Orphan Colony. Renewed interest in them in the United States and Britain, however, led to the revival of the Society for the Rescue of Chinese Jews on 5 August 1924.¹⁵⁹ Simon A. Levy, President, and Ezra were now the only Sephardim on the new committee of seven, which suggests a waning interest of the Sephardim in Kaifeng Jews.¹⁶⁰ Twenty-five applied to become members of the Society, the fee being Mex \$5 annually.¹⁶¹ Advantage was taken of the increasing facilities for travel. Kaifeng, hitherto weeks by cart or donkey from Shanghai, was a two day journey by train after 1913.¹⁶² Two delegates from the Society, Alexander Horne and Arthur Sopher,¹⁶³ managing director of *The China Press*, visited the Colony and noted that the same gods adorned their altars as were found in Chinese homes. Horne wondered 'in what

¹⁵⁶ Moore to the Members of the Society, 23/6/1902, PCP.

¹⁵⁷ 'G.E.S.' letter to the editor, *IM*, 4/7/19, p.34. Compare criticism in 1/11/24, p.10.

¹⁵⁸ *IM*, 4/7/24, p.18.

¹⁵⁹ 'Reorganised Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews Holds First Meeting' held at the Jewish club, Ahduth. G.E. Sokolsky gave a talk on 'The Road of Silk' and A. Horne on 'The Jews of Kaifengfu', illustrated with lantern-slides of views taken during his trip to Kaifeng, *IM*, 1/8/24, p.11, and 1/11/24, p.10

¹⁶⁰ The others included Dr. A. Rosenberg, Mrs. D. Horne, Dr. E. L. Lobzowsky, G. E. Sokolsky, A. Horne, *IM*, 1/11/24, p.10.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.10; meetings were held in July, August and October, 1924, January and June, 1925, Pollak, *Mandarins*, 1980, pp.225-228. There were 3 varieties of Shanghai dollars, *mex*, old Mexican dollar coins, exported by Spain and later Mexico, was the standard currency throughout China and Portuguese Macao up to the early 1930s, accompanied by Chinese 'copper' coins of low fluctuating value. After the collapse of the Chinese Imperial dynasty there were two Chinese silver dollars in circulation, 'big heads' depicting Yuan Shihkai and 'small heads'- Sun Yatsen.

¹⁶² *IM*, 1/1/33, p.8 and 1/11/24, p.10.

¹⁶³ He was one of the few Shanghai Jews who could read and write Chinese [Mandarin] and was also well versed in Jewish lore, Edward Ezra, 'Chinese Jews', *The East of Asia Magazine*, 1902, pp.278-296; Edward Ezra and Arthur Sopher, *Chinese Jews*, (Shanghai, 1926), reprinted in *Jews in Old China Some Western Views*, compiled by Hyman Kublin, (New York, 1971), pp.213-295.

sense they can be called Jews'.¹⁶⁴ He nonetheless urged that every effort should be made to save the community: 'though much delayed it is not too late. In another generation who knows?'¹⁶⁵ He observed:

...would that we [Jews] were a little more militant and aggressive, not in combating the religion of others, but at least in safeguarding our own. The swallowing-up of Jewish communities such as those in China would not then have been possible...¹⁶⁶

The appeal for rebuilding the synagogue continued to go unheeded.¹⁶⁷ Arthur Sopher and Edward Ezra marvelled at the apathy of Shanghai's Jews, suggesting that it gave some justification to the charge that Jews were engrossed solely in the pursuit of wealth and had little concern with matters of the spirit.¹⁶⁸ This criticism rankled the community, who referred to the large sum recently contributed by Sir Victor Sassoon towards the upkeep of the Shanghai Jewish School.¹⁶⁹ They argued that if it could be proved that, by rebuilding the synagogue, the remnants of Kaifeng Jews would be brought back to Judaism, the amount would be subscribed within less than twenty-four hours.¹⁷⁰ Apparently they had no confidence in the means proposed to save the Kaifeng Jews from extinction and were too astute to invest in projects with poor prospects. Their doubts were compounded by evidence that the Chinese delegate of the Society, Wong, [David Levy] allegedly a Sinkiang Jew,¹⁷¹ who recommended that a school be set up in Kaifeng and offered to organise it, was an imposter, and not Jewish.¹⁷² There was a fear that the Chinese who claimed Jewish descent did so because of financial reward. Inadequate resources, and the fact that nothing of lasting value was accomplished, dampened the enthusiasm of the Rescue Society, which had very little precedence for guidance.

Certainly Solomon and Abraham did everything in their power to make the

¹⁶⁴ *IM*, 4/7/24, p.18.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.14; *IM*, 1/11/24, p.10.

¹⁶⁶ Sopher, in Kublin, *op. cit.*, p.283; L.Gabow, 'A Literary Misdeed', pointed out that the Appendix in Sopher's 1925 and 1926 work was almost certainly written by Horne, not Sopher who merely edited the work.

¹⁶⁷ In the 1980's and 1990's renewed contact by American Jewish visitors and interest shown by Chinese scholars had led to suggestions of rebuilding the synagogue as a museum, rather than as a house of prayer.

¹⁶⁸ *IM*, 2/7/26, p.14, Kublin, *op. cit.*, p.216.

¹⁶⁹ 'A Scribe' to the editor, *IM*, 2/7/26, p.14.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁷¹ According to Wong the Chinese Government was keen that the Kaifeng synagogue be rebuilt. Wong was involved in the negotiations with the Canadian Missionary Society, *IM*, 1/11/24, p.10.

¹⁷² Pollak, *Mandarins*, pp.226-228.

Kaifeng visitors comfortable and saw to their Hebrew and religious instruction, but the fact that the eight delegates returned permanently to Kaifeng demonstrated that they could not integrate into the Shanghai Jewish community. Great efforts had been made to convince them of their obligation to be circumcised.¹⁷³ Joseph Hayeem Abraham, grandson of D.E.J. Abraham, also emphasised that they were content to stay in Shanghai where they were provided with jobs and were able to earn a living. Yet, 'when the time came to die they always went home'.¹⁷⁴ Joseph Abraham, points out that most of the members of the Society were very observant Sephardi Jews who hailed from Bombay where they had refused to accept the *Bene Israel* Jews because they did not consider them to be *bona fide* Jews.¹⁷⁵ Notwithstanding this, Baghdadi Jews tried to encourage the *Bene Israel* in their attempts to return to orthodoxy.¹⁷⁶ Shanghai Sephardim must have been disheartened to find that the Kaifeng Jews observed nothing of the religion, and with the passage of time they began to consider that their efforts were transient and therefore futile.

Robert Powell, the anthropologist, had reported in 1900 that the Kaifeng Jews by the early twentieth century bore 'anything but an honourable name'.¹⁷⁷ In November 1932, David A. Brown, a board member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, maintained that all the effort and publicity had not brought Kaifeng Jews closer to Judaism.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, the dealing of the Society with Wong suggested that there was a possibility that imposters would profess to be Jewish for the benefits that could accrue. The fact that the Kaifeng Jews were

¹⁷³ Two lads of 17 and 15 were opposed to circumcision, the little ones had been circumcised, Perlmann, *op. cit.*, p.12; Moore, Report to the Members of the Society, 23/6/1902, PCP; the visitors had been under the care of Abraham who had arranged for their education in English, Chinese in addition to Hebrew arranged by the Society, Moore to the Members of the Society, 23/6/1902, PCP.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Abraham, interview by Wendy Abraham, 30/4/1987.

¹⁷⁵ It is noteworthy, however, that in 1862 S.H. David of David Sassoon & Co., adopted a Kaifeng Jew who became Shalem Shalom David, a respected member of the Bombay community, *IM*, 24/8/1906, p.10. See also Shirley Isenberg, 'The Kaifeng Jews and India's Bene Israel: Different Paths', Unpublished paper submitted for the Harvard Symposium, 1992; *The Hebrew*, 12/10/1906, p.42.

¹⁷⁶ The Baghdadis provided them with financial assistance and employment, Roland, *op. cit.*, p.20; Memorandum by Emanuelsohn of Afghanistan, 1928, BDBJ, ACC3121/E3/512.

¹⁷⁷ 'They have not a very good reputation', Minutes of meeting 14/5/1900, p.3, PCP; Powell was present at the meeting of the Society on 20/8/1900, p.6, PCP; *China's Millions*, XI, March 1903, pp.77-79.

¹⁷⁸ Brown later joined the Canadian mission at Kaifeng of which White was the head, David A. Brown, 'China's Ancient Jews, A challenge and a Responsibility', *IM*, 1/1/1933 p.8; Brown to Ezra, acknowledged the 'many courtesies' extended to him in Shanghai, 1/4/1933, p.27; 'Brown Meets the Chinese Jews', *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*, Jan./March 1933, pp.199-288; William White, and Ronald Williams, *Chinese Jews: A Compilation of Matters Relating to the Jews of K'ai-feng Fu*, (Toronto, 1942), pp.150-164.

indistinguishable from their Chinese neighbours would have easily facilitated this deception.¹⁷⁹ In the absence of documentary evidence to disclose how Shanghai Jewry was approached for subscriptions and in what terms they responded, the reasons for their lack of involvement in rescue of the Kaifeng Jews, is open to conjecture. There may have been compelling reasons which made Shanghai's wealthy philanthropists like Haroon, Kadoorie and Victor Sassoon, who had spontaneously donated large sums to the Chinese educational institutions and flood relief, hesitant to contribute to the rebuilding of the Kaifeng synagogue, or even the hospital.¹⁸⁰ All these men had tremendous insight. Rose Horowitz puts forward a pragmatic reason:

Most of the contributors to charity were looking for their names to appear in the King's Birthday Honours list and this was not a favoured charity more so because the Kaifeng Jews were not salvageable.¹⁸¹

In time the Kaifeng Jews became a 'non subject' in Shanghai; 'nobody even cared' and it is probable that by the late 1930s few of the younger generation even knew of the existence of the Orphan Colony.¹⁸² Joseph Abraham recalled that interest in them 'fizzled out', and Li Zong Mei, son of Li Ching-sheng, was just regarded as another Chinese: 'he became like a museum object that was still walking',¹⁸³ and tired of the many anthropologists and Westerners who came to have a look at him, notably David Brown, Robert Powell and Abbott Lloyd.¹⁸⁴

The clearest lesson derived by historians and sociologists from the absorption of Chinese Jews into the religious cultures of the host country has been that this will happen to numerically small peoples transplanted into larger societies that do not persecute them or forcibly segregate them. Perlmann argued that there was little hope for the long term survival of Jewish communities living in a society which treated them well.¹⁸⁵ This example would not have escaped the notice of the Shanghai Sephardi community which numbered some eight hundred at its peak. It

¹⁷⁹ Ezra, *Remnants*, p.8.

¹⁸⁰ It was of course politic for them to make donations for Chinese charities. In this way they ingratiated themselves with Chiang Kaishek.

¹⁸¹ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/33.

¹⁸² Yosef Ya'acov, interview by author, Jerusalem, 2/6/93.

¹⁸³ Joseph Abraham interview by Wendy Abraham, 30/4/87.

¹⁸⁴ R.D. Abraham, to the editor *JC*, 12/10/62, p.20.

¹⁸⁵ Kublin, *Jews in Old China*, pp.200-211.

is possible that the plight of the Kaifeng Jews concentrated the minds of some Shanghai Sephardim on their own situation. The bizarre portrayal of their community by B. Berkman, a well-known German-Jewish author who had spent much time in Shanghai, in an article captioned ‘What of the Jews in China?’ in the *Jewish Exponent*, Philadelphia 1928, merits attention:

... If you see this Chinese crowd elbowing its way into the Synagogue, Chinese dressed and coiffeured in the good old Chinese way, you will have difficulty in believing that a Jewish religious service is the goal of these people. As a matter of fact they themselves know little about Judaism. It is a ceremony which they keep by habit and tradition when they go to Synagogue, while innerly absolutely alien to the service. Even the Hebrew language has been forgotten.¹⁸⁶

Although dismissed as a ‘fairy tale’ by Shanghai Sephardim, it nonetheless highlighted the fears of the community leaders that, unless they safeguarded their identity, and scrupulously perpetuated their religious traditions and rituals, their community would become extinct. Observing first hand the factors that eroded the identity of the Kaifeng Jews played a valuable role in reinforcing their own Jewish identity. It brought home to them that isolation from the other centres of Jewish life and above all, intermarriage, undermined the cohesiveness of Jewish society and culture.

In many parts of the Diaspora, the Judaism of immigrant Jews has been drawn upon and been enriched by the host country. The religion of the Kaifeng Jews became diluted with Confucianism, and Chinese religious images appeared in their homes. An examination of how Shanghai Sephardim performed rituals and celebrated holidays does not reveal any influence from their Chinese setting. Of course, their existence in Shanghai was limited to just over a century. In one important way, however, third generation Sephardim displayed their acculturation to the host country. They became accustomed to Chinese food and vegetables and the use of soya sauce in their cooking.¹⁸⁷ Many Sephardim believed in the efficacy of Chinese medicines and frequented Chinese apothecaries. Language was a major factor in precluding assimilation. In the Settlement, English was the *lingua franca* for trade. Household

¹⁸⁶ Cited in *IM*, 2/3/28, p.7.

¹⁸⁷ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93. Her father on a trip to Japan in 1915, toured the Kikkoman sauce factory and certified its *kashrut*.

servants spoke pidgin English and few Sephardim learnt to speak Chinese.¹⁸⁸ Almost all those interviewed for this study admitted their dislike of Chinese drama and music. As Jacob Alkow noted, however, 'you could not help being conscious of the interest that Jewish people had in Chinese art', particularly Reuben Abraham, Raymond Elias Toeg, and of course Sir Victor Sassoon.¹⁸⁹ Religious Jewish articles, such as the silver cases for the *Sifre Torah*, the pointers, *kumkums*, prayer shawls and their cases were made in Shanghai and exported to India.¹⁹⁰ Certain aspects of Jewish ritual helped Sephardim to relate to the Chinese people. They shared a common respect for the dead and a belief in spirits and superstitions.¹⁹¹ Sephardim like the Chinese, were accustomed to living in joint patriarchal families.¹⁹² Intermarriages between Sephardim and Chinese, however, was very rare indeed.

Rabbi Hirsch often alluded to the 'degenerate remains of an ancient Jewish Community' which, isolated and cut off from active centres of Judaism, was unable to preserve its religion.¹⁹³ A picture of American reform Jews, including David Brown,¹⁹⁴ examining manuscripts from Kaifeng in the *Israel's Messenger* emphasised the profound effect the extinction of the Orphan Colony had on world Jewry:

... seriously pondering over the fate of the Orphan Colony and wondering whether the same tragic fate would befall them or their children's children if they persist in their assimilation policy which undermines all Jewishness and destroys all vestige of reverence for the past.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁸ Several Chinese cooks spoke fluent Judeo-Arabic, Toueg, interview by author, Herzlia, 10/10/93.

¹⁸⁹ Alkow, interview by author, Herzlia, 3/6/93. For example see R. E. Toeg's 7-paged inventory and valuation of household articles, FO917/3166; 'Inspiration of Art in China', Lecture by Reuben Abraham, cited in *IM*, 10/6/21, p.23; 'Inventory and Valuation of Household Furniture' of R. E. Toeg lists 44 carved ivory ornaments valued at Tls 350 and other Chinese *objets d'art*, 10/11/31, PRO, FO 917/3325/3166; Horace Kadoorie, *The Art of Ivory Sculpture in Cathay: Incorporating a Catalogue of the Kadoorie Collection*, (Tokyo, 1988), 3 Vols; Lucas, Sydney Edward, compiler, *The Catalogue of Sassoon Chinese Ivories*, (London and New York, 1950). 'All Shanghai Sephardim had some Chinese items, but observant Jews shied away from depictions of humans and animals', Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

¹⁹⁰ Musleah, p.197. Practically the whole Sephardi community in Calcutta boasted *sissiths* from Shanghai, Seemah Lanyado, interview by author, London, 28/8/93.

¹⁹¹ 'Superstitions of the Chinese', *TCE*, 3/11/1893, p.620.

¹⁹² For further similarities see *IM*, 22/4/21, p.15.

¹⁹³ *IM*, 11/2/21, p.17; the *Israel's Messenger*, often reminded its readers of the 'fate of the Kaifeng Jews', for example, *IM*, 8/9/22, p.12.

¹⁹⁴ The picture made a strong impact on David Brown and prompted him to visit Kaifeng, 'Brown Meets the Chinese Jews', pp.199; 208, *CZA*, A213/8/126.

¹⁹⁵ *IM*, 4/7/24, p.18.

The fact that the Kaifeng Jews had been completely isolated from other centres of Jewish life and the mainstream of Judaism showed that neither individuals nor groups can exist in isolation. The elders of the Sephardi Jews of Shanghai were determined that their community would not suffer the same fate. The first attempts of Shanghai's Sephardim to save their co-religionists were a powerful confirmation of how much they valued their own Jewish identity. This is demonstrated in their complete initial commitment to another community of Jews, no matter how alien, and also by their awareness of their own vulnerability. Their zeal, however, was dampened in the face of the very considerable obstacles, which led them to conclude that it was too late to prevent the extinction of Kaifeng Jews.

The proximity of the Kaifeng colony to Shanghai was a reminder of the possibility of the Sephardi culture, religion and the cohesiveness of their small community being undermined unless they took precautionary action. The cultural boundaries of the Kaifeng Jewish community had dissolved in its interaction with a tolerant wider society and so fostered assimilation. It clearly illustrated how intermarriage weakened the foundations of Jewish society and culture. The close connection of marriage with Jewish identity is emphasised by the fact that the Baghdadi Jews had always been a predominantly endogamous group. Similar to the 'cousinhood' in Britain, wealthy Baghdadi families married each other, thus confirming their wealth and their high status in British society in Shanghai.¹⁹⁶ The importance the elders of the community placed on marriage as a means of preserving their unique Baghdadi heritage is evident in their censure of marriage between Sephardim and their Ashkenazi neighbours. Initially, Baghdadi parents ostracised their children when this occurred. Perhaps the laxity with which they came to regard these marriages in time, is indicative of a weakening of their Baghdadi identity.

¹⁹⁶ For example see Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood: the Anglo-Jewish Gentry*, (London & Eyre, 1971).

Intermarriage

‘Intermarriage is not a new problem, but it is new here’.¹⁹⁷

The question of mixed marriages, believed by the community elders to be vitally connected with the continuance of the community, was a topic of discussion in the pulpit and in the press. The fate of the Kaifeng Jews seems to have made little impression on the fourth generation Shanghai Sephardim and cannot account for the rarity of Sephardi intermarriage with the Chinese in Shanghai. As part of the foreign community, it is more likely that the deterrent was social ostracism, given that British culture did not favour intermarriage with the Chinese.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps a more powerful deterrent was the fact that they would have been ostracised from the Jewish community and their families.

Even intermarriage with the foreign community did not disturb the Sephardim until the 1930s when, according to the *Israel's Messenger*, the drift started to assume alarming proportions.¹⁹⁹ It noted that ‘the parents do not even raise an alarm’ when two girls, daughters of two ‘well-known’ members of the community married non-Jews.²⁰⁰ Attention was focused on the civil marriage of two brothers from a distinguished family of international repute, to non-Jewish girls.²⁰¹ It was performed with ‘pomp and ceremony’ at the local French Consulate, and the *Israel's Messenger* commented ruefully: ‘we were obliged to pass over in silence this stab given to the Jewish community’.²⁰²

Exogamy was condemned by the Sephardi elders and a majority of the members regarded it as a manifestation of deep erosion of Jewish identity.²⁰³ Significantly, the will of R. E. Toeg, who was well known in horse racing circles,

¹⁹⁷ *IM*, 2/9/32, p.1.

¹⁹⁸ Several, however, kept Chinese women and the offspring were brought up by missionaries, Horowitz, interview by author, tape recording, Harvard, 17/8/92. Pressure was exerted to make sure that young British businessmen and consuls did not get involved with Chinese, Eurasians or Russians, Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.115; see also F.H.H. King, *The History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Volume three: The Hong Kong Bank Between the Wars and the Bank Interned, 1919-1945: Return from Grandeur*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp.285-289.

¹⁹⁹ One example is the ‘Richardson-Moosa wedding’, *IM*, 1/8/1932, p.15.

²⁰⁰ ‘The case of a well-to-do young Jewish boy taking for himself a gentile girl (of inelegant type) is too well-known to need any comment’, From ‘Israelite’ Shanghai, to the editor *IM*, 2/11/30, p.28.

²⁰¹ Arthur and Theodore Sopher both married White Russians who then converted. Both marriages ended in divorce.

²⁰² *IM*, 2/9/32, p.1.

²⁰³ The civil marriage in the French Consulate of two brothers, from a distinguished orthodox family of international repute, *ibid.*, p.1.

stipulated that if his daughters married 'outside their religion' they would forfeit their inheritance, which would go directly to their children, who according to Jewish law were considered Jewish.²⁰⁴ The *Israel's Messenger* monitored the rise of exogamy among world Jewry, and declared its dismay at the intermarriage amongst the Sassoon family in England.²⁰⁵ Its forthright censorship of exogamy, notably its comment that Jews in England felt 'a pang of deep regret' at the announcement of the remarriage of Mrs. Goldsmid, a prominent Jewess, to a Christian, was criticised by some of its readers.²⁰⁶ They argued that the publishing of such opinions was out of place in cosmopolitan Shanghai and could provoke ill-feeling among the Christian community. The Sephardi elders, however, maintained that Jewish opposition to intermarriage was not concerned with race superiority but with race continuity, and regarded the discouragement of intermarriage by all creeds not as a sign of a narrow and intolerant doctrine, but rather as an act of loyalty to their faith.²⁰⁷

The conversion of Christian spouses to Judaism in Shanghai was considered by many Sephardim as 'face pidgin' [putting on a bold front in order not to lose face].²⁰⁸ They were critical of Western rabbis for making intermarriage extremely easy by conversions: 'They do not realise that every ceremony thus performed is a living advertisement and encouragement for others to follow suit'.²⁰⁹ Although Jewish law did not encourage conversion for motives other than the love of Judaism, with increasing interaction between Jews and non-Jews, some authorities considered denial of conversion deleterious, and were willing to accept converts whose sole motivation was marriage to a Jew.²¹⁰ The suggestion of the *Israel's Messenger* that Shanghai Sephardim had discouraged conversion mainly because they did not have an ordained rabbi to perform the ceremony is not convincing.²¹¹ The ceremony

²⁰⁴ 'R.E. Toeg's will', 4/7/1930, PRO, FO917/3325/3166.

²⁰⁵ On 6/8/13 Sybil, the daughter of Sir Edward Sassoon and Aline Rothschild, married the fifth Marquess of Cholmondeley; The *Israel's Messenger*, remarked that the engagement of the granddaughter of Jacob Schiff, Dorothy Schiff to Richard Hall would have undoubtedly broken Jacob's heart, *IM*, 9/11/23, p.7. and 7/3/24, p.6.

²⁰⁶ *IM*, 3/4/1908, p.6.

²⁰⁷ *IM*, 7/3/25, p.6. Letters to the editor of the *NCDN* from Rabbi Hirsch, Shanghai, 17/10/1923, published on 17, 19 and 23 October reprinted in *IM*, 9/11/1923, p.21.

²⁰⁸ Few of the children remained Jewish when they left Shanghai, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

²⁰⁹ Letter to the editor from 'Jew-Cub', Shanghai, 28/8/33, *IM*, 1/9/33, p.21.

²¹⁰ *IM*, 1/2/1929, p.18.

²¹¹ An application in 1924 to the Shanghai Jewish Communal Association for approval to convert a non-Jewish future bride was turned down because of the absence of an ordained rabbi in Shanghai, *IM*, 6/6/24, p.1.

was performed by elders of the community and was merely the culmination of a period of intensive instruction.²¹²

Several reasons were put forward for the inroads exogamy was making into Shanghai's Sephardi community: the community being left without a rabbi, parents' growing indifference to Judaism, untrained Jewish teachers, the ultra-modern mind, the community leaders who gave religious problems a low priority because their attention was focused on the 'balance sheet'.²¹³ *The Israel's Messenger* suggested that the lack of Jewish youth clubs encouraged Sephardi youth to mix socially with non-Jews and to imbibe 'the spirit of materialism, luxury and jazz-dancing'.²¹⁴ The youth were criticised for being incapable of combining broadmindedness and socialising with non-Jews with their religious obligations.²¹⁵ In fact the causes of intermarriage were much deeper. Orthodox Judaism was in tension with modernity in the unrestrained sophisticated wider society in the Settlement. Moreover, Baghdadi customs, being oriental, were at odds with British culture. This itself could have accounted for a weakening in ritual and tradition. Hebrew education for girls, 'the future mothers of the race', to inculcate a pride in their heritage, was among the suggestions put forward to encourage endogamy.²¹⁶ Some Sephardim advocated freer association with the Ashkenazim: 'the younger element of the Ashkenazi is too forward, wayward, free and easy and flighty, while the Sephardi is too reserved, conservative and unsociable... A union of both parties is highly desirable'.²¹⁷

Baghdadis married freely with Jews of similar background from Yemen, Beirut, Iran, Egypt, Aden, Afghanistan, Aleppo and Damascus who had settled among them. Intramarriage between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim had always been strongly discouraged, probably as much for social reasons as the desire to preserve Sephardi traditions. The Sephardi traditionalists considered most Russian Jews too lax in their religious observance. By the 1930s the Shanghai Jewish School broke

²¹² Rabbi Ashkenazi generally participated, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 2/2/93.

²¹³ *IM*, 6/6/24, p.1.

²¹⁴ *IM*, 1/2/29, p.18.

²¹⁵ *IM*, 1/9/33, p.21.

²¹⁶ *IM*, 2/9/32, p.1.

²¹⁷ *IM*, 1/9/33, p.21. David Abraham to Nahama Naer on 22/4/22 was reputedly the first marriage of an orthodox Sephardi Jew to a Russian Jewess in Shanghai, *IM*, 7/4/22, p.17. When Isaiah Jacob married a Russian Jewess Rebecca Soloclukhin, he was ostracised by his family, though she eventually became a beloved member of the Jacob family. Antipathy towards these marriages remained until the 1930s when they came to be recognised as a *fait accompli*, Rabbi Isaac Abraham, interview by author, tape recording, London, 20/5/93.

down the barriers between the youth of the two communities, and Baghdadi Jews became more tolerant of intramarriage.

As all those who were interviewed suggested that there was an insignificant number of mixed marriages, the *Israel's Messenger*, was probably exaggerating when it proclaimed that mixed marriages in Shanghai by 1932 started to assume alarming proportions. It is true, nevertheless, that over time the distinct cultural boundaries of the Sephardi community became blurred as they became socially and economically successful and extended more links beyond their own community. 'Here prosperity and freedom are the dangerous solvents in which many of our Jewish people are slowly but surely melting away'.²¹⁸ In the process, some were cut off from the communal life of the Sephardi community; probably the highest proportion of intermarriage took place among these. Nevertheless, many Sephardim retained a strong Jewish consciousness although they observed few ritual practices.

Conclusion

Several factors lend support to the choice of label 'Sephardim' by Jews from Baghdad. Clearly the Sephardi world is far wider in range than is indicated by its famous link with Spain in the Middle Ages. Jewish settlement in Spain was an offshoot of the Babylonian heritage.²¹⁹ During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, building on the foundations laid by Babylonian Jewry, the Jews in Muslim Spain reached an unprecedented level of cultural achievement with which Sephardim were proud to be associated. The Sephardim were considered as a Jewish aristocracy well into the eighteenth century. European connotations of the 'Sephardim' brought political and social benefits. The title 'Arabian' was chosen to emphasise their distinction from the *Bene Israel* and the Cochin Jews for religious reasons as they considered themselves to be more orthodox, and for political reasons - to obtain European status. Their contact with Ashkenazim in Shanghai articulated an identity as Sephardi Jews which had the advantage of implying European ancestry. Their grouping with 'Sephardim' was reinforced by the Sephardi-Ashkenazi divide in Shanghai based on differences in laws, synagogue liturgy, the pronunciation of

²¹⁸ *IM*, 7/3/24 p.6.

²¹⁹ Chaim Raphael, *The Sephardi Story: A Celebration of Jewish History*, (London, 1989), p.1.

Hebrew and *minhagim* and compounded by cultural and social dissimilarity between them and the Russian Jewish immigrants. The Sephardi seal was set by the World Conference of Sephardi Jews through a uniform prayer book and the training of rabbis and *hazanim*. The fact that they preferred to be known as Sephardim and made a conscious effort to forge an identity as Sephardim in Shanghai, implies a weakening of their Baghdadi identity. It may, however, be regarded as a purely pragmatic manoeuvre. By asserting a European pedigree, they enhanced their status.

A nucleus of similarity in common origin and common religious belief remained with Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews, fostering feelings of interdependence and a sense of mutual responsibility. These feelings were extended in some degree to the Russian Jewish immigrants to Shanghai, whom they saw as part of *klal Yisrael*. The initial endeavour of the Shanghai Sephardim to save their Chinese co-religionists from extinction was a powerful confirmation of how much they valued their own Jewish traditions and was one of their earliest and boldest statements of identity.

Shanghai Sephardim observed how the cultural boundaries of the Kaifeng Jewish community had dissolved in its interaction with a tolerant wider society. They were able to notice firsthand the effects of assimilation to Chinese society, and how intermarriage undermined the very existence of the Kaifeng community. For a community anxious to preserve its own identity, the overriding fear of its elders, to whom the preservation of their Jewish identity was clearly of paramount importance, was that it would be eroded by exogamy. Not least, they were determined to safeguard its Baghdadi identity by discouraging intramarriage with their Ashkenazi co-religionists. It is therefore important to emphasise these issues in a discussion on the identity of the Shanghai Sephardim.

Chapter Three: Religious Institutions

Traditions, Customs, Ceremonies and Superstitions

In this cosmopolitan city, where so much energy was expended in the amassing of wealth and the pursuit of pleasure, there was a 'veritable stronghold of uncompromising orthodox Judaism'... watched over [by] the older generation...¹

Jewish tradition in the narrow sense is based on beliefs, laws and ritual known as *halakha*.² The Torah and the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole form the ideological and ethical foundations of Jewish existence. The broader aspect of Jewish tradition involves the historical experience of the Jews and their interaction with the gentile world.³

There is much evidence to suggest that well into the twentieth century Shanghai's Sephardim were scrupulous in their observance of Baghdadi customs and ceremonies connected with their life cycle.⁴ Arguably this was the most crucial factor in the preservation of their identity and created a strong common bond with other Baghdadi Jews in Jewish settlements east of Baghdad: in India, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma and Australia. Most of these customs and superstitions have their roots in Jewish tradition from the Talmudic and Geonic periods.⁵ Some of the Baghdadi religious customs and traditions will be discussed here because they provide an insight into the singular heritage which distinguished Shanghai Sephardim from the other Jews in Shanghai. It is also important to observe how some of these traditions gradually changed as the community in time became increasingly Anglicised.

¹ Israel Cohen, 'With the Jews in Modern China, Part I, Hong Kong and Shanghai', *JC*, 24/2/22, p.4.

² The Torah is the basic symbol of traditional Jewish culture.

³ N. Kokosalakis, *op. cit.*, p.12.

⁴ Ezekiel Musleah, *op. cit.*, 1975, p.188-210; Batsheva Ida, 'The Iraqi Jewish Life Cycle', *Nehardea*, No.3, June 1988.

⁵ Isaac Sassoon, correspondence with author, New York, 1/11/93. The history, society, literature, language, folklore and culture of Iraqi Jews is well documented in S. Moreh, (ed.), *Studies on the History of Iraqi Jewry and their Culture*, Vol. I, (Or Yehuda, 1981).

The Home and the Synagogue.

The home and the synagogue have always been at the centre of Jewish tradition and culture and the means of transmitting and consolidating commitment to Judaism.⁶ It was in the home the typical Baghdadi cuisine, Jewish dietary laws, the rituals and superstitions were observed. These forged strong Jewish and Baghdadi identities.⁷ Children in Sephardi homes in Shanghai received a great deal of affection from the extended family and also from devoted Chinese *amahs* some of whom were regarded as surrogate mothers.⁸ To this day, many foreigners who were born in Shanghai have sought out their former servants to offer them financial tokens of their regard.⁹ Conspicuous too are the numerous wills which included bequests to Chinese servants.¹⁰ Rifka Toueg describes her home as 'a hot house - a complete world, totally self-satisfying. My only loyalty is to my family. We are really a clan - my family carries my identity'.¹¹ Children from wealthy middle class families had a Victorian style upbringing and were generally reserved.¹² Morning and night prayers were an integral part of their daily life at home. Rose Horowitz recalls that as a child she put coins into the Jewish National Fund Blue Box affixed to the dining room wall, as her father maintained that: 'To redeem *Eretz Yisrael* is by far the greatest *mitzva*'.¹³ Judeo-Arabic was spoken in their homes well into the early twentieth century - an important expression of identity, as language reflects a people's

⁶ Samuel Heilman, *Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction*, (Chicago, 1976), passim; Yaacov Ro'i, 'The Role of the Synagogue and Religion in the Jewish National Awakening', in Ro'i, Yaacov and Avi Beker, (ed.), *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*, (New York and London, 1990), pp.112-136; Izumi Sato, 'A Study on the Transmission/Acquisition Process of Ethnic Culture among Jewish Families in Japan-Case Studies in Tokyo and Kobe', *The Toyo Review*, No.23, pp.153-163.

⁷ Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs is a contemporary voice arguing for a return to traditional values in which the family is the crucible of the Jewish future, 'Woman's Role in Our Spiritual Future', *JC*, 23/2/90.

⁸ 'Born in comfort, cradled in luxury...the omnipresent *amah* at her beck and call', 'The Shanghai Girl', 2/7/1897, p.9. Many foreign settlers in China, attribute their attachment to the Chinese people to their wet nurses and *amahs* being Chinese, Rifka Toueg, interview by author, tape recording, Herzlia, 20/4/92.

⁹ Abe Abraham attempted to deliver money to former servants of Shanghaianders who had settled in America, Abe Abraham, interview by author, Shanghai, 6/4/91.

¹⁰ For example the will of Raphael Aaron Balilios bequeathed 'to Number One Chinese Servant Boy', in his employ for twenty years, Mex \$2,000. His cook, No.2 Chinese servant boy, chauffeur and coolie each received Mex \$100, 19/6/29, PRO, FO917/2500; see also the will of Salem Shalome David, 7/5/25, FO917/2829/2653.

¹¹ Toueg, interview by author, Herzlia, 2/5/93.

¹² Estelle Hillaly, interview by author, tape recording, London 3/2/92. This has been corroborated by several interviewees.

¹³ Horowitz donned a cap crocheted by her grandmother to say the *Shema*, before sleeping, Rose Horowitz, 'Growing up in Shanghai', submitted to the Symposium on Jewish Diasporas in China, Harvard, August 1992, p.8.

culture.¹⁴ But by the 1930's grandchildren rarely knew the language of their immigrant grandparents.¹⁵ Naturally, the adoption of English as their mother tongue weakened the cultural ties with Baghdad.

Shanghai Sephardim preserved the Baghdadian custom of naming children after their grandparents and parents in an attempt to honour them and keep their memory alive.¹⁶ By the turn of the century, English equivalents of the traditional Hebrew and Arabic first names were adopted.¹⁷ For example Jacob Joseph Isaacs was called Jason. Similarly, Rose was substituted for Rahma which was the name of Horowitz's maternal grandmother and also her paternal aunt who died within days of her birth.¹⁸ The surnames, however, remained distinctively Baghdadi, which may be seen as a strong commitment to preserving their Baghdadi identity. It must be remembered that Jews from Arabic centres in the Middle East rarely possessed surnames until they became necessary for legal documents and passports in the mid-nineteenth century. Often a surname was chosen to denote occupations; Haskel Shohet, the ritual slaughterer and Moshe Chabaz, the baker, [chebez: flat round bread]. A family name was generally a matter of personal choice and it was not unusual for two brothers to have different surnames, notably Abraham Joseph Gubbay and David Ezekiel Joshua Abraham.

Sabbath and Festivals

The lives of Shanghai Sephardim were marked by the cycle of the Sabbath, Jewish Holidays and the *rites de passage*; birth, *Bar Mitzvah*, marriage and death. The Festivals and Sabbath were family occasions which both renewed and transmitted family ties and communal identity. Israel Cohen, Zionist envoy to the East in 1920-1921 leaves an illuminating description of a Sabbath he spent in the home of S. J. Solomon, the 'very odour of sanctity, a milieu of strict observance and cheerful

¹⁴ Simon Herman, *op. cit.*, p.54.

¹⁵ Among the exceptions were Horowitz's maternal grandmother and her sisters. Educated at the Zicawei convent school, they were fluent in French, English, conversant with Chinese, Hindustani and Judeo-Arabic, Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.2.

¹⁶ Rabbi Solomon D. Sassoon, 'Baghdadi Naming Custom', *The Jewish Historical Society of England*, Transactions, 23, 1969/70, Vol. XXIII, and Miscellanies, Part VIII, (London, 1971), p.86 and also Part VII, pp.64-86; Arabic speaking Jews liked nicknaming, Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.81-83; Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 'The Naming of Children in Jewish Folklore, ritual and Practice', in B.J. Bamberger ed., *Studies in Jewish Law, Custom and Folklore*, New York, 1970; Joseph Witriol, 'Naming Names', *JC*, 31/1/86; Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.81-83; Cissy Flegg, interview by author, tape recording, Jerusalem, 10/4/92.

¹⁷ In Talmudic times Reuben became Rufus, Judah, Julian; *Leviticus Rabbah*, S. 32.

¹⁸ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.5.

ceremonials'. Solomon, a pious and learned man 'spent his days on the books of the Sassoons and his nights on the books of the Cabbala'. He highlights the differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi *minhagim* by focusing on distinctive Baghdadi customs. On the eve of Sabbath women lit the *teriya*. In common with Baghdadi communities in the East they baked Sabbath bread resembling large flat blistered pancakes common in the Middle East. Before *kiddush*,¹⁹ which preceded the Friday evening meal, it was customary for the father to bless the children, who in turn kissed his hand and those of the older relatives.²⁰ Sabbath *pizmonim* were sung in traditional Baghdad tunes.²¹ The morning service in the synagogue started at seven o' clock, customary throughout the East, and even earlier in the summer. There were cries of 'be-kabod' from the *kahal* when an individual was called to the reading of the law, and 'chazak u-baruch' when he completed his portion. Younger members of a family remained standing whilst the particular section of the law was being read by the father or older relative, and upon the 'honoured kinsman' returning to his seat, they devoutly kissed the fringe of his *tallith*.²² It is unlikely that a prayer for any royal family or other ruling authority was included in the service²³ until the 1890s when 'The Book of Prayer and Order of Service according to the Custom of Spanish and Portuguese Jews' was imported from London.²⁴ The service concluded at 9:15 a.m. just when the Ashkenazi service commenced. Several congregants made use of rickshaws to commute between the home and synagogue. On Sabbath and Festival mornings a convoy of some fifty rickshaws would carry religious Jews wearing prayer

¹⁹ Unlike Calcutta, where the synagogue was licensed to sell *kiddush wine*, it was made at home, or imported from *Eretz Yisrael*, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.72; Mercia Grant, interview by author, London, 2/2/93.

²⁰ The *kiddush* was served by a member of the family. A spicy curry 'a kosher Jewish version of an Indian food' was part of the traditional Sabbath dinner at D.E.J. Abraham's home, Jacob Alkow, *In Many Worlds*, (New York, 1985), p.140.

²¹ In some households servants wore special livery for the Sabbath and many were able to sing the *Zemiroi*, Toueg, interview by author, 2/5/93. Unlike the missionaries who encouraged their Chinese servants to join in family prayers and hymn singing, there was no idea of converting them to Judaism; Amnon Shiloah, *The Musical Tradition of Iraqi Jews*, (Or Yehuda, 1984).

²² Israel Cohen, *The Journal of a Jewish Traveller*, (London and New York, 1925), pp.156-159, and *A Jewish Pilgrimage: The Autobiography of Israel Cohen*, (London, 1956), Chap. 12, 'Travels in Asia, 1920-1921', pp.192-216; Cohen, 'With the Jews in Modern China', Part 1 - Hong Kong and Shanghai', *The Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, 24/2/22.

²³ According to the *Pirkei Aboth*, [*Ethics of the Fathers*], Chap. 3 and *Aboda Zara*, p.4a, a prayer for the Government was to be included in the Sabbath synagogue service.

²⁴ They included an English translation based on the work of Rev. D.A. de Sola, Minister of the Bevis Marks, London 1901; Eze Nathan, *The History of the Jews in Singapore, 1830-1945* (Singapore, 1986), p.33; Albert Nissim, interview by author, New Jersey, 2/1/1994.

shawls and skull caps.²⁵ The fares were generally paid by Chinese servants. The question whether this was permissible on the Sabbath was constantly discussed in the East in the rabbinic *responsa*.²⁶ *Hameen* chicken with *hameen* roasted eggs was the traditional Sabbath lunch.²⁷ For *habdala* at the close of the Sabbath, a blessing was made on wine and myrtle.²⁸

Rosh Hashanah was observed with both rejoicing and solemnity. According to Sephardic custom, during the evening meal blessings were recited over dates, long beans, spinach, chives, marrow, pomegranates, apple preserve and the head of a lamb or cock or fish, [representing the head of the year] to beseech - life, health, fertility, prosperity and peace of mind.²⁹ The *shofar* blown during the morning service in all the synagogues, encouraged children from different synagogues to place bets on which *shofar* would be blown the longest for the *Trua Gedola* [the longest blast]. Boys scanned their stop-watches intently. On the eve of *Yom Kippur* the ceremony of *kaparah* was observed. A white fowl was rotated above the head of each member of the family, with a prayer that the slaughter of the bird would be accepted as atonement for sins. The fowls were then usually given to the poor.³⁰ Shanghai Sephardim recall the splendour of the *Sifrei Torah*, all on display for the *Kol Nidre*. While the tuneful Sephardi *Neila* was led from the *tebah* and responsively chanted by the *kahal*, a procession of congregants including the disabled, infants, and elderly, moved up one aisle to kiss each *Sefer Torah* in symbolic sealing of their repentance and then returned to their seats.³¹ The doors and windows of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue were opened wide inviting all Jews to participate. Many crowded into the courtyard where they strained to hear the traditional tunes.³²

²⁵ Rena Krasno, *Strangers Always; A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai*, (Berkeley, 1992), p.111.

²⁶ *Gemorah, Bezah: 25 b*; R. Josef Caro, *Orah Hayeem*, 522.

²⁷ Compare Israel Cohen, 'Jews in Modern China', *JC*, 24/2/22, p.4; Yosef Ya'acov's Sabbath in Shanghai was; 'a relaxed day, extended repast, Torah reading, football, cards, mah-jongg, no radio, no cars', Ya'acov, interview by author, tape recording, Jerusalem, 20/5/93; See Mavis Hyman, *Indian-Jewish Cooking*, (London, 1992).

²⁸ R. Caro recommends myrtle in preference to other fragrant herbs, Caro, *Orah Hayeem*, 297 Article 4.

²⁹ The Talmudic reference for the symbolic use of some of these fruits and vegetables is to be found in the *Babylonian Talmud Keritot*, 6a and *Harayot* 12, and are recommended as a good omen. Their Hebrew [or Aramaic] names provided propitious play on words; Nathan, *op. cit.*, p.44. The distinctive Baghdadi greeting for the Festivals is *Tizkoo Le-Shanim Rabboth*, [may you merit many years].

³⁰ The desire for a tangible 'scapegoat' led many orthodox Sephardim to disregard the ruling of Rabbi Caro in the *Shulhan Aruch* discouraging the practice, Caro, *op. cit.*, 605, article 4.

³¹ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.12.

³² Horowitz, correspondence with author, Los Angeles, 2/5/93.

Following close on the heels of the Fast, was the Festival of *Succoth*. *Ethrogim* for use during the Festival were grown in the garden of D. E. J. Abraham and made available to the community.³³ Many Shanghai Sephardim continued to erect *succoth* till the outbreak of the Second World War. In contrast Musleah observed that in time there were fewer *succoth* in Calcutta due to the growing embarrassment and the unwillingness of the Sephardim to attract attention.³⁴ During the Festivals, in keeping with Baghdadi custom, Shanghai Sephardim visited relatives and friends. Rose water, contained in a distinctive *kumkum*, was sprinkled on the hands of the departing guests who made a benediction on smelling the perfume.³⁵ During the Festival of *Simhat Torah* the *kahal* formed a procession encircling the *tebah*, clapped hands and chanted popular Baghdadi tunes and *zemirot* notably *simhoona*, *simhoona*, *besimhat hatorah* [rejoice, rejoice, at the rejoicing of the law]. The emotion of the moment generally led the community to drop its reserve and make merry in the Baghdadian way. Many were nonplussed trying to fathom the spiritual content of one of the favoured tunes in all Eastern Baghdadi communities in the East, which ended '*fiztak, bindak, joz, wuloz, ulsamka miqliya*', [pistachio, hazel and walnut and almond and fried fish].³⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century *Simhat Torah* assumed Zionist associations in Shanghai when Isaac Levis, son of the community's midwife, introduced the tune of *Hatikvah* into the service, this becoming an accepted part of the ritual. The children received Zionist badges or flags, in addition to the customary jar of sweets, after the morning service.³⁷

Hanukkah was celebrated with the lighting of oil lamps at home.³⁸ By the 1920s children received toys, an Ashkenazi custom, and several visited the department store Santa Claus. Those who participated in their school friends' Christmas parties maintained that 'it did not seem to matter; we weren't enticed away

³³ Abe Abraham, interview by author, tape recording, Shanghai, 6/4/90.

³⁴ Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.219.

³⁵ Flower Elias Judith Elias Cooper, *The Jews of Calcutta: The Autobiography of a Community 1798-1972*, (Calcutta, 1974); p.219; *Magen Abraham*, 128, Article 8; Haham Zvi recommended this practice, *Responsa*, No.92.

³⁶ *IM*, 6/11/36, p.18.

³⁷ He taught it to the *kahal*, Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.13.

³⁸ Yitzhak Avishur, '*Hanukkah: Lamps and Festival Among the Jews of Babylon*', *Nehardea*, No. 4, April 1990; the strong impression the lighting of the oil lamps made on Sephardi youth is depicted in Gregory Patent, *Shanghai Passage*, (New York, 1990), p.48.

from our own faith'.³⁹ In Shanghai *Hanukkah* became associated with parties and fund-raising dances.⁴⁰ The focus of *Purim* was the reading of the *megillah* in the synagogue where children stamped their feet and shouted at the mention of Haman. Trays of delicacies [*shalah manoth*] were exchanged,⁴¹ with wrapped coins as gifts for the children. On the eve of *Purim* children counted shekels in anticipation of gambling - the only day in the year it was acceptable.⁴² Fancy dress balls were held in aid of various charities. Concerts were generally performed by the pupils of the Shanghai Jewish School during which bags of sweets 'bearing Zionist colours and a profusion of cakes and tea were served'.⁴³

The Festival of *Pesach* required the most preparation in the home. Well into the 1930's Shanghai Sephardim clubbed together to make *matzoth*. Wheat for the *sedarim* was cleaned to ensure it was free from chaff, before it was ground by the local Jewish baker with a stone hand mill.⁴⁴ It was a concerted effort involving the children, who sang the *Hallel* in a boisterous chorus while it baked in a communal *tanoor*.⁴⁵ Unlike the Ashkenazim, many Sephardim eat rice during *Pesach*. The women removed the chaff and ground some of the rice into powder which was combined with rose water and baked into soft cakes. Specifically Baghdadi were some of the ceremonial dishes of the *Pesach Shatakah* night, notably *hallech* made from date juice and ground nuts. The *sedarim* were broken carefully into the Hebrew letters *daleth* and *vav*, and the *daleth* was wrapped in a scarf and tied over the child's left shoulder. The father then asked his youngest son in Arabic to explain where he had come from and whither he was travelling. The boy answered by reciting the *Ma*

³⁹ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.13; compare *IM*, 8/1/26, p.5.

⁴⁰ *IM*, 13/1/22, p.21; In the presence of some 450 the *Menorah* was lit by Brown, the choir sang the *Haneroth Hallalu* and the *Hatikvah*, *IM*, 1/2/32, p.22 and 3/1/36, p.6.

⁴¹ The servant delivering the *shalah manoth* was accompanied by a child of the household. Halachic opinion is that the *shalah manoth* should be given by a messenger. Regarding a gentile acting as a messenger see *Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin*, 41b; *Netivot Hamishpat*, Chap. 182; Orthodox Sephardim were careful to supervise the handling of food by their servants, Cissy Flegg, interview by author, tape recording, Jerusalem, 15/10/93.

⁴² Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.14. For half shekels they used Hong Kong dollars which had the proper silver content which Shanghai dollars lacked.

⁴³ *IM*, 2/3/28, p.8.

⁴⁴ Kosher milk for *Pesach* was available at a farm where some cows were kept on a special diet, Toueg, interview by author, 2/5/93.

⁴⁵ Isaac Abraham, interview by author, tape recording, London, 10/5/92 and Flegg, interview by author, 10/4/92. By the turn of the century Matza was made in Shanghai from wheat carefully supervised from its growth in Calcutta. Machinery for grinding it was imported from America, *IM*, 5/2/1909, p.22. Compare, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.69.

Nishtana.⁴⁶ In several homes Baghdadi traditions were cherished to the last detail, and the *Haggada* was read in Hebrew, and in Arabic.⁴⁷

Shabouth, the Harvest Festival, which also commemorated the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, was celebrated seven weeks after *Pesach*. It became associated with the delicacy *khahi*, a flaky, butter-filled fried pastry smothered with honey and whipped cream. In this way the yearly cycle passed pleasantly except for the ninth day of the Hebrew month of *Ab* which was observed as a fast day in commemoration of the destruction of both the Temples. Before the fast the austere repast of lentils and rice was eaten sitting on the floor.

...Looking back I find we lived a wholly Jewish existence. Yet I can also point to our secular everyday affairs being typically British in most respects.⁴⁸

In this manner Shanghai Sephardim expressed their Jewish consciousness through their religious observances, based on a common heritage shared with Jewish communities throughout the world. The religious rites and customs practised in the home and in the synagogue on the Festivals and on the Sabbath were the main-spring of their communal life, and were reinforced by the other distinctive rituals that were observed through their life cycle. Festive days were intended to unify the community. Whether or not this was the case depended on individual observances.

In 1914 a grave blow was struck at the traditional Judaism of Bombay Jews, which vicariously affected its sister community in Shanghai. Albert Raymond, the Bombay manager of Messrs. E. D. Sassoon and Co., insisted that all Jews employed in the Sassoon mills and firms had to work on Sabbath and on all Jewish Festivals, except *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, or face dismissal. With this total reversal of David Sassoon's policy of fostering the religious observance of his employees, the community leaders penalised traditional Jews who found it extremely difficult to find employment which did not infringe on their religious observance. At this time all

⁴⁶ Horowitz, p.15; Nathan, *op. cit.*, pp.42-48.

⁴⁷ Sidney Jonah, the grandson of S.J. Solomon, still rattles off by rote parts of the '*sharrah*', [translation of Hebrew into Arabic], Jonah, interview by author, telephone, California, 20/12/93.

⁴⁸ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.16.

British gentile businesses were open on Saturday morning.⁴⁹ The effects were comparable in Shanghai in 1922, when with the merger of Messrs. E. D. Sassoon and Co. and Messrs. Arnhold Brothers, almost all the Jewish staff, 'some who have grown grey in the service of the Firm', were abruptly dismissed.⁵⁰ The closure in May 1935 of the Shanghai offices of Messrs. David Sassoon and Co. was yet another blow to the traditionalists.⁵¹

Rites de Passage

In the early years of the Settlement there were no resident *mohelim* in the Eastern ports. Circumcisions were deferred for months, and the hapless infants were entrusted to the tender mercies of visiting *mohelim*, who often had to rectify their bungling with a second operation. In 1889 Shanghai boasted an expert *mohel*, J.R. Elias, a 'closely watched' protégé of the 'saintly E. J. Abraham',⁵² who provided a special scholarship for Elias to become efficient in *shehita*, *Brith Milah* and *hazanuth* in Baghdad.⁵³ 'Yosef Rahamim' became a household word among Sephardim, who as a mark of honour, inscribed his name in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund [at a cost of £60]. He served the community for thirty-five years performing several hundred *brithoth milah*,⁵⁴ and trained his successor J. Moosa who became an efficient *mohel*.⁵⁵

Childbirth among Baghdad Jews had always been connected with superstitions to ward off demons and evil spirits.⁵⁶ It was believed that for the first forty days after childbirth, demons and spirits were particularly menacing. Therefore a clove

⁴⁹ Letter to the Editor from Noory Azoory Bombay, 22/10/24. *IM*, 5/12/24, p.17; 'The Bombay Jewish Sufferers' complained of being compelled to work on *Tisha b'Ab*, and *Purim*; *IM*, 5/10/34, p.16, and 1/11/35, p.18; Caro, *Orah Hayeem*, 551, article 3, and 696, article 1; see also criticism of E. D. Sassoon & Co., for paying not more than Rs 40 a month, 'not even a living wage', *IM*, 1/11/35, p.20.

⁵⁰ E. D. Sassoon & Co., preferred to consolidate their holdings in Bombay, Calcutta, Manchester and London. The staff received a bonus of four months' pay, *IM*, 2/11/22, p.21; 1/8/24, p.11.

⁵¹ Sir Victor Sassoon stressed that he was a utilitarian and the firm was not a charitable institution, *IM*, 6/3/35, p.22. *TJT*, September, 1937 p.10; also a tribute to those who helped to increase Sassoon assets, October 1937, pp.1-2, p.6. and pp.15-16.

⁵² Ezekiel Joshua Abraham [1824 - 1896] was the father of D. E. J. Abraham, *IM*, 5/1/23, pp.14-15.

⁵³ *IM*, 15/12/21, p.8.

⁵⁴ *IM*, 5/1/23, p.14.

⁵⁵ *IM*, 15/12/21, p.8.

⁵⁶ Superstitions are discussed in *Gemorah, Baba Metzia*, 107 b; *Pirka Aboth*, Chap. 2. Article 2; Morris Cohen, 'The Jews of Baghdad', *JC*, 30/7/1880, p.11.

of garlic,⁵⁷ strings of amber beads and an *afsa* were hung by the bedside of the child or mother.⁵⁸ On the eighth evening after the birth of sons [*leilt Akd-el-Yas*] excerpts from the *Zohar* were read and the *Eliyahu* chair was borrowed from the synagogue. It was decorated with myrtle and a Pentateuch [Five books of Moses] placed on it.⁵⁹ Circumcision generally took place in the home.⁶⁰

For centuries belief in evil spirits was prevalent in Babylon and, despite the condemnation by the better informed rabbis, superstitions were impossible to eradicate.⁶¹ It was believed that evil spirits, *msahbah*, which traversed the world had to be appeased. They were said to dwell in trees, and Baghdadi Jews avoided walking under them at night. Black cats with bright eyes were regarded as demons, and cats and dogs were not reared as domestic pets. Shell and imitation turquoises were joined by a gallnut which was believed to split if the wearer was struck by the evil eye.⁶² Many Baghdadi Jews believed in these superstitions well into the twentieth century.

Bar Mitzvah

A boy's status of adulthood was confirmed by the ritual of *Bar Mitzvah*. In Baghdad boys were permitted to read the *maftir* and *haphtarah* in the synagogue before the age of thirteen. Therefore the ritual most associated with his coming of age was the wearing of *tephillin* at a ceremony held at home on the day after the Hebrew birthday, rather than being called to the law.⁶³ On the following Sabbath

⁵⁷ 'It would smell terribly', Toueg, interview by author, 2/5/93; 'We never count children, we say "thank God plenty"', Flegg, interview by author, 10/4/92.

⁵⁸ On the sixth day after the birth of a child, *Shasha*, a ceremony designed to ward off evil spirits, took place, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.200.

⁵⁹ Myrtle was identified with the prophet Khidr Elyas.

⁶⁰ The baby, carried by the grandmothers, was presented to the *mohel*, to the emotional Baghdadi chant '*ben ba lanu*', Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

⁶¹ People from Baghdad were supposed to be more prone to the evil eye, Rabbi Josef Hayeem, *Responsa, Rav Pealim, Yoreh Deah*, Vol.2, (Jerusalem, 1980), pp.28b-29b; David Solomon Sassoon recorded superstitious beliefs and practices told him by Hakham Sason Smootha in 1910, David Sassoon, *op. cit.*, pp.190-199. The *zohar* and other kabbalistic treatises were popular studies among Baghdadi Jews. The most basic source for Baghdadi mystical ritual and law is R. Josef Hayeem, *Ben Ish Hai*, (Jerusalem, 1898, Baghdad, 1902); Hayeem influenced by the Kabbalist Isaac Luria introduced into the prayers and ceremonial some mystical and kabbalistic practices. Baghdad was the seat of kabbalistic and astrological studies, Musleah, *op. cit.*, 232; I. Isaac, 'Queer Beliefs of the Arab Jews', *The Israelite*, October, 1917, Vol.I, No.X, pp.180-181, and pp.190-191.

⁶² H. Jason, *Folktales of the Jews of Iraq: Types Genres and Narrators* - An analysis of content, type and ethno-poetic genres of 1200 folktales recorded by the Israel Folk Tale Archives from Jews of Iraq in Israel, 1957-1983, (Haifa, 1990); Cabbalistic practices in Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.232.

⁶³ In Baghdad a boy was not allowed to wear *tephillin* before his thirteenth birthday, *Caf Ha Hayeem*, Vol. I, Chap. 37 article 3, footnote 14.

during the synagogue service he was called to read the *maftir* and *haphtarah*, amid a shower of sweets and the sound of the *killili* from the ladies' gallery. *Bar Mitzvah* celebrations in Shanghai were religious occasions shared by the family and close friends.⁶⁴ After his *Bar Mitzvah* the boy qualified to be a member of a *minyán* and also to be called to the reading of the *Torah*. The injunction that phylacteries be worn by Jewish males on every weekday ensured that their links with Judaism would be maintained.

Weddings

In Baghdad girls between the ages of ten and thirteen were given in marriage to boys between eighteen and twenty.⁶⁵ By the turn of the century, however, girls rarely married before the age of sixteen. Jacob Sapir⁶⁶ observed that Baghdadian men married only virgins below the age of seventeen and preferred to choose them from Baghdad, Syria and the Holy Land.⁶⁷ Marriages were arranged by a *shadchanith*, generally between families of similar ethnic backgrounds, and with cousins or near relatives, notably maternal uncles.⁶⁸ The tremendous importance Baghdadi Jews attached to ancestry is demonstrated in the searching inquiries made even to the third and fourth generations of the prospective bride and groom. A well known Baghdadian proverb *Khidh liesil wula alihseer*. 'Take a man of good family, even if he be on matting', suggests that descent was valued more than wealth.

The early Sephardi pioneers in Shanghai strictly adhered to the many distinctive rituals connected with the solemnisation of the marriage.⁶⁹ If the match was acceptable, the groom's parents sent the bride a tray laden with sweets, flowers, perfume and a piece of jewellery. Rue leaves were included to protect against the

⁶⁴ Nathan, *op. cit.*, pp.52-66. Perhaps there was no need for elaborate parties as an incentive to keep the child's interest, *Responsa, Igrot Moshe, Orach Hayeem*, Vol.1. It is noteworthy that the speech Ezekiel Abraham delivered for his *Bar Mitzvah* in January 1933, composed by Rev. Mendel Brown, was given by his grandson in November 1992 in New York, Abraham interview by author, telephone, 20/12/93, New York.

⁶⁵ Yitzhak Avishur, 'The Jewish Wedding in Baghdad in the Last 200 years', *Nehardea*, Journal of the Babylonian Heritage Cultural Centre, Or-Yehuda, No.3, June 1988, p.27.

⁶⁶ Author of *Even Sapir*, (Mainz, 1871).

⁶⁷ The diaries of Shalom ben Aharon ben Obadiah ha-Cohen, [born in Aleppo] the founder of the Jewish community in Calcutta, indicate that the wives of the early settlers often joined their husbands after a few years, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.201.

⁶⁸ Their fees were standard, *ibid.*, p.202. *Gemorah, Baba Batra*, 109b-110a.

⁶⁹ Flower Elias, *op. cit.*, p.54.

Birth Certificate.

No. 28

Sex	Name and Surname of Father	Name & Maiden Surname of Mother	Signature of Registrar & Residence of Informant	When and Where Born	Signature of Mother or Person Having Charge	Nationality
Male	Isaac Jacob Isaac	Rebecca Day	J. Isaac 48 West Wesley Road	23 rd Day 1951 48 West Wesley Rd	Isaac Isaac	Legation

Copy of the Entry of the Birth of Isaiah David
 Dated this 23rd day of October 1951
 President of the Jewish Communal Association of Shanghai.

Sephardic Jewish Communal Association

Shanghai

This is to Certify

that

Yeha Brud, ISAAC

Was Married to

Isaiah Meyer COHEN

23 January, 1951 - 16 Shabat 5711

Obel Rachel

Synagogue

M. M. Cohen

Officiating Minister

A. M. Sopher, R. D. Abraham

I witnessed by... I registered in the Registry of this Association as a marriage performed according to the Law of Israel.

Secretary

President

Shanghai, May 24, 1951.



מצא אשרה מצא טוב ויפק רצון מה'



On Tuesday on the Sixteenth day of the month Shebat, in the year 5711... since the creation of the world, such being the era according to which we are accustomed to reckon here in this city of Shanghai, situated on the Whangpoo River in the Republic of China: with the sanction of the Rabbis, whose renown, please God, shall increase forever, verily Isaiah Cohen, said to another Yeha Brud...

"Be thou my wife according to the law of Moses and Israel, and I, with the help of Heaven, will work for thee, feed, honour, comfort, support, maintain and clothe thee in accordance with the custom of Jewish husbands who work for, feed, honour, comfort, support, maintain and clothe their wives in truth and constancy. Moreover, I will set aside for thee as dowry the sum of the dowry, AND HE PLEDGED AND DREW ON HIS PROPERTY THE SUM OF SILVER ZUS two hundred that is, two hundred Zus of pure silver, which belong to thee according to the law of Moses, as well as thy food, clothing and necessaries, to live with thee in conjugal relations according to universal custom."

And Yeha Brud consented and became his wife. And Yeha Brud the above mentioned, agreed to add from his own an additional sum of ten hundred to the dowry that she brought from her mother's house, golden jewellery and dresses amounting to 4000... Isaiah Cohen agreed to increase this amount from his own with the sum of 1000... making in all with the additional sum and the dowry, exclusive of the principal, the sum of 15000... Isaiah Cohen who has all been duly received into the hands and under the control of the aforesaid Isaiah Cohen, who has enjoined it upon himself as a loan and debt.

And thus the aforesaid bridegroom Isaiah Cohen affirmed before us: "The responsibility of this entire marriage contract pertaining to principal, dowry and the additional sum, with all the other terms and conditions of this marriage contract I take upon myself and upon my heirs after me, so that all this shall be paid from the choicest part of my property, possessions or money that I now possess beneath the heavens or may hereafter acquire, movable and immovable property, including movable property upon my immovable possessions; all of which shall be paid from the payment of this marriage contract after my death—even to the very mantle upon my shoulders."

We have administered to Isaiah Cohen the above-mentioned bridegroom the perfect and complete legal formality of an agreement ("Kinyan"), under a legally acceptable token, for the establishment of all the foregoing in complete trust and strict oath in sight of ALMIGHTY GOD, both of those who swear in truth and of those who are here to confirm and establish all that is written and stated above, declaring null and void all conflicting declarations whatsoever and disqualifying their witnesses, according to the ruling of our sage Rabbi Solomon, son of Adereth—may his memory be for a blessing.

This is not to be regarded as an illusory obligation ("Ammakhta"), or as a mere form of document, but as being in agreement with all other legally accepted and properly arranged Ketuboth (marriage contracts) which are practised in Israel in accordance with the institution of our sages—may their memory be forever blessed.

And everything is valid, pure, strict, clear and established.
 Witnesses: Isaiah Cohen (Bridegroom), Isaiah Cohen (Secretary of the Association).

The stamp to the value of the fees charged may be affixed to this form and cancelled.

No.	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence of the Jews of Marriage	Father's Name and Residence	Rank or Profession of Father
1	31	Bachelor	Acting Secretary	879, Yuhu Rd. Shanghai	M. M. Cohen	Deceased
2	19	Spinster	Stenographer	430, Seymour Rd. Shanghai	J. Isaac	Merchant

is General, Shanghai according to the provisions of the Foreign Marriage Act, 1922 by me, S. D. Weiss, Kenneth Sigmund, Deputy Consul General.

evil spirits. At the *Mileek* held at the girl's home, the ring was placed on her finger by her mother-in-law. Special attention was paid by Baghdadi Jews to the *Leilt el-Hinni*, [Leolt el-Khadbah], on the eve of the wedding. The groom sent henna, sweets, wax candles and shoes to the bride's home where the nails of the bride were painted with henna to protect her from evil spirits, [*al kabsa*]. All these ceremonies were accompanied by Hebrew and Arabic songs, sung by distinct groups of singers, each with its own repertoire.⁷⁰ The joyous ladies' *killili* was a familiar sound at celebrations in the 1920s such as when the bridegroom was called up to the *Sefer Torah* in the synagogue on the Sabbaths before and after the wedding.⁷¹ The *ketuba* stated the value of the bride's dowry and the amount that the bridegroom contracted to give her in the event of a divorce.⁷² This sum was the first charge, after funeral expenses, on the husband's estate.⁷³

By the 1930s arranged marriages among Shanghai Sephardim were exceptional and by the third generation people usually chose their spouses. Dating took the form of shared lunches, hiring a junk and going up the river, bicycle rides, and outings to the cinema. Except for the occasional marriage ceremonies where the grandparents insisted that the Baghdad customs be observed, those described above were discarded by the third generation of Shanghai's Sephardim. There can be few more convincing manifestations of the extent to which they had become acculturated to the British, than the description of Jewish marriages in the local papers, under the revealing caption 'Wedding Bells'.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Galia N. Ben-Mordechai, 'The Musical Culture of Iraqi Jewry Spans the Globe', *Nehardea*, No. 6, March 1993, pp.9-10.

⁷¹ Rule No. 13 of the *Magen David* Synagogue founded in 1884 in Calcutta, stated that 'no one shall audibly felicitate congregations in any way such as the Arabic-speaking shrill outcry', Ida Cowen, *Jews in Remote Corners of the World*, (New Jersey, 1971); David Solomon Sassoon, *op. cit*, pp.181-189.

⁷² *TJM*, 3/4/14, p.133.

⁷³ The bride's dowry generally included, jewellery, furniture and *tallith* case and cap for the groom who contributed the mattress, and the bridal garments; *Ketuboth* were decorated with signs of good omen and fertility, *Nehardea*, No.5, June, 1991, pp.9-10; Shanghai *ketuboth* were basically in Aramaic with some technical terms and stock phrases in Hebrew. See Illustration p.94, by courtesy of Rose Horowitz, and Isaiah and Florrie Cohen.

⁷⁴ At the wedding of Louisa Isaac to Nooriel Isaacs members of the SMC Police Specials made a crossed baton arch on 30/11/30, reported in *NCH*, 2/12/30, p.303; *IM*, 2/1/31, p.36; Flora Kate Elias, to Ellis Hayim, *NCH*, 21/12/18, p.714; Cecilia Gubbay to M. Silas whose father, D.H.Silas performed the ceremony, *NCH*, 20/3/20, p.766; Moselle Shibbeth to Solomon Gatton, *NCH*, 10/6/22, p.753; Vera Elias to S.E. Levy, the ceremony was solemnised by Rabbi Hirsch and N.S. Levy; *NCH* 15/12/23, p.759; Sybil Moses to Maurice E. Dangoor, *NCH*, 28/2/25, p.347; Leah Benjamin to Cyril Minney, *IM*, 4/11/32, p.14; the religious ceremony associated with the 'Golden Wedding' celebration of Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Elisha is notable, *IM*, 3/5/35, p.21.

A list of the wedding presents and their donors was recorded in the *Israel's Messenger* and also the *North China Herald*.⁷⁵ In sharp contrast to the *izar* and *ebbayi* the bride and bridesmaids could have been models of a Western fashion magazine.⁷⁶ The marriage ceremony was generally held in the synagogue.⁷⁷ No one questioned the right of Jews, or anybody else, to practise their own community rites within the international enclave.⁷⁸ Honeymoons came into vogue among the less traditional Sephardim at the turn of the century, and judging from the 'Social and Personal Columns' of the *Israel's Messenger* the most favoured places for the wealthy were Japan, Hong Kong, Indo-China the Strait Settlements, England and America. This was a break with the customary *sheva berakoth*, when the seven benedictions prescribed by the Talmud and recited at the wedding ceremony were repeated for seven nights at festive dinners.⁷⁹ Moving into a new house was celebrated with a short service of dedication *chanukath ha bayit* while *mezuzoth* were nailed to doorposts of the house.

Exceptionally few Sephardi marriages in Shanghai ended in divorce,⁸⁰ although it was common in the foreign concessions.⁸¹ Divorce was supervised by the *Beth Din*, composed of elders of the community, who arranged for a scribe to draw up a *Get* which became effective when received by the wife.⁸² A few cases were heard at HM Supreme Court, but this was generally after the *Beth Din* failed to resolve the problem.⁸³ Marital trouble among the Sephardi community was infrequent according to HM Police Court records.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ For example *IM*, 2/10/1908, p.12; *TJM*, 3/4/1914, p.235.

⁷⁶ 'Every wedding was an occasion requiring a completely new outfit. It was like a ritual, the tailor came to the house, we pored over fashion magazines', Toueg, interview by author, 11/4/92.

⁷⁷ 'A Jewish Wedding', *NCH*, 10/3/1906, p.493; in the 1920s the Carlton Cafe was a popular venue for the wedding reception, usually a dance for some 300 guests, *IM*, 3/4/1908, p.9, 2/10/1908, p.12, 7/4/1922, p.17.

⁷⁸ Ya'acov, interview by author, 2/5/93; *IM*, 3/4/1908 p.9. In India if the trustees refused permission, the groom had his marriage solemnised in the presence of a quorum of ten men, Sargon, 'Anomalies of Jewish Marriages In India', *TJT*, April, 1934, pp.8-9.

⁷⁹ Generally *zemiroth* were sung in Hebrew and songs in Arabic notably 'Ya nabi, hilu hilu le sofer and *Suri goali ya* recorded in the Sassoon manuscript collection, Elias. pp.47-78.

⁸⁰ Only a handful are to be found in the law reports of the Supreme Court, notably 'The Cohen Divorce Case', *NCH*, 17/6/32, pp.842-845; 28/6/39, p.562, and 23/10/40, p.148; N. Nissim, Hon. Secretary SJCA, to Shanghai Consul General regarding re-marriage of Shalom Levy, PRO, FO656/3, 31/3/38.

⁸¹ Anecdotal evidence suggests this to Robert Bickers, Bickers, interview by author, London, 18/8/93.

⁸² Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

⁸³ *NCH*, 17/6/22, pp.844-845.

⁸⁴ For example, 'Marital Troubles in Court', Mrs. L. Benjamin v. Mr. B.F. Benjamin, *NCH*, 15/4/36, p.119.

Funeral and Burial Customs

Death was announced in the synagogues, but never on the Sabbath and Festivals, by placing a bier in front of the dead person's home.⁸⁵ Mourners rent their garments, and male mourners also tied handkerchiefs around their necks. Women took part in sewing of the shroud, which was made from the finest cotton, but they were prohibited from attending the burial. The bier was carried on the shoulders of the mourners, and psalms, laments and didactic verses such as *Shokhne Bate Homer*, were chanted as the procession made its way to the cemetery.⁸⁶ Unlike the Ashkenazim who interred the body in a coffin, the Sephardim buried their dead wrapped only in a shroud.⁸⁷ The ancient *halakha* required that the mourners be provided with the first meal after the burial of a relative. The obligation rested on friends and neighbours and in this way the community became involved in the bereavement. Bread and hard-boiled eggs, [symbolic of silence also considered a source of life] is what the neighbours tended to bring.⁸⁸ During the prescribed seven days of mourning the mourners sat on mats on the ground. Services were held thrice daily for seven days and then on Sabbath afternoons throughout the month after the burial. *Kaleicha* [flat cakes flavoured with saffron] were distributed among relatives and friends to symbolically release the deceased from obligations he may not have discharged.⁸⁹ During the first year of mourning a wick was kindled in a glass containing oil and water. This rite was repeated on the anniversary of the death thereafter.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Hirsch formed the Shanghai *Hevra Kadisha*, *IM*, 11/11/21.

⁸⁶ The unique exception was the funeral of S. J. Solomon, as a tribute of respect and affection his body, not in a bier, was carried by the mourners a distance of over two miles to the cemetery, Sidney Jonah, interview by author, telephone, Los Angeles, 20/12/1993. The Baikal Road cemetery was divided into two sections separating the Ashkenazi and Sephardi dead, Krasno, *op. cit.*, p.38; Elias, *Calcutta*, p.9; Jack Riemer, (ed.), *Jewish Reflection on Death*, (New York, 1977), pp.75-104;

⁸⁷ R. Caro, *Yorad Deah*, 362, article 2; see also H. Rabinowicz, *A Guide to Life: Jewish Laws and Customs of Mourning*, 2nd. edition (London, 1969).

⁸⁸ Isaac Sassoon, correspondence with author, New York, 1/11/93.

⁸⁹ Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p.188; Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.208.

⁹⁰ Several Shanghai Sephardim, notably Salem Shalome David made provision in their wills for 'all ceremonies and prayers for the repose of my soul, performed according to Jewish custom and rites and on a scale conforming to my station in life', he also paid Rs 3,000 to an orphanage in Jerusalem to celebrate the anniversary of his death 'in the usual manner', and to appoint one of the orphans to read *kadish* for him, 7/5/25, PRO FO917/2829/2653.

Accounts of some of the funerals of wealthy Shanghai Sephardim in the 1920s, notably of Edward Ezra, demonstrate the Anglicising influence.⁹¹ The coffin passed into the cemetery through a guard of honour of the Jewish troop of Boy Scouts.⁹² Although it is not a Jewish custom to have flowers at a funeral,⁹³ his grave was covered in hundreds of wreaths'.⁹⁴ These were nonetheless only peripheral changes, the essential ritual and customs remained intact.

A Sephardi identity was fostered both in the home and in the synagogue, where shared religious observance drew the community together. Because of wider socio-cultural changes, Shanghai Sephardim became highly selective in the rituals they observed. Many of the practices that were once acknowledged as important elements of the traditional way of life of the group, were abandoned in varying degrees. For some, traditional Jewish beliefs and practices were upheld as personal religious convictions, for others it was a means of association. Several of the younger generation condemned what they considered to be the empty and hypocritical adherence to every detail of ritual; the kernel was rotted and only the husk remained.⁹⁵ Undoubtedly the minutiae of rituals made it easier for the Sephardim to maintain their distinctive identity. Before the turn of the century Baghdadi traditions were generally preserved. Barriers with the wider society gradually crumbled and by the 1920s as some Sephardim became Anglicised their links with Judaism became weaker.

⁹¹ Ezra's coffin, covered by a black velvet pall and surmounted by a single wreath, led the procession in a carriages followed by nine carriages carrying the family, *NCH*, 24/12/21, p.833.

⁹² *NCH*, *ibid.*, p.833; *IM*, 13/1/21, pp.14, 19; a description of Ezra in Morton Cameron, *Present Day Impressions of the Far East and Prominent and Progressive Chinese at Home and Abroad*, (London & Shanghai, 1917), pp.379-382; see also *IM*, 30/5/1902, p.23; his commercial role recorded in G.E. Miller, *op. cit.*, p.271.

⁹³ *Moed Katan*, 27 a/b; Talmudic evidence suggests that scented herbs and myrtle were used, *Bezah*, 2, Chronicle 16,14; *Baba Kama*, 16b.

⁹⁴ *NCH*, 24/12/21, p.833; 'all classes of the community, foreign and Chinese attended', and photographs captioned 'the Funeral Procession', 'A Touching Tribute', [from the Scouts], 'Under a Pall of Flowers', in *IM*, 13/1/22, pp.14-20; a list of 'Charitable Contributions' in memory of the deceased generally appeared in the *IM*.

⁹⁵ For example *IM*, 11/2/21, p.21.

Sephardi Synagogues in Shanghai

...wherever ten Jews are found they are in duty bound to organise a synagogue...⁹⁶

Judaism regards the synagogue as the communal home of every Jew. By 1898 the *Beth El* and *Shearith Israel* served as nerve centres of the community in Shanghai, and were used as *Beth Hakeneset*, *Beth Hatefillah*, and also *Beth Hamidrash*.⁹⁷ The Sephardim gravitated around these synagogues, which became the focus of community activity, centres for social exchange and public meetings. Before the turn of the century they naturally also served an important economic role, as it was likely that the merchants, who came together every morning and evening for the services, discussed business. Synagogue rituals and attendance were strong forces of Jewish identity.

During the early 1870s there were hardly two score members in Shanghai.⁹⁸ Until 1875 the *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* services were held in the spacious dining room of Messrs. David Sassoon Sons and Co. The next year M.S. Gubbay, the senior partner of the firm offered a vacant house in Kiangse Road, near the junction of Foochow Road, to be used as a temporary synagogue during the High Holidays. This was adapted through the efforts of D.S. Silas and J. Moses into a comfortable house of worship.⁹⁹ A small *Sefer Torah*, the first ever in Shanghai, sent to Moses from his friends abroad arrived for the Festivals. Timing of the services, depended on assembling a *minyan*.¹⁰⁰ The growth of the congregation necessitated a move to larger premises in Foochow Road, where it adopted the name

⁹⁶ *IM*, 4/5/23, p.4; *Rambam*, Chap. XI, article I.

⁹⁷ Though referred to as synagogues, they were in fact prayer halls not specifically constructed for this use. Baghdad's twenty-one synagogues were regularly attended by almost the whole community. Their brick walls were bare, and the roof was left open in many places for light and air, which also let in the rain. The benches were covered with carpets, and there was nowhere to place the prayer books, Morris Cohen, 'The Jews of Baghdad', *JC*, 30/7/1880, p.11, reprinted from the Annual Report of the Anglo-Jewish Association.

⁹⁸ 'An Interview with Mr. S. J. Solomon...The Grand Old Man of Shanghai Jewry', *IM*, 27/10/18, p.55; 'Nous n'avons pas trouvé de communauté juive établie avant 1870', J. Dehergne, 'Israel à Shanghai: les communautés juives', *Bulletin de l'Université l'Aurore*, Vol.3, series, 9, p.272.

⁹⁹ The donations received during the month of the Festivals exceeded the expense of furnishing the synagogue, *IM*, 27/10/18, p.55.

¹⁰⁰ In the early days of the Settlement in order to muster a *minyan* for the *Selihoth* services before dawn the *shamash* [beadle] 'would go to every Jewish home yelling at the top of his voice, 'oora, oora, mish shenathchaim,' *IM*, 7/6/29, p.7. and 7/9/28, p.22.

Beth El.¹⁰¹ Within a few years it was accommodated in a more spacious house in Peking Road, near the junction of Kiangse Road.¹⁰² At a meeting of the members of the *Beth El* on the 2 August 1887 the religious organisation of the community began.¹⁰³ In 1898 a second synagogue, the *Shearith Israel*, was established in a house in Wuchang Road.¹⁰⁴ It boasted regular services twice daily and housed a *Talmud Torah* (Hebrew School) 'for the voluntary imparting of Hebrew knowledge to the little ones of some of the members of the community'.¹⁰⁵ More spacious premises for the burgeoning congregation was found first in Seward Road [now 541 Dong Dai Ming Road] in 1900 and then Whangpoo Road.¹⁰⁶ The Baghdad *minhagim* were followed in these two synagogues which were attended principally by Sephardim.¹⁰⁷ The main source of income for synagogues was the auction of synagogue privileges; notably lighting the lamps, *komas* and the opening of the *hakhal*.¹⁰⁸ Auctions were conducted in Arabic and the buyer was blessed in Hebrew at the end of each transaction. The highest bidder won the right to the respective *mitzvoth*. Wealthy members would buy them at an inflated price and sometimes present them to other congregants.¹⁰⁹ The *Sifrei Torah* were generally imported from Baghdad, and the typically Baghdadian *tik*, in which they were contained were often overlaid with exquisite gold or silver with embossed floral patterns. The scrolls

¹⁰¹ The synagogue was a room about thirty or forty feet square, taking up the entire upper floor of the building. It was plainly yet neatly furnished, with the women's section railed off from the rest, 'in true orthodox fashion, for the Jewish community of Shanghai is too limited in numbers to indulge in the luxury of dividing itself into sects', Adler Stern, *op. cit.*, He visited the synagogue in 1888.

¹⁰² *IM*, 27/10/18, p.55, 11/2/21, p.16 and 6/3/25, p.6; M. Sopher, Honorary Secretary from 1878-1908 was succeeded by J. Salmon B.A. LL.B., from 1913-1920; *Directory of China 1906*, p.793; its site now houses the Friendship store, Betta, *op. cit.*, p. 53; the *Beth El* Synagogue was built in Calcutta in 1856, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.37.

¹⁰³ M. Brown, lists the leading members in 'The Modern Jews of China Shanghai, Part II: The Origin and Development of the Shanghai Jewish Community', *IM*, 4/12/36, p.10; somewhat surprisingly the President was Louis Moore, an Ashkenazi Jew from England, and the Vice Presidents were R.A. Gubbay and S.A. Nathan, *The China Directory for 1887*.

¹⁰⁴ *IM*, 4/6/20, pp.42-43; Kranzler gives the date 1900, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.49; Dicker gives the date 1998, *op. cit.*, p.66; *Israel's Messenger* probably erroneously gives the date 1899 in a retrospective account, *IM*, 6/3/25, p.6.; See also Betta, *op. cit.*, pp.49-50.

¹⁰⁵ It was the genesis of the Shanghai Jewish School.

¹⁰⁶ *IM*, 27/10/18, p.55 and a retrospective account in 3/6/27, p.16; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.49.

¹⁰⁷ The *hazan* of the *Bethel* was N. Nahoum in 1906 and Shooker in 1907. S.E. Abraham was *hazan* of the *Shearith Israel*.

¹⁰⁸ *IM*, 8/8/22, p.24.

¹⁰⁹ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93; the custom of selling the *komas* in lieu of membership subscriptions was instituted by Simon Dwek Cohen in 1825 in Calcutta. Moses Dwek initiated the system of auctioning privileges such as opening the ark, carrying *Sifrei Torah*, reading *zemirot*, and *komas*, Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.30, 197.

were usually a gift to the synagogue, dedicated to the memory of a deceased person whose name was inscribed on the inside of the minaret-like top of the case.¹¹⁰ Until the organisation of the *Ohel Moshe* Synagogue in 1907, the Russian Jewish immigrants to Shanghai were assigned rooms in the *Shearith Israel* Synagogue for their services.¹¹¹

S. J. Solomon provides an illuminating account of the events which had provoked the more orthodox members of the *Beth El* to sever their affiliation to the synagogue and establish the *Shearith Israel*.¹¹² A member of the congregation, who had bought a *koma* arrived in a carriage, with a cigar in his hand, in violation of the Sabbath and was censured by another member [presumably D.E.J. Abraham].¹¹³ The strictly orthodox congregants decided to conduct daily services in private residences.¹¹⁴ It was probably Abraham who rented a house in Seward Road which he converted into a synagogue and maintained at his own expense. This was the genesis of the *Shearith Israel* [1899] where congregants were expected to be strictly orthodox in their practices.¹¹⁵ In 1914, however, in the teeth of strong opposition, the sale of *mitzvot* to the less observant in the congregation was adopted by the *Shearith Israel*.

¹¹⁰ Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p.166. See for example 'Consecration of a new *Sefer Torah*' in memory of Salem David, *IM*, 8/7/27, pp.15-16. In memory of their dead relatives, Baghdadi Jews frequently donated *parokhoth*, or silver appurtenances to the synagogue, *IM*, 13/1/21, pp.14,19, and 6/7/23, p.1; compare Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.198.

¹¹¹ When the community numbered 1,000 in the late 1920s, Rabbi Meier Ashkenazi, a member of the Lubavitch Hassidic group, was appointed minister. Orthodox Sephardim recognised him as their spiritual leader, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.79, note 83, quotes the obituary in *The New York Times*, 27/8/54, p.21; *IM*, 4/6/26, p.12, 2/11/28, p.10 and 1/2/32, p.22.

¹¹² Solomon states that the incident took place on the night of *Rosh Hashanah*, 1903, which fell on the Sabbath. This does not, however, correspond with the date 1898 specified for the establishment of the *Shearith Israel* in *IM*, 4/6/20, pp.42-43; Kranzler, *op. cit.* p.49. A similar cleavage took place in Calcutta in 1816, when the community of less than 50 Jews was forced to maintain two places of worship, Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.25, 159-180.

¹¹³ *IM*, 4/6/20, p.42; Bombay and Calcutta issued coupons for use on the Sabbath and Festivals by the Bombay Electric Supply and Tramways Co. Ltd., *TJT*, July, 1937, p.3; Rabbi Ouziel, [then of Tel Aviv], treatise '*Mishpetei Uziel*', (1935), question 28, gave it his sanction in a place where the majority of the inhabitants were non-Jews, if the purpose of the journey was to perform a *mitzvah*, like attending the synagogue services. Hayeem Jacob Cohen's treatise, *Imray Shabbath* [1974] explained the grounds for the prohibition against the use of trams on the Sabbath; Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.259; Rabbi Josef Hayeem, *Rav Pe'alim, Orach Hayeem*, Vol.I.

¹¹⁴ The founders included Solomon, S. Hayeem D.E.J., and A. Abraham, N. and S. Levy, Moosa, Somekh, Ezra, Levis, *IM*, 3/6/27, p.14.

¹¹⁵ The synagogue moved to Boone Road and then to Chapoo Road in March 1925 and was incorporated with the *Beth Aharon* in 1927, *IM*, 6/3/25, p.6.

After a few months' trial, at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 9 March 1915, the majority were unwilling to accept violations of the Sabbath.¹¹⁶ The acceptance of the resolution 'that henceforth only observers of the Sabbath, *Yom Kippur* and Holidays could be called to the law and taken in a *minyán*... especially in this enlightened age', caused reverberations in the Eastern Jewish communities, and it was argued that, if universally accepted, world synagogue attendance would plummet.¹¹⁷ The *Beth El* and *Shearith Israel* continued to serve the religious needs of the entire Jewish community.¹¹⁸

By the end of World War I the increase in the *kehilla* warranted the construction of large synagogues, and with the influx of Baghdadi immigrants the community had clearly outgrown their prayer halls.¹¹⁹ In November 1894, Shanghai's Fiftieth Jubilee year, the Shanghai Jewish community, numbering some one hundred and fifty, 'felt very sore' that they did not possess a synagogue comparable with the magnificent churches in which Shanghai Jubilee services were held. Both synagogue premises had deteriorated and become unfit for religious worship.¹²⁰ In 1901 the gift to the Hong Kong community of the *Ohel Leah* by Jacob Elias Sassoon¹²¹ encouraged the sending of a petition bearing the signatures of over fifty Shanghai Sephardim to Arthur David Sassoon in London, requesting funds for a 'proper and substantial' synagogue for the community, the majority of whom were Sassoon employees.¹²² This appears to have had no success. When approached by Simon Levy, an elder of the community, Sir Jacob Sassoon Bart.,

¹¹⁶ If the resolution was not passed they were not willing to maintain the synagogue, *IM*, 4/6/20, p.42.

¹¹⁷ *IM*, 4/6/20, p.42-43; some wished to address this question to the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of London, Dr. Gaster, *IM*, 10/9/20, p.18; for a discussion on the anomaly of using rickshaws and palanquins while condemning horse carriages and motorcars see *TJM*, 31/10/13, p.159; '60 percent of the Jews to-day are by force of circumstances debarred from observing the Sabbath', B.J.H. Somake to the editor *IM*, 10/9/20, pp.18-19.

¹¹⁸ Its *mikveh* was still used after 1941 as no new one was built in the Ashkenazi New Synagogue, Krantzler, *op. cit.*, p.80, note 87.

¹¹⁹ *IM*, 11/11/21, p.12.

¹²⁰ 'Proposed New Synagogue at Shanghai', *JC*, 12/1/1894, p.14, and 12/3/1920, p.13; 'Hardly standing room in *Shearith Israel*', *IM*, 29/10/1920, p.20; 'New Synagogue contemplated in Hongkew', *IM*, 11/11/1921, p.12; by this time the synagogues in Baghdad were badly in need of repair and by the 1930s 'they were quite unfit for their purpose', *IM*, 1/5/33, p.1.

¹²¹ The synagogue was opened in 1902, *JC*, 28/6/1907, p.13, and *JC*, 14/6/1901, p.13. From 1860, Arthur David Sassoon and Solomon David Sassoon provided the community with premises for religious services, *IM*, 3/6/27, p.22. The foundation stone of *Ohel Leah* was laid on 7/6/1901. The synagogue was dedicated in memory of Jacob Sassoon's mother. He donated the building and the site was the combined gift of the brothers Edward Meyer and Jacob Sassoon. In February 1924, the community numbered 100, *JC*, 24/2/22, p.4 and 14/6/1901, p.13.

¹²² Letter to the editor signed 'A lover of Mosaic Law', Shanghai, 30/11/1893, *JC*, 12/1/1894, p.14.

ISRAEL'S MESSENGER

Official Organ of the Shanghai Zionist Association.

A Fortnightly Jewish Paper Devoted to the Interests of Jews and

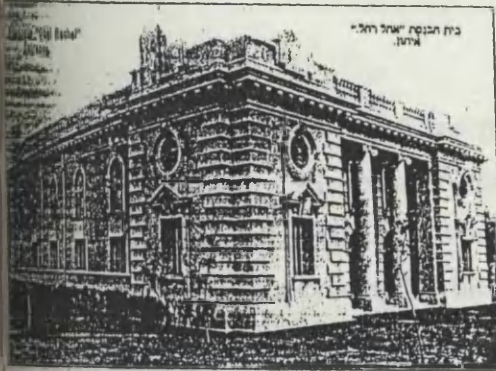
Judaism in the East.

OFFICE: 16 PEKING ROAD, SHANGHAI.

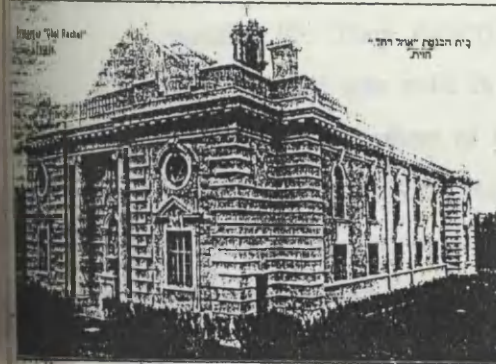
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Shanghai, Friday, 17th May, 1920—Sivan 4th, 5687.

SYNAGOGUE "OHEL-RACHEL"



Exterior view leading to the entrance.



Exterior view showing the corner-stone.

We regret to say that the second edition which was confidently expected to be ready for a consecration service on the eve of Rosh Hashana, is still far from being ready for a delivery. Owing to the repeated broken columns not having been completed the Ark could not be made ready for use for service.

However, we are pleased to say that the capital platform, and the Hevels & Daks are being placed in position together with the seating accommodation for use during the ensuing High Holidays.

Under the circumstances, the Committee of the Synagogue could not decide for the consecration service as was anticipated, and it is hoped that within the next few weeks the Ark will be quite ready and a date for the final opening service will be announced.

Opening Words from the Consecration Address of Rabbi Hirsch:

I cannot be with you today in person, but my spirit joins you in closest sympathy. In the construction of a new religious centre in these days is an event that transcends the limits of a single community. In the terrible conditions which the world-wide pogroms have brought upon the Jews in the diaspora have gone down, a new home is being built on the distant shores of China, and is lovingly dedicated to the sacred use. The whole House of Israel watches you to-day with vibrant interest and desires hope and inspiration from you. It follows you on the work you have accomplished, and blesses the memory of the pioneers whose generous spirit you so generously embodied with this stately edifice.

CALENDAR FOR THE FORTNIGHT.

Friday, Sivan 4th (May 17th) Sabbath commences (time of lighting) at 6.26 p.m.
 Saturday, Sivan 5th (May 18th) Erev Shabbath (Eve of Feast of Pentecost), last day of Omer, portion of the Law, Hallel, Numbers, chapters 1, 2, 3, and part of 4, Haphtar, Hodes, chapter 2, Prophets, Isaiah, chapters 1 to 4 inclusive, Ezra, chapters 1 to 4 inclusive, and Ethics, chapter 8. Sabbath terminates at 7.10 p.m.
 Sunday, Sivan 6th (May 19th) First day of Shabbath (Feast of Pentecost)
 Monday, Sivan 7th (May 20th) Second day of Shabbath
 Holiday terminates at 7.15 p.m.
 Tuesday, Sivan 8th (May 21st) Erev Hag.
 Friday, Sivan 11th (May 24th) Sabbath commences (time of lighting) at 6.50 p.m.
 Saturday, Sivan 12th (May 25th) Sabbath (portion of the Law, Numbers, part of chapter 4, and chapters 5, 6 and 7, Haphtar, Judges, chapter 1, Prophets, Isaiah, chapters 5 to 8 inclusive, and Ruth all. Sabbath terminates at 7.16 p.m.

SERVICES AT THE SYNAGOGUES DURING THE FORTNIGHT. (Subject to alterations)

SYNAGOGUE "BETH-EL" 16, Peking Road.
 N. S. Nahom, Hazan
 Saturday, Sivan 5th (May 18th) Shabbath at 7.15 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.00 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.00 p.m.
 Sunday, Sivan 6th (May 19th) First day of Shabbath (Pentecost)
 Shabbath at 7.16 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.45 p.m.
 Monday, Sivan 7th (May 20th) Second day of Shabbath (Pentecost)
 Shabbath at 7.16 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.00 p.m.
 Saturday, Sivan 12th (May 25th) Shabbath at 7.16 a.m.

SYNAGOGUE "SHEARITH ISRAEL" 8, Seward Road.

S. E. Abraham, Hazan.
 Friday, Sivan 4th (May 17th) Shabbath at 8.45 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.25 p.m.
 Arith .. 6.40 p.m.
 Saturday, Sivan 5th (May 18th) Shabbath at 8.50 a.m.
 Mincha .. 4.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.00 p.m.
 Sunday, Sivan 6th (May 19th) First day of Shabbath (Pentecost)
 Shabbath at 4.50 a.m. and 6.00 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 6.45 p.m.

Monday, Sivan 7th (May 20th) Second day of Shabbath (Pentecost)
 Shabbath at 6.30 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.10 p.m.
 Tuesday, Sivan 8th (May 21st) Shabbath at 6.45 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.15 p.m.
 Wednesday, Sivan 9th (May 22nd) Shabbath at 6.45 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.15 p.m.
 Thursday, Sivan 10th (May 23rd) Shabbath at 6.45 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.15 p.m.
 Friday, Sivan 11th (May 24th) Shabbath at 6.45 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.30 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.15 p.m.

SYNAGOGUE "OHEIL MOISHE" 9, Seward Road

A. Lettuce, Hazan.
 Synagogue "Oheil Moische," 9 Seward Road A. Lettuce, Hazan
 Friday, Sivan 4th (May 17th) Shabbath at 7.15 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.15 p.m.
 Arith .. 6.4 p.m.
 Saturday, Sivan 5th (May 18th) Shabbath at 6.00 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.00 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.00 p.m.
 Sunday, Sivan 6th (May 19th) Shabbath (Feast of Pentecost)
 Monday, Sivan 7th (May 20th) Shabbath at 6.00 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.00 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.00 p.m.
 Tuesday, Sivan 8th (May 21st) Shabbath at 7.15 a.m.
 Wednesday, Sivan 9th (May 22nd) Shabbath at 7.15 a.m.
 Thursday, Sivan 10th (May 23rd) Shabbath at 7.15 a.m.
 Friday, Sivan 11th (May 24th) Shabbath at 7.15 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.00 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.00 p.m.
 Saturday, Sivan 12th (May 25th) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.00 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.15 p.m.
 Sunday, Sivan 13th (May 26th) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Monday, Sivan 14th (May 27th) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Tuesday, Sivan 15th (May 28th) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Wednesday, Sivan 16th (May 29th) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Thursday, Sivan 17th (May 30th) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Friday, Sivan 18th (May 31st) Shabbath at 8.00 a.m.
 Mincha .. 6.00 p.m.
 Arith .. 7.15 p.m.
 Shabbath will be held at No. 8 Seward Road, at 8 p.m. on Thursday night, and services will follow at 8.30 a.m. at Shearith Israel Synagogue.

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS

No. of Telegram: 154

Office Stamp: [Stamp]

Words Received here at: [Stamp]

Office of Origin and Service Institution: Shanghai 12 2 27 12 2 27

Chief Rabbi: [Signature]

As recommended Hirsch approved kindly expedite onward enya

Shanghai approve. [Signature]

London arrange [Signature]

Legation [Signature]

TELEGRAM

ISSUED FROM CHIEF CABLE STATION, ELECTRA HOUSE, FINCHBURY AVENUE

REPLIES SHOULD BE ORDERED

Via Eastern:

ELECTRA HOUSE

UK 53

QUA 14 Z SHANGHAI 19 26 QW

LCD CHIEF RABBI HAMILTON TERRACE LN

BEG YOU RECOMMEND ME FOR POSITION OF RABBI

CAPTOWN CLIMATE HERE IMPOSSIBLE HIRSH

endowed Rs 15000 for the *Ohel Rachel* which was founded in memory of his wife.¹²³ His brother Sir Edward donated an additional Tls 25,000 enabling Shanghai to build a synagogue second to none in the East.¹²⁴ A committee of management compiled the rules for the management of the synagogue and appointed five members to act in conjunction with the trustees.¹²⁵ The members, all formerly from the *Beth El*, selected their seats, and subscriptions were based according to their position.¹²⁶ They subscribed towards the cost of the furniture and fittings. The *Ohel Rachel* was built in the style of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogues in London.¹²⁷ Members of the community donated the furniture and fittings.¹²⁸ The *tebah*, the gift of Silas Haroon in memory of his brother, stood in the centre of the large hall flanked by seats for men, with a gallery above for the women.¹²⁹ An alcove curtained by rich velvet *parokheth* accommodated some thirty *Sifrei Torah*.¹³⁰ Conforming to traditional requirements, upon the distempered wall of the vestibule there was a bare patch commemorating the destruction of the Temple.¹³¹ It is a notable sign of acculturation to the British that each seat bore the name of the subscriber in English. There were free seats at the back for those unable to afford the subscription.¹³² In the courtyard a deep round well was dug to represent the stream into which orthodox Jews symbolically cast their sins on *Rosh Hashanah*.¹³³

¹²³ Sir Jacob was born in Bombay in 1845, the eldest son of E.D. Sassoon. He married Rachel Isaac of Calcutta. In January 1909 the title of Baronetcy was conferred on Jacob by King Edward VII in recognition of his philanthropy in India, *IM*, 27/10/18, pp.24-25, and 11/2/21, p.19.

¹²⁴ *The Shanghai Gazette*, 24/1/20, p.6. Its address was 200 Seymour Road, now Shanxi North Road, *IM*, 10/9/20, p.39, and 11/2/21, p.14; 'Noted for its architectural beauty it enjoys spacious play ground, library and *mikweh*', 3/6/1927, pp.20-21; see Illustration, p.103.

¹²⁵ The trustees remained 'sleeping partners' in the administration of the synagogue, *The Shanghai Gazette*, 24/1/20, p.6. and *NCH*, 31/1/21, p.308.

¹²⁶ All members of the *Beth El*, when the synagogue closed on 31/12/19, had their membership transferred to the *Ohel Rachel*, which was to be ready for services by March 1920. The staff of the *Beth El* Synagogue were employed by the *Ohel Rachel* from 1/1/20, *The Shanghai Gazette*, 24/1/20, p.6. In Calcutta there were no seat rentals. Seats were distributed to all members prior to the opening ceremony of the *Magen David* Synagogue, and reclaimed if members were absent for three years, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.141.

¹²⁷ The Bevis Marks [1701] and Lauderdale Road Synagogue [1896]. Compare Meir Benayahu, 'The Great Synagogue of Baghdad', *Nehardea*, No.3 - June 1988, pp.18-19.

¹²⁸ *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19.

¹²⁹ *IM*, 11/2/21, p.14.

¹³⁰ The *Sifrei Torah* were used in turn for reading the Pentateuch. The *kahal* filed past and kissed them respectfully. This custom was referred to as making *zoor* [Arabic: go around], Isaac Abraham, interview by author, 10/5/92.

¹³¹ *Babylonian Talmud: Baba Batra*, 60 b.

¹³² Toeg, interview by author, Herzlia, 5/5/93.

¹³³ Israel Cohen, 'With the Jews in Modern China' Part II, Shanghai, Mukden, Tientsin', *JC*, 24/3/22, p.3.

On 27 October 1918 the foundation stone was laid by Mrs. D. E. J. Abraham¹³⁴ and the synagogue was consecrated on 23 January 1921.¹³⁵ The consecration of the first edifice purpose-built for divine worship¹³⁶ which coincided with the appointment of the community's first rabbi, was indeed a red letter day in the annals of the Jewish community of Shanghai.¹³⁷ It was hailed by Rabbi Hirsch, as 'an event that transcends in importance the immediate confines of a single community'. It seemed providential that a 'new home for Judaism' had been built in China when, in the aftermath of World War I, many Jewish communities were being persecuted in Europe.¹³⁸ During the three years of his ministry, however, he had cause to believe that benefactors like Jacob Sassoon were a mixed blessing and that communal life in the Far East was not as vibrant as he would have wished because synagogues were the gifts of wealthy philanthropists, rather than the result of unified effort. He argued that there was no common interest or mutual responsibility to draw congregants together:

...the individual is not called upon to contribute substantially, and as he is not a giver, neither a getter...the synagogue never becomes a centre of Jewish life, where interests cross and intersect, and where a communal soul is born. It just remains a house of prayer, where worshippers come to pray in self-detachment.¹³⁹

At the Second Annual Synagogue Meeting in April 1922 the Balance Sheet showed a deficit of about \$3,500, 'which was wiped off due to the personal efforts

¹³⁴ At the invitation of the trustees, Simon Levy, Edward Ezra, A. Howard, S. Solomon, *NCH*, 22/11/18, p.282; *IM*, 2/10/18, p.24; 'Laying of Corner Stone' *NCH*, 2/11/18, p.282; it was an impressive service conducted by 'a renowned Cantor' who had organised a choir, a retrospective account in *IM*, 11/9/25, p.20.

¹³⁵ *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19. Almoni maintains that it was consecrated in 1922, Kranzler gives the date 1920, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.49, and note 37; the confusion is due to the fact that *IM* printed the [proposed] 'Consecration Address of Rabbi Hirsch', *IM*, 10/9/20, p.39, in which Hirsch expressed regret that he was unable to be present. However, owing to a broken column the Ark was not ready for use, the consecration of the synagogue was postponed until 23/1/21, when Hirsch was also inducted as minister to the congregation; the consecration, 'due to have taken place on the eve of the Jewish New Year on September 12 has been deferred until the arrival of Rabbi Hirsch in Shanghai', *NCH*, 4/9/20, p.622. Pan Guang, Vice Chairman of the Shanghai Judaic Studies Association, has agreed to amend the date '1920' on the memorial plaque put up in the *Ohel Rachel* in June 1993 in honour of the visit of Israel's President Chaim Herzog to Shanghai, see *Igud Yotsei Sin*, June, 1993, No.5., p.4.

¹³⁶ The *Beth El* and *Shearith Israel*, were not housed in premises specifically constructed as synagogues.

¹³⁷ *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19, 29/10/20, p.10, and 3/6/27, p.20.

¹³⁸ S. Levy, Presidential address, *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19, and 27/10/18, p.25; Hirsch 'is rather a phenomenon, for he is the only trained rabbi of modern education throughout Eastern Jewry', Israel Cohen, 'Jews in Far Off Lands', Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle*, *JC*, 3/6/21, p.16.

¹³⁹ Hirsch's 'Sephardi' cited by Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.50.

of the chairman in raising it from some of the members'.¹⁴⁰ It is notable that four years after its construction, sufficient funds had not been collected to build a *mikveh* [ritual bath] in the synagogue grounds.¹⁴¹ Until it was installed in 1927 the *mikveh* in the premises of the *Shearith Israel* Synagogue continued to be used.¹⁴²

Initially the site of the *Ohel Rachel* in Seymour Road was regarded a 'little out of the way'. After the 1927 civil war and the 1932 Japanese invasion, however, the migration of a large number of Jewish residents from the northern district to the Western area justified the choice of the trustees, notably that of their prime mover, Simon Levy.¹⁴³ In time its accessibility enabled the *Ohel Rachel* to play a vital role in the development of the community.

The *Beth Aharon* Synagogue, a gift to the Community, in memory of Silas Hardoon's father, Aharon, was built in 1927 to replace the *Shearith Israel*, which had become inadequate for the needs of its congregation.¹⁴⁴ A chapter in the history of Shanghai Sephardi Jewry was closed with the removal of the *Sifrei Torah* to a new home on Museum Road [now 42 *Hu Qiu Road*]. In the Hongkou district at the corner of Balfour and Museum, the *Beth Aharon* was accessible to the residents of the western and northern districts.¹⁴⁵ 'Thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Liza Hardoon' who spent some \$300,000 on a building of striking Moorish and Byzantine architecture, Shanghai Sephardim received 'a worthy house of worship'.¹⁴⁶ With exuberance it was later to regret, the *Israel's Messenger* proclaimed, 'No effort on his [Hardoon's] part was spared to render lasting and efficacious service to the

¹⁴⁰ *IM*, 5/5/22, p.1. This was certainly not the way many fourth generation Sephardi Jews saw the synagogue.

¹⁴¹ Tls 1,200 had been collected, and Tls 600 more was required, *IM*, 9/5/24, p.13.

¹⁴² The synagogue was managed by a Board of Trustees. A committee was elected annually. \$450 was spent on the upkeep of the Hebrew and Religious classes annually, *IM*, 3/6/27, p.21; I. Toeg constructed a *mikveh* in his house, Toueg, interview by author, 2/5/93. Compare *mikvoth* in Calcutta, Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.72-73.

¹⁴³ *IM*, 3/6/27, p.20.

¹⁴⁴ *IM*, 3/6/27, p.14; the *Shearith Israel* later accommodated a Chinese school; Joseph David Epstein, *Yeshiva of Mir, Jewish Institutions of Higher Learning in Europe: Their Development and Destruction*, [Hebrew], (New York, 1956), pp.127-128; Hardoon had a dream in which he was reprimanded for not assisting his fellow Jews, Chunuh Hertzman, *Mirrer Yeshiva in Golus*, (New York, 1950), p.22; S. J. Solomon persuaded Hardoon, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

¹⁴⁵ The site, some one and a half *mu* cost \$160,000 approximately, the cost of construction some \$150,000, *IM*, 6/3/25, p.6; *NCH*, 2/7/27, p.20.

¹⁴⁶ *IM*, 3/6/27, pp.1, 14, 24; \$160,000 was paid for the site, *IM*, 3/6/27, p.14; Maurice Benjamin accepted a very low sum for part of his site in Museum Road, *IM*, 5/10/28, p.4; F. L. Hawks Pott, *A Short History of Shanghai*, (Shanghai, 1937), p.304; 'Beth Aharon, "An Occasion for Joy": Message from former Rabbi of Shanghai', *IM*, 3/6/27, p.10.

community'.¹⁴⁷ The official opening of the synagogue on 30 June 1927, by Sir Sidney Barton, KBE., Consul General in Shanghai, took place in the presence of a large number of the local Jewish community and several Chinese notables, amidst much pomp and ceremony,¹⁴⁸ 'Jew and Gentile, Buddhist and Taoist, Catholic and Protestant, Faithful and Unbeliever, bore devout testimony to that Oneness, the *Shema* was recited'.¹⁴⁹

The important question to address is whether the donations of monumental synagogues united the Sephardi community and reinforced its identity? Affiliation to a synagogue is an expression of Jewish identity even for the non-religious. Regular attendants equated it to a club, without which they would not have met frequently.¹⁵⁰ It was a social occasion on which the *kahal* donned their best attire. After the service the boys played football in the school playground which formed part of the synagogue courtyard. In the 1930s those who lived at a distance from the synagogues travelled to and from them by bus, using tokens for fares.¹⁵¹ For those who attended the synagogue regularly it was a crucial factor in strengthening their Baghdadi, Sephardi and Jewish identities.

The *Beth El* and the *Shearith Israel*, although merely prayer halls, played a crucial role in fostering cohesiveness among the early settlers, who had not fully adjusted to their environment. By the time the monumental *Ohel Rachel* and the *Beth Aharon* Synagogues were constructed in 1921 and 1927 respectively, the Sephardi community had become more established. More acculturated to the British it became confident to face the wider society. Nonetheless, these synagogues were the focal points which bound Shanghai Sephardim together. Their role in fostering unity among the congregants, however, was limited because of several undercurrents within the community, many of which revolved around the Rabbinate.

¹⁴⁷ *IM*, 3/7/27, p.14.

¹⁴⁸ 'Shanghai's New Synagogue Consecrated with Solemn Rites', *NCH*, 2/7/27, p.20; This display of communal solidarity at a time when Chiang Kaishek's defence force was in Shanghai is noteworthy. Barton, conscious of the honour of a Christian being asked to open a Jewish house of worship, declared that the British Empire was proud to acknowledge the services of Jews. One would have expected it to have been opened by the SMC Chairman.

¹⁴⁹ The *Hatikvah* was sung by the choir and congregation. This was followed by the British national anthem during which the British Consul-General and the Boy Scouts saluted. The prayer for the Royal Family was recited by D. E. J. Abraham in Hebrew and in English, *IM*, 8/7/27, p.13.

¹⁵⁰ Toueg, interview by author, 2/5/93.

¹⁵¹ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, pp.18-19.

The Rabbinate

...Religion is now [1921] in a state of flux... ¹⁵²

...times have changed and we live in an age when it is necessary to make concessions in order to adapt to the need of the times... ¹⁵³

By the 1920s there were indications of fragmentation of the community and a weakening of traditional values.¹⁵⁴ Exposure to Western communities made the Sephardim more urbane and dissatisfied with poor religious leaders, prayers by rote and practices which had lost their meaning. The discontent probably started to ferment with the beginnings of a dilution of culture derived from Baghdad. To secure their ties with the British was of paramount importance. There were definite political, legal, social and economic incentives to encourage attenuation of their links with Baghdad. The employment of a qualified Ashkenazi rabbi from London was unprecedented in the East, where no qualified rabbi was ever employed by Sephardi communities.¹⁵⁵ The question of whether his services stemmed the erosion of their Baghdadi identity will now be explored.

It was largely due to the influence of David Sassoon that the Baghdadi pioneers in the East were scrupulous in preserving their traditions. Initially, however far Baghdadi Jews migrated from the country of their origin, spiritually and religiously they remained attached to their roots. They contributed to Jewish religious and charitable institutions in Baghdad and the maintenance of the sacred places.¹⁵⁶ They turned to the Rabbinate in Baghdad for authoritative opinions on questions of Jewish law, arbitration in internal communal dissension concerning *minhagim* and even their business disputes.¹⁵⁷ Consequently, as Jacob Sapir discovered, in his travels through India in 1852, Indian communities did not even have the semblance of the office of *hakham*.¹⁵⁸ In the early days of settlement in Shanghai, several leaders, notably A. E. J. and D. E. J. Abraham, S. J. Solomon and Simon Levy

¹⁵² Hirsch's inaugural speech, *IM*, 11/2/21, p.16.

¹⁵³ 'The Organ', *IM*, 5/5/22, p.6.

¹⁵⁴ *IM*, 3/8/23, p.1.

¹⁵⁵ 'The Problems of Diaspora Jewry', *IM*, 7/1/27, p.8.

¹⁵⁶ Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.189.

¹⁵⁷ 'Responsa and Other Jewish Legal Action', Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.255, and Chap.14; Jack Balas, 'The Jewish Community of Singapore Events in the Iraq Jewish Community in the Diaspora', *Nehardea*, No.4, April 1990.

¹⁵⁸ Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.268.

were respected for their learning and carried out the duties of a rabbi. There was also a continual stream of *shelikhim* who unofficially assumed the spiritual direction of the Sephardi community, and some were esteemed for the significant role they played in its development.¹⁵⁹ Initially, Sassoon Abraham was employed as combined *hazan-shohet*, services he continued to perform until his death. Hakham Eliyahu Isaac who had received instruction in *hazanuth* in Baghdad and served as *hazan* of the *Ohel Leah* Synagogue in Hong Kong from 1904, was recruited by Edward Ezra for the *Ohel Rachel* where he officiated till his retirement in 1935. He was commended for his accuracy and distinctness in reading the Torah.¹⁶⁰ He had a pleasant relationship with the community who paid him on a piecemeal basis for his services as scribe for preparing *ketuboth*, but did not use him as a rabbi.¹⁶¹

There were also some imposters, 'brash, semi-literate' 'quack *hazanim*' with a 'hazy knowledge' of the Talmud, who donned the title 'Rabbi', although no rabbinical college had bestowed it upon them.¹⁶² This indiscriminate use of the title was highlighted when the officiating minister at a funeral was heralded in the press as 'Rabbi', creating the impression that Shanghai boasted a plethora of Rabbis.¹⁶³ By September 1922, general dissatisfaction was voiced at the manner in which the religious services were being conducted. There were complaints that they were badly read and uninspiring.¹⁶⁴ Apart from *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Yarzeit* [anniversary of death], the synagogue was practically deserted.¹⁶⁵ Various suggestions were put forward to attract larger attendance. The committee agreed to certain prayers being read in English and the introduction of a choir during the Friday

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.40.

¹⁶⁰ He had a three year contract, *IM*, 4/7/19, p.7 and 13/5/38, p.11.

¹⁶¹ The grandfather of Sassoon Jacoby, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93. Possibly, as customary in Baghdad, the *hazan* had no fixed salary, but received gifts from offerings made at the *maftir*, Cohen, *op. cit.*, p.11.

¹⁶² Myers called for radical changes in the 'pitiabie *Hazzanooth* system' whereby any adventurer was accepted as *hazan*, *IM*, 22/4/21, p.32. Compare Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.85.

¹⁶³ *IM*, 10/9/20, p.18.

¹⁶⁴ For example, 'A Worshipper in Distress', 'prayers are gabbled at the rate of 100 words a minute...complicated mass of unmeaning sounds', Ish Al Diglo, *IM*, 11/2/21, p.21, and M. Myers asked 'What are the qualifications of a *Hazan*?', *IM*, 22/4/21, p.32.

¹⁶⁵ At the 2nd Annual Meeting in April, 1922, the Chairman pleaded for better synagogue attendance. 'Saturday morning services were hurried 'due to causes over which some have no control', *IM*, 5/5/22, pp.1-2.

evening service. It hoped that 'those who cannot aid the movement will not try and obstruct and destroy it'.¹⁶⁶

To further its religious and cultural development, the elders of the community decided to employ a *bona fide* rabbi. The choice of a candidate was no easy task. Jacob Sapir highlighted the difficulties of finding a suitable rabbi for a Baghdadi community which had become acculturated to the British. 'Such a multi-qualified rabbi has not yet arisen in their midst'. He had to be a synthesis of the cultures of Asia and Europe, steeped in the Talmud of Babylon, as well as in European secular education. Certainly rabbis from Baghdad were unqualified to direct a modern educational programme.¹⁶⁷ Significantly, Bension Meir Ouziel [1880-1953], who had been appointed Hakham Bashi of Jaffa since 1911, was not approached.¹⁶⁸ The choice was left to Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Empire.¹⁶⁹ This is indicative of the extent to which Shanghai Sephardim were acculturated to the British.¹⁷⁰ As Israel Finestein has emphasised the distinct 'English flavour' of the Chief Rabbinate, its centralism, the social stability which it seemed to represent gave to the office in the late nineteenth century an unprecedented prestige.¹⁷¹

The appointment of Rabbi W. Hirsch was hailed as 'a new era' in the communal life of the Sephardi community of Shanghai.¹⁷² For the first time in the history of the Baghdadi Jewish emigration to the East, they were to be ministered to by a qualified rabbi, 'duly ordained in Israel [sic], and therefore a worthy exponent of the ideals of Judaism ... It is a great triumph for Judaism in China'.¹⁷³ Rabbi Hirsch explained why he chose to give up a comfortable position in England and

¹⁶⁶ It was also suggested that an organ be installed in the synagogue to be used during weddings because, 'the orthodox synagogues in England are permitting the use of the organ', *IM*, 5/5/22, pp.1,17, 8/9/22, p.13, and 6/10/22, p.11.

¹⁶⁷ Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.39, cites Sapir, *Eben Sapir*, 2,99.

¹⁶⁸ Rabbi Meir Jacob [1856-1939] was elected *Rishon Le-Sion* (Chief Rabbi in *Eretz Yisrael*) in 1921.

¹⁶⁹ *IM*, 4/7/19, p.7; Dr. Daiches and Dr. Gross had been recommended, Dr. Hertz to Ezra, 24/9/1919, and Ezra to Hertz, 13/3/20, BDBJ, ACC2805/3/E/13/15. The Trustees of the *Ohel Rachel* remitted £200 to Dr. Hertz 'in connection with the engagement of Gross for their congregation', Simon Levy to Hertz, 26/5/20, ACC2895/3/E/13/1J.

¹⁷⁰ There was 'reliable information' that Dr. Hertz was to include Shanghai in his 'pastoral tour of the British Empire', *NCH*, 4/9/1920, p.622.

¹⁷¹ Israel Finestein, *Jewish Society in Victorian England Collected Essays*, (London, 1993), p.161.

¹⁷² *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19; Edward Ezra to Dr. Hertz, 24/3/20, Telegram, No. 154, BDBJ, ACC 2805/3/E/13/13.

¹⁷³ *IM*, 29/10/20, p.10.

wander to what appeared to be the end of the world to live under conditions which filled him with apprehension.¹⁷⁴ He certainly had very high expectations:

... We look to the Jews in Shanghai to build in their midst a safe home for traditional Judaism. But more than this we hope that their community becomes a centre from which Jewish life will irradiate and influence the smaller neighbouring communities. Many strongholds of Judaism have been broken up or destroyed ... forced to emigrate to the hospitable shores of the East. We look to the Jewish Community of Shanghai to become an outpost of Jews in the Far East which will extend influences of the spirit far and beyond its commercial boundaries and gather and preserve every particle of Jewish life that may be cast its way...¹⁷⁵

The nervous excitement within the community is evident in the pages of the *Israel's Messenger*, which recorded that on 8 October 1920 Rabbi Hirsch, accompanied by his wife, left London on the steamer *Devanha* for Shanghai.¹⁷⁶ An English Ashkenazi rabbi to pastor to the needs of an oriental Sephardi community was a novel experiment which the community wanted to succeed.¹⁷⁷ 'It is our bounden duty to give him our unstinting support in his ministerial duties'. They hoped that he would not feel embarrassed, if his work yielded few signs of progress, and warned him to be prepared to 'preach before empty benches'.¹⁷⁸ They acknowledged that their generation possessed a meagre knowledge of Judaism, and that 'large numbers had lost touch with Jewish life and Jewish feeling'.¹⁷⁹

The arrival of Hirsch in 1921 raised the status of the Shanghai Sephardi community. 'His presence ensures our recognition as a community, elicits the respect of other denominations'.¹⁸⁰ Undoubtedly the Sephardim were fully aware of their increased stature and the respect they would be accorded by their neighbours, and their sister communities in the East. They seem to have regarded Rabbi Hirsch as an ornament. *The Jewish Pulpit*, a communal paper, printed his sermons and his fine

¹⁷⁴ 'I feel attracted by the prospect of working for the uplift of traditional Judaism in a free atmosphere, unhindered by precedent and a jealous laity,' Hirsch to Dr. Hertz, 18/2/20, BDBJ, ACC 2805/3/E1315.

¹⁷⁵ *IM*, 19/9/20, p.28; W. Hirsch, 'The Function of the Synagogue', *IM*, 29/10/20, pp.40-41.

¹⁷⁶ *IM*, 29/10/20, p.6; *NCH*, 4/9/20, p.622.

¹⁷⁷ *IM*, 4/1/24, p.7.

¹⁷⁸ *IM*, 29/10/20, p.6 and 4/1/24, p.1.

¹⁷⁹ Letter to the editor from Ben Amittai, *IM*, 2/7/19, p.7. The same views were expressed in Edward Ezra's speech at the consecration of the *Ohel Rachel*, *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19.

¹⁸⁰ *IM*, 4/6/23, p.20, 'The Christians and newspapers in Shanghai are beginning to respect our community', 10/3/22, p.29; 'Rabbi Hirsch is making his presence in Shanghai felt for good', *North China Daily News*, [hereafter *NCDN*], 23/3/23, p.6.

oratory was reputed to be a most outstanding feature of his ministry in Shanghai. His eloquence, however, appears to have been lost on some of his *kahal*, 'the old-fashioned members who belonged to the 'glorious ancient past' and do not understand the language:¹⁸¹

...One member hails from Bakooba and another from far-off Cairo, and yet another from Constantinople; it is a problem indeed to reconcile these into a modern service and get them to sit together patiently until the service is over.¹⁸²

This indicates that Hirsch was not flexible enough to change the format of his ministry.

Hirsch, however, edited and translated for the use of his *kehilla* the *Hanahageth Ha Hok*, a booklet on the liturgy of the burial service published in Baghdad in 1893.¹⁸³ This was adopted by the Far Eastern Sephardi communities and satisfied an urgent need, despite errors because Chinese printers had no type for the vowel points.¹⁸⁴ Decorum during the burial services showed a marked improvement.¹⁸⁵ Hirsch organised a collection of £1000 for a library.¹⁸⁶ The Hebrew and Religious classes he introduced on Saturdays initially attracted some eighty pupils, but the numbers dwindled to twenty in 1923.¹⁸⁷ Although some children received private religious instruction, there were, nonetheless, many who received no religious instruction at all.¹⁸⁸ Hirsch was supported by his wife in his attempts to instil some life into the community. He founded the Young Men's Hebrew Association, while the Girls' Club and the Jewish Benevolent Society came into being on his wife's initiative. She also served on the committee of the Jewish

¹⁸¹ *IM*, 6/7/23, p.20.

¹⁸² This portrayal in 1927, four years after Hirsch's departure from Shanghai, is probably applicable to the *kahal* during his ministry, *IM*, 3/6/27, p.20; for examples of protests against the behaviour of some congregants during the sermons see *IM*, 6/7/23. p.20.

¹⁸³ Hirsch's booklet is referred to in Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p.178.

¹⁸⁴ The cost was defrayed by Luna Sopher's family and copies distributed to members of the Shanghai community, *IM*, 4/1/24, p.1.

¹⁸⁵ *IM*, 22/4/21, p.10; 'English style also involved decorum in Synagogue as a matter of self respect and communal dignity', Finestein, *op.cit.*, p.176.

¹⁸⁶ *IM*, 2/10/21, p.19.

¹⁸⁷ 'Perhaps if these were made in a district where the Jewish quarters predominate [sic] there might have been better results', *IM*, 7/4/22, p.6, 22/4/21, p.10, and 7/12/23, p.13.

¹⁸⁸ *IM*, 7/12/23, p.13. There are parallels here with the formation of Americans as a distinct entity in Shanghai after the Great War, Huskey, *op. cit.*, Chap. I.

Communal Association and the Hebrew Relief Society.¹⁸⁹ The Hirschs' were involved in the local Zionist Association and staunch supporters of the movement.¹⁹⁰ As editor of the *Jewish Communal Recorder*, he tried to unite the community.¹⁹¹ Yet, for all his efforts, Hirsch expressed disappointment that he was unable to inspire greater spiritual ardour in his congregation:

...a desert people to this day, disorganised and loosely connected... There is no inner cohesion, no force or attraction to draw the separate individuals into massed units... it is extremely difficult to organise among them a community in the modern sense, especially as some individuals are strong, with larger or smaller spheres of influence.¹⁹²

His scathing epithet 'desert people' was inappropriate, considering the Sephardim were highly urbanised. It highlights the cultural conflict between him and the *kahal*. If his attitude was contemptuous, as this indeed suggests, his congregation would have certainly sensed it and this may have been partly accountable for their reluctance to accept his leadership.

It was common knowledge that Hirsch wished to retire after the termination of his agreement in October 1924, and in the absence of any overture to persuade him to remain, he tendered his resignation.¹⁹³ Many Sephardim resented him 'broadcasting' that no one knew anything about Judaism until he taught them,¹⁹⁴ when in fact Shanghai's Sephardim boasted many outstanding Jews well versed in the Talmud.¹⁹⁵ Criticism focused on the holidays he took: 'a religion from which a man can take 'leave of absence' during summer time is not worth considering during the remaining months of the year'.¹⁹⁶ Also, unlike Rabbi Ashkenazi, his children did not attend the Jewish school, perhaps understandably, as at that time the premises were in a deplorable state. Some congregants were critical of his open

¹⁸⁹ She organised bazaars and concerts, *IM*, 4/1/24, p.7.

¹⁹⁰ *IM*, 2/10/21, p.17.

¹⁹¹ *IM*, 22/4/21, p.10.

¹⁹² Hirsch, 'Sephardi' cited by Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.50.

¹⁹³ 'Three years, the terms of my agreement, will be completed next November. I have decided to leave Shanghai. The climate affects my health, and there are other considerations which urge me to return to England', letter to the Trustees and Committee of the Synagogue from Hirsch, 13/4/23, cited in *IM*, 8/6/23, p.19; Hirsch to Chief Rabbi Hertz, 30/10/21, telegram, see Illustration, p.103.

¹⁹⁴ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 11/2/93.

¹⁹⁵ Notable among them were S.J. Solomon, D.E.J. Abraham, and Silas Simon Levy.

¹⁹⁶ *IM*, 9/11/23, p.20. cites letters to the editor of the *NCDN*, 17, 19, and 23 October from 'Jewish Nationalist', Shanghai, 15/10/23. This criticism is unfair as all the foreign community who could afford it, went to cooler climes during the summer.

denouncements from the pulpit and argued that the Rabbi should speak in more 'veiled terms' on communal matters.¹⁹⁷ Not surprisingly, Hirsch became embroiled in the controversial issue of Sabbath observance. There appeared to be no leeway for compromise on this problem. Certainly nobody took kindly to condemnation. One of the *kahal*, Elias Levy, suggested that since thousands of Jewish firms and employees all over the world, and even in Baghdad, were obliged to work during Sabbath, the non-observance of the Sabbath 'under compulsory circumstances should be generally overlooked rather than publicly denounced' by Hirsch.¹⁹⁸ Levy argued, given it was in no way harmful to the public, it should be left to the discretion of the individual. Levy also accused the Shanghai Sephardim, of 'certain practices not consistent with the Torah', notably riding vehicles drawn by fire or electricity, or drawn by human beings or animals.¹⁹⁹

The pro-rabbi lobby, with David Shalom Arakie and N. E. B. Ezra at the helm, maintained that it was the Rabbis' privilege to speak in strong and definite terms, and that the fact that many were violating the Sabbath did not justify its wholesale desecration.²⁰⁰ They requested the Committee and the Trustees to make every effort to retain Hirsch's services, or to ensure that the office of the Rabbinate was not left vacant.²⁰¹ M. Myers, one of the trustees, suggested that the office of Rabbinate should be detached from the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue and include the members of the other synagogues. The *Shearith Israel* Synagogue, however, preferred the old system of being led by a *hazan*. The argument that the financial burden of the Rabbinate was too heavy for the community to carry was dismissed by many of the *kahal*, seeing that Shanghai Sephardim had more wealthy members than any other Eastern community.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ *IM*, 4/5/23, p.15.

¹⁹⁸ Violation of Sabbath was forbidden except where there was danger to life, *Gemorah, Yoma*, 85a; the difficulties some Sephardim encountered in getting days off from work for the Festivals and Sabbath are illustrated in *R. M. Benjamin v. Evans & Co.*, *NCH*, 23/11/1906, p.446.

¹⁹⁹ *Musleah, op. cit.*, p.259.

²⁰⁰ *IM*, 8/6/23, p.1.

²⁰¹ *IM*, 8/7/23, p.20, 4/5/23, pp.1-2; Simon A. Levy, President, to Hirsch, 18/10/23, and Hirsch to Levy, 23/10/23, cited in *IM*, 9/11/23, pp.12,13, in which Hirsch wrote, 'I should gladly have remained another couple of years in Shanghai. But I feel that at this stage of my life I should seek a wider field for my energies, with better results than I can possibly anticipate here'.

²⁰² 'Why only one of those present could subscribe either the yearly deficit of the synagogue income or the entire amount of the lien on the synagogue house', David Shalom Arakie, '*Ohel Rachel* Synagogue Holds Extraordinary Meeting', *IM*, 9/11/23, p.12; Arakie suggested a membership campaign, 'The Rabbinate Question

Hirsch's departure for Pretoria in February 1924 left the community with the difficult task of securing a successor.²⁰³ At the Fourth Annual Meeting of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue, on 28 April 1924,²⁰⁴ Ezra proposed that another approach be made to Chief Rabbi Hertz to secure a suitable rabbi, or to train a graduate of Jews' College London for 'our special congregation'. Emphasis was placed on training them as *hazanim*.²⁰⁵ A Sephardi minister appeared to be the solution,²⁰⁶ but the President, Simon Levy, suggested that they wait about two years to give the community time to re-organise its finances.²⁰⁷ There was heated opposition from two members to the employment of any rabbi. Significantly, one sole voice recommended that a rabbi be imported from Palestine or Baghdad. Arthur and Theodore Sopher emphasised the importance of a professional theologian to lead the community. A more concise liturgy, lectures in Jewish history and, above all, the use of Hebrew as a living language, in order to preserve the Jewish identity of the community were required.²⁰⁸ There is no record of the community's reaction to this reformist proposal.

In fact no rabbi ever officially succeeded Hirsch. Rabbi Meier Ashkenazi, 'a gentle, kindly warm-hearted man', when asked for guidance in matters concerning Jewish law gave a decree. 'He did not insist that everything had to be done his way'. He sat with two learned men on the Sephardi *Beth Din* [court] which based its judgements on Talmudic law.²⁰⁹ Rev. Mendel Brown, a former student of Jews'

in Shanghai Matters', *IM*, 4/5/23, p.15.

²⁰³ 'If I leave Shanghai shortly, the community will relapse into chaos once more', Hirsch to Dr. J.H.Hertz, 9/8/23, p.2, BDBJ, ACC2805/33/E1315; 'If I satisfied congregations like Middlesbro [sic] and Shanghai, I shall satisfy any community', Hirsch to Hertz, 11/10/23 and 6/11/23, ACC2805/33/E1315; similar sentiments were expressed by Leon Friedman, 'In Shanghai the community thus far had shown a real desire to adopt Western culture and it behaved them not to throw away their good work and return to chaos', 9/11/23, p.12, ACC2805/33/E1315.

²⁰⁴ The meeting was presided over by Levy, and attended by: R. Abraham, D. Benjamin, Maurice David, Salem David, E. Elias, N. Ezra, C. Gubbay, E. Hayim, J. Judah, S. Levy, M. Myers, A. Moses, S. Perry, F. Reiss, D. Silas, J. Salmon, G. Sokolsky. *IM*, 9/5/24, p.13.

²⁰⁵ Baghdad born Myer Moses was suggested, *IM*, 7/3/24, p.12.

²⁰⁶ Hirsch believed that only Baghdad students who had entered the Jews' College would be suitable as they could combine the office of *hazan* and minister, satisfying those who 'have not the courage or generosity to provide their synagogues well to have a modern teacher of Judaism among them. Otherwise we shall have Kaifangfoo written over again', Hirsch to Hertz, 6/12/23, BDBJ, ACC2805/33/E/13/15.

²⁰⁷ The Treasurer's account showed a deficit of \$3,026.17. The subscriptions amounted to over \$16,000,00, an annual increase of \$3,000. Donations had increased to over \$2,900, but promised donations had often not been honoured, *IM*, 9/5/24, p.13.

²⁰⁸ *IM*, 1/6/35, p.10.

²⁰⁹ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 11/2/93.

College London, principal of the Shanghai Jewish School in 1932, was recruited by Ezra Shahmoon, one of the elders of the community to serve as unofficial rabbi of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue.²¹⁰ He delivered sermons, conducted a choir service on Friday evenings and encouraged the youth to participate in the synagogue services.²¹¹ Fourth generation Shanghai Sephardim were almost unanimous in their approval of the English hymns he introduced from the Ashkenazi services, which 'were a welcome addition to our very Eastern style chanting and liturgical songs'.²¹² They recall that his accent in intoning the prayers on Sabbath caused some amusement among the Sephardi *kehilla*. Predictably, Brown encountered the same problems as Hirsch. Few students from Public and Foreign Schools attended his classes on religious and moral instruction. He pinpointed the factors that were eroding their Jewish identity: apathy and the 'appalling indifference' of their parents who failed to provide a Jewish home and atmosphere, the secular influence of commercial life, 'newly made companions, newly awakened sexual instincts', and above all, the almost insuperable difficulty of remaining Jewish in an economic world which insisted on 'standardised conformity'.²¹³ He maintained that the Jewish adolescents posed the greatest threat to preserving the identity of the community, and underlined the urgent need for a centre which afforded recreational, social and cultural activities.²¹⁴ At the time of the expiry of his contract, there appeared to be surprisingly little controversy regarding its renewal. Nevertheless, those interviewed by the author in this study and documentary evidence suggest that the efforts of Rabbi Hirsch and Rev. Brown were hardly recognised or appreciated by the community.

The creation of a Rabbinate in Shanghai did not serve to unify the Sephardi community.²¹⁵ The decision to employ the Ashkenazi rabbis was made by wealthy families who provided the funds. Many of the *kahal* considered these rabbis unacceptable in a congregation of Baghdadi Jews who did not have a sense of

²¹⁰ *IM*, 2/11/34, p.12, 4/11/32, and 3/5/35, p.1; he was an English Jew of Polish origin, Alkow, *op. cit.*, p.148; Henrietta Reiffler, his daughter, interview by author, Harvard, 16/8/92.

²¹¹ *IM*, 13/5/38, p.13; Toueg, interview by author, 2/5/93.

²¹² 'Eventually many in the community grew fond of Brown, and felt very comfortable with him', Toueg, correspondence with author 11/6/93.

²¹³ *IM*, 2/9/35, p.11; for criticism of Sephardi youth see, *IM*, 11/2/21, p.17, 6/7/23, p.9, 3/8/23, p.1, and 7/9/23, p.9.

²¹⁴ *IM*, 2/9/35, p.11.

²¹⁵ A sense of responsibility was lacking in many of the congregants, 'nor can anyone avoid seeing that thin veil of malice, hatred and uncharitableness', D. Arakie, *IM*, 4/5/23, p.15.

association with non-Baghdadi Jews, even in cosmopolitan Shanghai. The curious juxtaposition of Rev. Brown, wearing long black robes with his Anglicised British pronunciation of Hebrew, conducting the service jointly with the *sheliah sabbour* who prayed Baghdadian style, evoked some amusement among the *kahal*. The introduction, of some Ashkenazi tunes and hymns, incongruous as it may appear retrospectively, was accepted; 'both worlds were functioning at the same time, without a feeling of strangeness. Both aspects needed expression. It was a kind of amelioration of Baghdadi traditions'.²¹⁶ Brown tried to adapt himself to the Sephardic mould. He was therefore not a glaring anomaly. However, given that sermons were not a Baghdadi *minhag*, and that the Shanghai Sephardim boasted that their synagogue services were far shorter than those of the Ashkenazim, many resented the length of Brown's services and considered his 'pontificating' a waste of time. In fact their attitude was exactly the same as it was to the Baghdadi self-styled rabbis.²¹⁷ There was always a great deal of backbiting. 'We did fine without a rabbi, what do we need one for now?' It was not so much the cost of employing them. Far more irksome was the obligation to pay them lip service and to accept more stringent standards than those by which they wanted to live. Rose Horowitz suggests: 'This was a stiff necked people, wholly Jewish in their attitude, who resented anyone telling them what to do, when to do it, and how to do it'.²¹⁸ Isaac Abraham, emphasises the antagonism of traditionalists to a 'Reform minister masquerading as a Rabbinical Authority decked in modern garb and clean-shaven'.²¹⁹

Nonetheless the Sephardim highly prized the prestige attached to being represented by a British rabbi in the milieu of the International Settlement. 'It gave us a feeling of pride that our representative spoke English so well'. Israel Finestein has observed in the Anglo-Jewish community in London the 'overriding emphasis was on the need for the Jewish clergy, as they were significantly called, to present

²¹⁶ Tuoeg, interview by author, 2/5/93.

²¹⁷ 'Certain folks [sic] in Shanghai had yet to learn the rudiments of courtesy in their idea of the office of the Rabbinate', Leon Friedman, *IM*, 9/11/23, p.12.

²¹⁸ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 2/2/93.

²¹⁹ Isaac Abraham, interview by author, 10/9/93.

Judaism to the gentiles. Rabbinic qualification was not deemed essential'.²²⁰ Religious questions of Shanghai Sephardim were now being referred to the Rabbinate in Britain. Certainly by this time the *kahal* was sufficiently Anglicised to find Arabic strange, if not incomprehensible. There were some who gave their wholehearted support to Rabbi Hirsch and Rev. Mendel Brown and appreciated the amelioration of some of their Baghdadi customs in the service, notably the improved decorum.²²¹ After all, as Moses Cohen, a visitor to Baghdad in 1880, observed of its synagogues, 'there is always devotion, but without order. Some say their prayers walking about, others sit cross-legged on benches whilst children walk or run about and chat'.²²² Rev. Brown performed the useful role of moral and spiritual guide. He had the 'right word for the right occasion' and displayed an affection for the community, which was reciprocated by many, although the traditionalists were critical of him. He was not accepted as the final authority, and important religious questions were addressed to Rabbi Ashkenazi.²²³ It should be remembered that the community itself was in the process of transformation. A rabbi had to be able to adapt to differences within the community, and to be tolerant of others whilst remaining true to his own calling. This seems to have been beyond the power of both the seemingly arrogant Hirsch and the warm-hearted and accommodating Brown.

²²⁰ Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler [1891-1911] and the Italian-born Haham of the 1870s, Benjamin Artom, attributed anti-Jewish attitude to the fact that the real doctrines of Judaism were imperfectly known by followers of other creeds, Finestein, *op. cit.*, pp.176.

²²¹ In the 1830s decorum in public worship became almost an obsession in England. Among the grounds on which the Goldsmids reputedly based their case for complete Jewish emancipation in England in 1845 was greater decorum and the use of some English in the synagogue services, Finestein, *op. cit.*, p.31.

²²² This was not atypical of other offshoot communities from Baghdad which had taken root in the East. Perhaps frequent attendance led them to feel at home in their synagogues. Men took off their slippers when called to the law, Morris Cohen, 'The Jews of Baghdad', Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Anglo-Jewish Association, *JC*, 30/7/1880, pp.11-12.

²²³ 'An Interview with Rabbi Ashkenazi', *IM*, 4/6/26, p.12; Tuogeg, interview by author, 2/5/93.

The Debate between the Traditionalist and Non-traditionalist Sephardim in Shanghai

...As we have changed our mode of living, our dress and our habits, so should we also modernise our religious organisations and have competent spiritual chiefs to guide us in language understood by all and in a manner to attract all...²²⁴

In order to understand more fully the problems concerning the Shanghai Rabbinate, it is necessary to examine the influence of Reform Judaism which made deep inroads into the religious identity of the Sephardim, many of whom saw a need for a reform of Baghdadi traditionalism. Given that the debate on issues of Reform Judaism in Calcutta, Bombay, Cochin and Rangoon was never serious, it is reasonable to assume that Shanghai Sephardim were influenced to some extent by the sizeable Ashkenazi community in their midst. The debate between those for and against employing a rabbi became polarised around N.E.B. Ezra, the 'fearless exponent of Traditional Judaism', and Charles Gubbay, President of the Shanghai Jewish Communal Association. It provides an insight into the effects of Reform Judaism on the Sephardi congregation and echoes the controversy between Reform and Orthodox Jewry in Europe and America.²²⁵

Gubbay maintained that a trained rabbi could only awaken the spirituality of the community if his message was in harmony with the thinking of the time. He argued that traditional Judaism had lost its spirituality: 'the neglect of the future is being compensated by more synagogues and more bigotry among the spiritual heads of Eastern Jewry'. He predicted that the 'synagogues of today will be the museums of tomorrow', unless they were adjusted to meet the demands of the time.²²⁶ Gubbay welcomed the 'rise of the cult of Theosophy in the heart of Eastern Jewry', as a sign that it had 'shaken off the trammels of Traditionalism' and was beginning to think for itself, not with the aid of the *Shulhan Arukh*, but with modern educational

²²⁴ Speech by Edward Ezra, Vice President of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue at its consecration ceremony, *IM*, 11/2/21, p.19.

²²⁵ Reform Judaism, also known as Liberal or Progressive Judaism, was the first of the modern interpretations of Judaism to emerge in response to the changed political and cultural conditions brought about by the Emancipation. In an assertion of the legitimacy of change in Judaism it abbreviated the liturgy, introduced the sermon in the vernacular, choral singing with an organ accompaniment, and supplemented the standard Hebrew prayers with prayers in the vernacular, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem and New York, 1971, Vol.14, pp.24-26.

²²⁶ *IM*, 1/4/32, pp.8-9.

facilities.²²⁷ This, he believed, was not to the detriment of Judaism, but only to the outmoded ‘traditional understanding... ghetto Judaism’.²²⁸ Theosophy, he claimed, was able to bring them nearer to the understanding of the spiritual than were the synagogues.²²⁹

Ezra argued that traditional Judaism contained the essence of the religion that had preserved Judaism in the Diaspora. Because Eastern Jewry lacked the training necessary to grasp this, it had lost its spirituality and sought instead the new sensational ideas of Theosophy: ‘You possess treasures you know not of’.²³⁰ He warned against the danger of schism in their small community: ‘We are too weak to be divided’.²³¹ Gubbay urged the *kahal* to base its belief on reason, not on ‘blind belief’.²³² Ezra emphasised that Judaism encouraged knowledge: ‘*Know thy God and worship Him*’.²³³ Much to the amusement of Gubbay, Ezra insisted that lack of ‘a singing *hazan*’ was the main obstacle to the spiritual progress of the community.²³⁴ In contrast, ‘the enchanting music composed by renowned Cantors’ encouraged Western congregations to turn out in full force.²³⁵

Interviewees recall that the debates were not only academic. There was a great deal of vehemence and depth to the discussion which the youth regarded as ‘great fun’.²³⁶ Suggestions that English be included in the synagogue service were fiercely opposed by traditionalists who believed that if they changed even an iota of their tradition they would lose everything.²³⁷ Reform Judaism first surfaced in one of the Shanghai synagogues when M. Myers, on his return from San Francisco,

²²⁷ *IM*, 1/4/32, p.9.

²²⁸ *ibid*, p.9.

²²⁹ *ibid.*, p.9; ‘The Theosophy Cult: Theosophy is Jewish says Mr. Horne’, *IM*, 3/8/23, p.19 and 1/4/32, p.8.

²³⁰ *IM*, 1/4/32, p.8, and 2/12/34, p.15.

²³¹ ‘The Patient is Dying’, *IM*, 3/7/31, p.1.

²³² He adopted the argument of Reform Judaism which did not recognise the authority of a rabbi or chief rabbi. He suggested that a Conference of Orthodox Rabbis should adapt Jewish rituals and ceremonies to modern needs, *IM*, 2/11/34, p.15.

²³³ *IM*, 3/7/31, p.1.

²³⁴ Among the numerous complaints of correspondents to the *IM*, see ‘A Worshipper in Distress’, critical of prayers being ‘gabbled at the rate of 100 words a minute’, *IM*, 19/1/21, p.36.

²³⁵ *IM*, 1/4/32, p.9.

²³⁶ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 2/2/93.

²³⁷ Thus protracted controversies regarding ritualistic minutiae, pronunciation, intonation or liturgical order were a common occurrence during services, compare Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.192.

where he had attended a Reform congregation, walked into the synagogue without a *kippah*. He was admonished and covered his head on future visits.²³⁸

Against this backdrop, it is important to examine the attempts to introduce the choir into the synagogue services as a means of strengthening the religious consciousness of Shanghai Sephardim. In November, 1920, S. J. Solomon approached Jacob Friend, a yeshiva-trained rabbi from Lithuania,²³⁹ to organise a choir for the inaugural service of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue on the 23 January, 1921.²⁴⁰ Its excellent performance prompted Edward Ezra, as representative of the synagogue committee, to request Friend to train a choir composed of school children to become a permanent feature of the synagogue services. The far-reaching advantages it afforded in reinforcing the religious identity of the *kahal* were obvious. Regular attendance familiarised the youth and their supportive parents with the prayers. The Jewish community benefited by the enhanced beauty of the service, particularly at weddings and on festive occasions. Initially the choir was enthusiastically supported by the children, many of whom changed their piano lessons from Friday evening to participate in the Sabbath services. Through the voluntary and dedicated efforts of Friend, it functioned for over a year.²⁴¹

Friend expressed his deep disappointment when he was compelled to disband it because it lacked support.²⁴² He unsuccessfully tried to make it compulsory for children living in the vicinity of the *Ohel Rachel* to attend choir service. He was critical of well-to-do Jews, 'whose children can afford to waste heaps of time in pony riding, scoutism, parades', who backed out of the choir, under the pretext of lack of time, leaving the whole burden on the Hongkou children.²⁴³ The *Israel's Messenger*, an ardent supporter of the choir, regretted that there were 'certain old fashioned critics who object to the intrusion of a choir on flimsy grounds'.²⁴⁴ The

²³⁸ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 2/2/93.

²³⁹ He attended the Royal School of Music at Vilna and was a rabbinical student but fled from Russia before being ordained, *IM*, 8/7/27, p.10.

²⁴⁰ J. Friend to the editor, *IM*, 5/5/22, p.34; at the 'Laying of corner stone of the Ohel Rachel' the choir comprised ten boys, later there was a mixed choir which some Orthodox members considered wrong, *IM*, 13/1/22, p.24; *NCH*, 22/11/21, p.282.

²⁴¹ *IM*, 5/5/22, p.34; 'A Bold Departure, Passover with Choir', *IM*, 10/6/21, p.3.

²⁴² *ibid.*, p.34; 'Our Choir - Its History and a Plea to Establish it on a Permanent Basis', *IM*, 8/7/27, pp.10 and 13; 'It went by the wayside like everything else', Balfora Levene, née Friend, interview by author, telephone, Georgia, 21/12/93.

²⁴³ Letter to the Editor from Friend, Shanghai 27/4/22, *IM*, 5/5/22, p.34.

²⁴⁴ *IM*, 7/4/22, p.6.

choir ceased to function apart from some special choral services, such as the dedication of the *Beth Aharon* in 1927,²⁴⁵ *Hanukkah* and the special Jubilee service in May, 1935. Even today Sephardi Shanghailanders acknowledge the wholehearted and outstanding devotion of Friend to his work for all three Jewish congregations in Shanghai.²⁴⁶

With the advent of Rev. Mendel Brown as minister of the *Ohel Rachel* in 1932, the mixed choir began again to assume importance in the communal life of the Sephardim, especially the Friday evening service.²⁴⁷ It was boycotted, however, by some traditionalists who refused to attend the service.²⁴⁸ It is significant that the initiative for establishing the choir had come from S.J. Solomon, one of the most devout Sephardi Jews in Shanghai. It may well be that he expected it to function only at the inaugural service of the *Ohel Rachel*. It is also possible that opposition from traditionalists to a mixed choir contributed to its demise. Somewhat ironically, the beneficial influence of the choir in reinforcing the unity and religious identity of the *kahal* was overshadowed by the widened rift between traditionalists and the more progressive elements within the Shanghai Sephardi community.

In the 1920s the community became more diverse with varying shades of thought about religious practice. Different groups had different needs and there seemed to be no room for compromise between them. Schisms were threatening the solidarity of the Baghdadi community. The appointment of Hirsch seems to have hardened and even clarified the divisions in the community on religious grounds. He satisfied few. Although Orthodox, as an Ashkenazi, he did not appeal to the Baghdadis or to Sephardi traditionalists. There was little meeting of heart or mind. Being Orthodox he pointed a finger at the non-Orthodox, which further alienated them. They wanted re-interpretation, and he was not prepared to do this. Although they were afraid that differences in the practice of Judaism would destroy their Jewishness altogether, neither group was capable of accommodating the other. They were looking for a solution to bridge their differences, rather than accept them.

²⁴⁵ *IM*, 8/7/27, pp.10,13; photographs of the mixed choir in *IM*, 5/8/27, p.12.

²⁴⁶ 'Though his rewards from the Sephardi community were minimal there was a smile and a kind word for everyone', Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/93.

²⁴⁷ *IM*, 3/1/36, p.6.

²⁴⁸ Isaac Abraham, interview by author, London, 10/9/93.

When the situation was resolved, it was by each going their own way. Somewhat paradoxically, even those who rejected traditionalism were not prepared to deny their Baghdadi identity.²⁴⁹ Reform *per se* made no inroads till after World War II, but laxity of observance was an ongoing process.

Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah noticed a similar pattern of change in the Sephardi Community of Calcutta in the twentieth century. Many were becoming less Orthodox, breaking the Sabbath and disregarding Fasts and Festivals. There were clear fissures in religious observance; Baghdadi practices became less familiar, but there was very little erosion of Jewish identity. In Shanghai, perhaps because of greater exposure to Western culture and Ashkenazi ways, the Sephardim were more positive in achieving what they wanted - relaxed observances. In Calcutta the different shades of observance seemed to be contained, despite some mutual disapproval. This may have been due to apathy, or to the fact that the *kahal* was not so individualistic as in Shanghai where differences were marked more aggressively by the influential wealthy members of the community.

Conclusion

The nurturing of the Baghdadi identity took place essentially in the home²⁵⁰ and in the synagogue where it was expressed through the observance of Sabbath and on Festivals. *Kashruth* tends to bring Jewish observance to the very centre of family life, particularly by the Orthodox who are careful to preserve Jewish dietary laws.²⁵¹ Others observed the dietary laws more selectively, for example not every family bought *kasher* meat. This did not detract from their essential Jewish identity as there were other channels - namely synagogue attendance and observance of the Festivals - through which they remained affiliated and associated with Judaism and with the community.²⁵²

A strong sense of Jewish identity was reflected in *rites de passage*. Male circumcision and *Bar Mitzvah* were meticulously observed by Shanghai Sephardim

²⁴⁹ Yosef Ya'acov, interview by author, Jerusalem, 10/10/93.

²⁵⁰ 'We imbibed it from our mother milk', Mavis Hyman, interview by author, London, 11/3/93.

²⁵¹ *Leviticus*, XI; Kokosalakis, *op. cit.*, p.218.

²⁵² 'I am proud to be a Jew, and because I do not frequent the synagogues in no way lessens my claims to be a Jew', B. Somake, letter to the editor, Bombay, 29/3/32, in *IM*, 1/5/32, p.18.

according to Jewish law and Baghdadi custom. Marriage within the community prevailed, largely preserving both Jewish and Sephardi identities. It was not until the 1930s that a more lax attitude was taken to marriage between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Intermarriage was exceptional throughout the period of the existence of this community.

The centrality of Jewish tradition in the lives of some Sephardim conflicted with their social ambition. Economic competitiveness influenced some to break away from observances important to Judaism such as not working on the Sabbath. Observance of the dietary laws and Sabbath made socialising with non-Jews difficult. The significance of Hebrew, both as an ethnic and religious language, weakened increasingly in day-to-day communication and, in three generations, Judeo-Arabic was largely abandoned in favour of English, thus eroding a Baghdadi tie.

There are indications of apathy, perhaps because of lack of education, so crucial in making tradition and customs meaningful. Clearly some of the younger generation came to regard their Baghdadi origin as a hindrance because they differentiated them from the British. Baghdadi traditions began to seem archaic to some congregants. They were living in a more 'open' community exposed to a variety of foreign influences, at a time when Western ones were always esteemed in the Orient. People increasingly questioned religious practices and there were few Talmudic scholars in Shanghai to draw them back into the fold. Several Sephardim felt that loyalty to practices which no longer had any meaning was hollow. This alarmed the traditionalists who believed that without Torah there could be no community. What were the options? Punitive? Expel those who refused to keep in line? This would only harden schism in the community. The second option was to attract qualified teachers, but few were willing to go to China. What background was necessary for a leader to forge the required unity? Were the breakaways really interested in rapprochement or were they floating on a tide of apathy and negativism towards their Baghdad background?

The distinction between Jewish, Baghdadi and Sephardi identity needs to be borne in mind to understand the situation. At one end of the spectrum a hard core of Shanghai Sephardim identified at every level. At the other, there was a very small minority who broke away entirely, even from the Jewish fold. Their wealth gave

them an entrée into aristocratic circles in the West which was cemented by an education abroad and opportunities to live in the West as gentlemen. But for the majority, there was another road leading to identification with a wider Jewish community which did not tie itself to those aspects of Baghdadi tradition which seemed meaningless. Some saw themselves as belonging to the more amorphous group of Sephardim. In times of great environmental change, those of liberal inclination strained at the leash to move with the times, while the traditionalists held tenaciously to a way of life handed down by previous generations.

In the nineteenth century the synagogue was the nucleus of the community and fulfilled a crucial religious, social and economic role. Affiliation to the synagogues was an expression of Jewish identity even for the non-religious in the third and fourth generations. It was, and remained, the nerve centre of communication. The split in the *Beth El*, and the establishment of the more Orthodox *Shearith Israel*, appears to have reinforced rather than weakened the religious identity of the community. At the turn of the century, however, the community leaders were aware that, in its struggle to find acceptance in the wider society, the Baghdadi identity of the *kehilla* was being eroded and their traditions were becoming irksome with their exposure to Ashkenazi and Western values. Above all, the impact of the moral, intellectual, and social turmoil of the 1920s on the wider society was reflected in the Shanghai Sephardi community by its influence on its Jewish consciousness.

Common interests and mutual responsibility should have continued to draw the community together in the 1920s. Several factors, however, prevented the monumental *Ohel Rachel* and *Beth Aharon* from generally strengthening the community's identity and solidarity. This was due primarily to the changing character of the *kehilla* which by the 1920s had lost its earlier insecurity and consequently its dependence on the synagogue. As the Sephardim became increasingly acculturated to the British, the synagogues lost their prominence in the lives of some Jews. For others the synagogue continued to be a magnet, fulfilling both a religious and social function, reinforcing at the same time their Sephardi identity. Synagogues, almost empty throughout the year, were packed during the major Festivals especially on *Pesach* the *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

As an 'outsider' Hirsch, perhaps unfamiliar with the endowment of synagogues by wealthy philanthropists, arguably incorrectly, attributed the inability of Shanghai Sephardim to work co-operatively as a group to the fact that the *Ohel Rachel* was a gift to the community. He overlooked the inroads made on the community by Reform Judaism. While the theological and philosophical concepts of the Reform Movement appear to have made little impact on Shanghai Sephardim, they did attempt to adapt Jewish tradition to the wider culture, making it both Anglicised and liberalised. The appointments of the Ashkenazi Rabbis, Hirsch and Brown, were incongruous for a Baghdadi congregation in which many were staunch traditionalists. There was certain erosion of Baghdadi synagogue traditions: sermons preached in English, a lectern installed in the *Ohel Rachel*, a mixed choir,²⁵³ and talk of using an organ.

The essential point is that the liturgy remained totally Baghdadi. Unlike their sister communities in India, confrontation with an Ashkenazi community sharpened the awareness of Shanghai Sephardim of their Baghdadi origins and kept alive their Baghdadi traditions. Shanghai traditionalists had to defend their position against the traditions and customs of the Ashkenazi as well as against the movement towards Reform Judaism in Shanghai.

²⁵³ Sheila Dubnov, interview by author, London, 2/5/93.

Chapter Four: Other Communal Institutions

The Shanghai Jewish Communal Association

From a Jewish religious perspective, the relationship between God and His people has been historically reflected, not only through the beliefs and practices of Jews, but also through the social organisation of the Jewish communities. As Irene Eber has emphasised, Jewish self-definition is closely associated with the creation of cultural institutions, and Jewish existence is defined in terms of community.¹ The growth of the community in Shanghai by the late nineteenth century created a need for an umbrella organisation to control and direct its various functions, and to establish the structure essential to its religious observance and to its fuller life.² This chapter explores the extent to which The Shanghai Jewish Communal Association [SJCA] and the Shanghai Jewish School [SJS] were able to fulfil their purpose of generating a Jewish identity and solidarity with world Jewry, and also a Baghdadi identity reflecting the culture of its founders. It investigates the reasons for the absence of a viable Sephardi club in the Settlement, and examines the achievement of the Fifth Shanghai Jewish Boy Scout Group and the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association in preserving the Jewish identity of Sephardi youth.

The Sephardim of mid-nineteenth century Shanghai were closely bound together through their common origins, employment, marriage and religious belief, but formal social and religious institutions were slow to develop. Initially, social and religious leadership came from the Sassoon family. In the fledgling community things were run on an individual level, until the urgent need for a communal organisation became highlighted by the constant stream of indigent Jews from Eastern ports who solicited alms in the International Settlement. This embarrassed the Shanghai Jewish community who established, in early 1904, a Benevolent Fund to deal with the problem.³ This tentative beginning of organisation of Jewish communal life did not gain momentum until the next year when a large influx of

¹ Irene Eber, *Passage Through China, The Jewish Communities of Harbin, Tientsin and Shanghai*, (Tel Aviv, 1986), p.5.

² Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.68.

³ *IM*, 12/1/1906, p.13.

impoverished Jews galvanised Shanghai Jewry into action.⁴ At a meeting on 12 January 1906, Edward Ezra proposed the creation of 'The Association of the Jewish community of Shanghai', in order to cope with the growing administrative needs of the community.⁵ Members of the *Beth El*, *Shearith Israel*, and the Ashkenazi *Ohel Moishe* Synagogue, were invited to join in order to make the Association representative of all sections of Shanghai Jewry.⁶ This was an important departure from the practice of Baghdadi Jews of arranging their separate institutions independently. They tried to emulate the Western communities in administering communal organisations on democratic lines, although their own experience here was very limited.⁷

The provisional committee laid plans for running the Association but it took almost three years before the SJCA came into being on 29 September 1909.⁸ Its objective was the centralised control of general communal affairs viz: the upkeep of the cemetery, the purchase of land for a new one,⁹ distribution of charity to the impoverished, arranging passages for the destitute leaving Shanghai, and the provision of *kasher* meat.¹⁰ The SJCA kept an official register of births, marriages and deaths, and its consent was required for the performance of marriages and the granting of divorces.¹¹ As there was no rabbi in Shanghai till 1921, the President of the SJCA, was authorised to perform marriages 'according to the custom and usage of the Association and according to Jewish law'.¹² Synagogues were not permitted to perform marriage, divorce or other religious ceremonies without a written permit

⁴ After several abortive attempts a committee was formed on 7/12/1905 comprising D. E. J. Abraham, D. M. David, M. Deitrich, A. E. Moses, [President], M. Myer, [Hon. Secretary], Edward Nissim, [Hon Treasurer], S. Zimmerman, [Vice President].

⁵ There were 21 present. D.M. David was elected Chairman, E. Jonah, Secretary. The annual membership subscription was fixed at not less than \$12, *IM*, 12/1/1906, p.13-14; J. Zeitin, 'The Sephardic Community of Shanghai', *The American Sephardi*, Vol. 2, Nos. 1-2, 1986, p.73.

⁶ *IM*, 31/5/1907, p.13.

⁷ 'Shanghai Jewish Community to be Organised', 30/4/1909, p.11. 'Constitutions and Bye-Laws of the Shanghai Jewish Communal Association', (Shanghai), undated document drafted by J.E. Salmon, a solicitor, as noted in his obituary, *IM*, 1/11/35, p.13, and 6/12/35, p.9.

⁸ *IM*, 30/4/1909, p.11-12 and 28/5/1909, p.15.

⁹ Mohawk Road [Hwangpi Lu] cemetery founded in 1862 had 304 graves. The Baikal Road [Hweiming Lu] cemetery, founded in 1917, had 1,692 graves. Point Road and Columbia Road cemeteries came into operation in 1940 and 1941 for the refugees from Nazi persecution, *Catalogue of the Exhibition Jewish Life in Shanghai, September 1948- January 1949*, Yiddish Scientific Institute [hereafter Yivo].

¹⁰ Compare Janice Williams, *Conceptual Change and Religious Practice, with Special Reference to British Jews in England and Israel*, (Avebury, 1987), pp.117-118.

¹¹ *IM*, 10/9/1909, pp.7-8.

¹² *NCH*, 17/6/1922, pp.844-845.

from the committee. A circular addressed to non-synagogue members in January 1910 invited them to join and share the communal responsibility.¹³ The fact that these communal records are untraceable is most unfortunate for historians researching the Shanghai Sephardi community.

The synagogues ruled that their congregants become *de facto* subscribing members of the SJCA, and the *Beth El* and *Shearith Israel* paid a tax which automatically registered their congregations.¹⁴ In April 1907 the *Ohel Moishe* and the committee of the newly formed Hebrew Philanthropic Society opted to merge with the SJCA and offered to contribute a minimum of Mex \$400 annually, if the Association assumed responsibility for the Ashkenazi destitute.¹⁵ The management committee was comprised of representatives of the subscribing synagogues in proportion to their contributions. No synagogue was to have a representation of more than two-thirds of the committee.¹⁶ W.M. Katz representing the *Ohel Moishe* accepted the Chairmanship of the committee comprising four Sephardi and three Ashkenazi members.¹⁷

The Charity Committee

The problem of Jewish poverty in the International Settlement was inextricably linked with the general economic structure of society. The poor were not just the old and the infirm, but predominantly young men with families.¹⁸ The most difficult problems for the administration of Jewish charity were compounded by the large numbers of itinerant Jewish beggars.¹⁹ Poverty in the nineteenth century was a social stigma and Shanghai's Jewish élite, particularly sensitive to public opinion

¹³ The Jewish poor were exempted from payment of any fees. Non-members did not enjoy any of the privileges and were buried in the cemetery only on the receipt of \$100 from the mourners, *IM*, 30/4/1909, p.11.

¹⁴ *IM*, 7/1/1910, p.4.

¹⁵ It is probable that the Ashkenazi did not predominate numerically till between 1920 and 1923.

¹⁶ *IM*, 12/1/1906, p.13, and *JC*, 28/6/1907, p.14.

¹⁷ The statement of account from January to November 1906: income \$3,566, expenditure \$3,566.48, cash account \$1,201. The committee comprised: A. E. Moses, S. Zimmerman, President, Edward Nissim, Hon. Treasurer, M. Myer, Hon. Secretary, *IM*, 31/5/1907, p.13.

¹⁸ Compare 'The Neglected Poor of Calcutta', *The Hebrew*, 11/1/1907, and 'The Horrors of Hurriahatta Slum', 14/6/1907; community leaders urged the Indian government to adopt repressive measures against beggars, *The Jewish Messenger*, [hereafter *TJM*], 4/7/1913, pp.63-64; 'Jewish Ladies' League; the increasing number of Jewish poor is ruining the Jewish name', *TJM*, 1/8/1913, p.95; an appeal to the community to stop indiscriminate alms giving and support the League instead, *TJM*, 17/10/1913, pp.149-150.

¹⁹ *IM*, 3/4/1936, p.1.

regarding Jewish poverty, were at pains not only to safeguard the community but also their own position and prestige.²⁰ They assumed responsibility for the Jewish destitute in the Settlement and believed this would minimise anti-Jewish prejudice. Their reaction to an article entitled 'Jerusalem Jews' in *The Celestial Empire* in January 1893 referring to the nuisance caused by some women, who were in fact not Jewish, begging in the Settlement, is revealing. S. Minny argued that the article reflected great discredit on the small Jewish community in Shanghai 'who have in almost every instance on the arrival of any poor Jewish families looked to their wants and with a private subscription amongst themselves'.²¹ They had always managed to keep them from begging. The giving of private charity was very much part of the Baghdadi way of life and care was taken not to embarrass the recipient. This was an important channel for reinforcing the Jewish identity and solidarity among Shanghai Jewry.²²

The SJCA Committee, aware of the urgent need to establish proper communal machinery for the care of the impoverished, appointed a special charity sub-committee to dispense 'careful and judicious charities'.²³ This coterie of dedicated workers included M. Myers who, even after his retirement from active service, continued to assist with the accounts.²⁴ Dr. Kreig was appointed to attend to the medical needs of the Jewish poor. The provisional committee in January 1906 unequivocally ruled that no charity should be given to poor Jews coming from abroad by any individual member of the community.²⁵ These newcomers were to be referred to the sub-committee who paid for their return passage, unless they were considered deserving of more relief.²⁶ The problem of the itinerant poor was brought sharply into focus in 1935 when a member of the Sephardi community, annoyed by the beggars

²⁰ 'A Native of Baghdad, David Isaac, unemployed was charged with begging alms at No.23, The Bund,' *TCE*, 12/8/1904, and similar notices in the press reflected on the Jewish community.

²¹ 'Jew or Gentile?', *TCE*, 13/1/1893, p.47.

²² Deuteronomy, 15:9-11; for a detailed account of the dispensing of charity in Baghdad see, Morris Cohen, 'The Jews of Baghdad', *JC*, 30/7/1880, p.11.

²³ *IM*, 30/4/1909, pp.11-12.

²⁴ 'Successful entertainment to aid Jewish charities' raised some \$3,500, *IM*, 5/1/1923, p.19.

²⁵ Point 6 of the report drawn up by the provisional committee of the SJCA in 1906, *IM*, 29/9/1909, pp.7-8.

²⁶ The Indian Jewish communities were asked not to encourage visitors to come on begging expeditions to Shanghai, *IM*, 12/1/1906, pp.13-14. Arguably, the poor were free agents and personally responsible for their movements.

importuning in the synagogue, brought the matter to the local British police court.²⁷ Although it was deemed wrong to encourage prosecution of such cases, it was nonetheless considered necessary to take a firm hand. Edward Nissim, an elder of the community, warned the Jewish poor of India, Singapore and Hong Kong who intended soliciting in Shanghai, that they would find themselves stranded.²⁸ Given the depressed economy in the 1930s²⁹ Shanghai Jewry maintained that they were not in a position to bear the costs of repatriating them.³⁰ The passage to Bombay cost £10.³¹ The increasing number of unemployed Shanghai Jews, including several waves of refugees from Russia, strained the Society's meagre resources. Ironically, against this backdrop over eighteen thousand refugees from Nazi persecution streamed into Shanghai between 1933-1940 precipitating a refugee problem of unprecedented dimensions.³² Significantly, the Ladies' Benevolent Society acknowledged its duty to offer full assistance to the refugees who sought asylum from persecution.³³ In 1933 close to \$1,000 dollars was raised for the welfare of German Jewish refugees in Shanghai. Mrs. R. E. Toeg was made Honorary Treasurer of this special fund.³⁴

What appears to be the insensitive and uncaring attitude of Shanghai Jewry towards the itinerant Jewish poor from other cities, must be seen in context.³⁵ A

²⁷ Mrs. Judah Azachee entered with her four children and 'shouted for assistance' during the service, *NCH*, 2/10/1935, p.31; *IM*, 1/11/1935, p.1; 'the beggar nuisance' is depicted in 'Peli' to the editor, 25/4/1932, *IM*, 5/5/1932, p.19.

²⁸ *IM*, 3/4/1936, p.11.

²⁹ For a retrospective report of the economic situation see 'Changing Conditions In Shanghai', *Finance & Commerce*, 8/2/1938, pp.105-106.

³⁰ *IM*, 3/4/1936, p.1.

³¹ It was noted, however, that, 'certain paid officials in our communal service are reported to wear a very callous outlook upon the poor instead of helping', *IM*, 1/11/1935, p.1.

³² 'Shanghai, City of Refuge', *NCH*, 24/5/1939, p.327, 22/2/1939, p.327, and 8/3/1939, p.413; Statistics provided to the SMC by the International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees, 17/1/41, Shanghai Municipal Police Dossier [SMP D] 5422A.

³³ Its priority was to assist refugees from persecution rather than those 'from Calcutta, Rangoon and Singapore, where oppression is nil', *IM*, 3/4/1936, p.1.

³⁴ She allocated \$760, 80 percent of private funds at her disposal towards these refugees, *IM*, 1/12/1933, p.10. and 2/11/1934 p.15; 'Empathy as a Source of Genuine Altruism', pp.207-210, and 'Altruism: Helping Others', pp.529-540, David G. Myers, *Social Psychology*, (Michigan, 1983); Psychologist A. Worenklein, emphasises that empathy and helping are enhanced by similarities between the victim and the observer; 'they tend to donate to their own kind', [in this case the Sephardi poor], A. Worenklein, interview by author, Montreal, 15/8/1993; See also Baron and Byrne, *Social Psychology, Understanding Human Interaction*, (Boston, 1987).

³⁵ From 21/3/1921 to April 1922 Bombay provided refuge for large numbers of destitute Jews from Anatolia; several batches of refugees received 'liberal help from the Jewish community', Sir S. David to the Commissioner of Police 27/5/1921, India Office [hereafter *IO*] Vol.28; S. David and Messrs. E. D. Sassoon were willing to pay Rs 5,000, for their repatriating to Palestine provided they left within a fortnight, 29/8/1921 *IO*, No. 261, T.W.; they were housed in the Jewish school, 'Begging was their only occupation', 30/1/1922, *IO*, Tel. 147, 10 Ext No. 428. The Iraq Government agreed to pay half the expenses incurred by the Government of Bombay for their maintenance, 11/3/1924 *IO*, 411/1921 L/E/7/1200 AG No. 3167/24.

Hong Kong correspondent to the *Israel's Messenger* in April 1922 claimed that all its poor had emigrated to Shanghai.³⁶ With the formation of the State of Iraq, in February 1932, the Baghdadi Jewish community shipped many of its poor which included large families with as many as five to eight children to Shanghai.³⁷ There were various general demands for charity on the community notably for causes in *Eretz Yisrael*, and Baghdad. Appeals for help for those who suffered in the severe famines in China were often coincident with those for assistance to Eastern European Jews.³⁸ There was also pressure for contributions to charities in the wider community in Shanghai.³⁹

At the first annual meeting on 28 May 1907 the SJCA reported that it had achieved its main objective, namely, the poor no longer solicited alms on the streets. In common with communal organisations, achievements of the SJCA were the result of the efforts of a few dedicated members: 'It is not fair that the burden should be borne by a few only'.⁴⁰ It annoyed them that Jews were offering their services to the Theosophical Society and devoting their 'energies and zeal to non-Jewish activities'.⁴¹ Two decades later in 1923, David Arakie, noted that 'the communal conscience is not thoroughly developed here - many escape contributing their share'.⁴²

³⁶ *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.6.

³⁷ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/1992. In Calcutta the poor tended to hand down to their children the passive acceptance of 'perpetual dole', Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.311.

³⁸ Shanghai Jewry raised £500,000 for the victims of the Kishnieff pogrom, *IM*, 26/6/1906; appeal for the victims of the famine in Hebron, 6/3/1908; The Grand Rabbin of Mossoul, Elia Sayegh, visited Shanghai in 1908 to solicit funds, *IM*, 2/10/1908, p.13 and 10/9/1909, p.16; Rabbi Hirsch observed that Shanghai Sephardim had bridged with many connections and associations the vast distance that divided it from other Jewish communities, *IM*, 29/10/1920, p.41.

³⁹ Edward Ezra was Chairman of the Foreign Community's Charity Organisation Committee which came into existence in 1914, *NCH*, 13/5/15, pp.170-171, and 17/12/1921, p.767. Perhaps then, Ezra's persistent criticism of the lack of response to his various appeals should be taken as lightly as his readers appeared to take them, *IM*, 22/4/1921, p.12.

⁴⁰ Its fund raising activities-concerts, balls and bazaars were envied by Bombay and Hong Kong Jews, *IM*, 31/5/1907, 7/4/1922, p.6, and 13/1/1922 p.6.

⁴¹ A. Horne was its President, *IM*, 6/7/1923, p.22; 'the local pulpit censures the lukewarm attitude' of the community in communal matters, *IM*, 6/10/1922, p.10. Compare C.Z. Kloetzel's criticism, over a decade later, of 'the upper ten among Baghdadis' of Bombay who neglect the urgent needs of their own community, while making annual donations of thousands of pounds to general charities 'administered by the wives of viceroys', *TJT*, July 1936, p.11; *The Hebrew*, 21/1/1907, p.87.

⁴² *IM*, 6/4/1923, p.15-16, and 4/6/1926, p.17.

The Shehita Board

Traditional Baghdadi Jews were generally accompanied on their travels by their cooks and trained *shohetim*.⁴³ George Hayim records the 'endless preparations' involved when a group of thirty-nine Shanghai Baghdad Jews, travelled together to Europe via Russia in the 1920s: 'The tribe all had to have *kasher* food, this meant bottling, salting and sterilizing chicken and vegetables'.⁴⁴ Well into the mid-twentieth century Jewish boys in Shanghai were taught the ritual slaughter of fowls, even when official *shohetim* were employed by the community.⁴⁵ As in Calcutta, the *hazan* assumed the responsibility of *shohet* until the growth of the community warranted the establishment of a *Shehita* Board which was set up by the SJCA to meet the needs of the community.⁴⁶

From its inception the Board was beset by a host of problems. The lack of qualified *shohetim* resulted in an irregular supply of *kasher* meat. At the request of the President of the Board, Edward Ezra, the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad selected a proficient *shohet*, Sassoon Abraham, for the Shanghai community.⁴⁷ He was, however, unable to cope singlehandedly when slaughtering fifteen to twenty head of sheep, and two or three cows every weekday, particularly during the very cold winters.⁴⁸ By 1923 there were four *shohetim* in Shanghai. Two were supported by the SJCA, the others by the *Shearith Israel* and the Ashkenazi community.⁴⁹

The whole question of licensing, training and the competence of *shohetim*, caused considerable headaches to the leaders of the community.⁵⁰ Despite the strenuous efforts of Edward Ezra and S. J. Solomon, [Honorary Secretary], there was insufficient inducement for local Chinese butchers to take up the business of supplying *kasher* meat to the community, of which only a small section, perhaps one-third of

⁴³ Katie Gubbay, interview by author, tape recording, London, 1/9/1991. She recalled that on the boat from Baghdad to Bombay their cook brought an ample supply of fowl on board.

⁴⁴ George Hayim, *Thou Shalt Not Uncover Thy Mother's Nakedness, An Autobiography*, (London and New York, 1988), p.16.

⁴⁵ For example Yosef Ya'acov, who, it is noteworthy, attended an SMC School, Ya'acov, interview, 10/10/1993.

⁴⁶ *IM*, 27/10/1918, p.55.

⁴⁷ *IM*, 5/5/1922, p.35.

⁴⁸ Compare Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.256.

⁴⁹ *IM*, 9/11/1923, p.10. Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Shanghai had separate *shehita* until Pearl Harbour, December, 1941. The Russian observance of slaughter was somewhat more lax than that of the Sephardim, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 20/8/1993.

⁵⁰ Criticism of the *shohetim* in *IM*, 7/12/1928, p.20; *IM*, 7/9/1923, p.9.

the combined Sephardi and Ashkenazi community observed *kashrut*.⁵¹ By the 1920s there were complaints that there was no *shomer* to supervise the butcher shop which also sold non-*kasher* meat, probably because of lack of funds. It was suggested that, as in London, only Jewish butchers should be allowed to sell *kasher* meat.⁵²

Although the Board was criticised for the steady rise in the price of meat, it was in fact remarkable that the *kasher* meat in Shanghai cost the same price as the *treifa*; generally in other countries it cost far more. The Communal Association defrayed *shehita* and *porging* [sinews, etc. removed] costs.⁵³ This incentive to encourage the community to purchase *kasher* meat is a significant demonstration of the importance the elders of the community attached to the Dietary Laws as a means of preserving the Jewish identity of the community. Clearly some members needed inducements to observe the laws of *kashrut*. In the 1924 when the price of *kasher* meat was raised five cents, some Sephardim argued that the 'shameless profiteering ... is driving away many from eating *kasher*'.⁵⁴ In this situation they appeared willing to forego their heritage and this aspect of their Jewish identity.

Generally there was a sufficient supply of *kasher* mutton and beef to meet the demands of Shanghai, and even Singapore, Jewry.⁵⁵ After the death of Solomon in October 1922, the *Shehita* Board appears to have existed in name only, with no one accepting responsibility.⁵⁶ Letters to the editor of the *Israel's Messenger* demonstrate the 'tremendous hardship', some encountered in procuring *kasher* meat.⁵⁷ Nothing came of the SJCA request to the SMC in 1935 to install a 'Weinberg' pen for electrical stunning of the animals. Significantly, the council agreed to its installation if the SJCA offered to bear one half of the cost, some £150.⁵⁸ It indicates the liberal attitude of the foreign community towards the ritual

⁵¹ 'The *Shehita* Board', S. J. Solomon, letter to the editor *IM*, Shanghai, 2/5/1922, *IM*, 5/5/1922, p.35.

⁵² *IM*, 16/12/1921; see criticism of the Humane Society's article on *shehita* printed in the Hong Kong Press, and the suggestion that it 'be met by a judicious distribution of pamphlets', E. Zeitlyn to Emanuel, 7/11/1922, 'The Juicy Meat', *BDBJ*, ACC 3121/ B4/Hon1.

⁵³ *IM*, 5/5/1922, p.35.

⁵⁴ *IM*, 5/5/1922, p.35, 7/3/1924, p.15, and 7/5/1926, p.4.

⁵⁵ 'If we had some business acumen we would turn the local board into a business institution and emulate the London *Shehita* Board which yielded a profit of £80,000 a year', *IM*, 7/5/1926, p.4.

⁵⁶ *IM*, 6/3/1923, p.1, 7/9/1923, p.9, 3/11/1922, p.24 and 1/12/1922, p.18. The Calcutta *Shehita* Board, set up in 1926, did not long survive the death of E. M. Cohen in January 1927, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.69.

⁵⁷ For example, the complaint that the meat was sold out before 6 a.m., *IM*, 7/9/1923, p.9; see also other complaints in *IM*, 6/8/1926, p.16 and 3/9/1926, p.15.

⁵⁸ Mendel Brown to the Secretary of the *BDBJ*, 23/4/1934 ACC3121/C11/12/5, *IM*, 3/5/1935, p.14.

practices of Shanghai Jewry. However great the difficulties involved in the procurement of *kasher* meat, the important point is that Shanghai Sephardim were able to ensure a steady supply. It undoubtedly played a crucial role in reinforcing their Jewish identity, as the laws of *kashrut* generally remained important for the Sephardim, although they practised them selectively and flexibly.

The Shanghai Jewish School

...What is the matter with us? What greater indictment can be levelled against us than that we pay no attention to the needs of the rising generation?...⁵⁹

Denominational schools are usually set up to perpetuate through the curriculum a system of values which are unique in specific ways. Jewish education, knowledge of the Pentateuch and the commentaries is an essential element of Jewish identity. There is an overwhelming emphasis on literacy and Jewish schools teach, *inter alia*, Hebrew, Jewish History and Jewish Law.⁶⁰ Until 1831 Jews in Baghdad learned only in the *estad*, [private institutions] which belonged to the *estadi* [teacher]. The medium of instruction was Judeo-Arabic. Learning was by rote, and in the absence of teaching aids, writing was done on the floor.⁶¹

The early settlers adopted the traditional means of imparting instruction from father to son, or through a private instructor who earned his livelihood teaching children of affluent parents in their homes or at his residence.⁶² As their numbers increased this became no longer viable. On the initiative of Abraham, the *Shearith Israel* Synagogue which was founded in 1900,⁶³ incorporated, in 1902, a *Talmud*

⁵⁹ *IM*, 6/10/1922, p.10.

⁶⁰ *IM*, 4/7/1939, p.26. A Jewish father has the specific obligation to educate his sons, *Gemorah, Kiddushim*, p.29a and 29b; Julius B. Maller, 'The Role of Education in Jewish History', in Louis Finkelstein, ed., *The Jews, Their History, Culture and Religion, Vol.III*, (Philadelphia, 1949).

⁶¹ 'One will learn by repetition and afterwards will grasp the meaning', *Babylonian Talmud*, tractate *Shabbat*, 63; for a detailed description of the primitive conditions in many Baghdadi schools in the 1880s, see Morris Cohen, 'The Jews of Baghdad', *JC*, 30/7/1880, p.11; See also Carmella Shiponi, 'Jewish Education in Iraq 1830-1950', M. A. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1981, pp.25-27.

⁶² The form of education was probably mechanical Hebrew reading of the traditional Biblical chants and recitation of prayers, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.270.

⁶³ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 73, note 43; the elected committee for the school was R. H. Elias, Edward I. Ezra, Silas Hardoon, Simon A. Levy, Edward Nissim, A. E. Moses, S. E. Schwartz, S. Zimmerman, The Jewish school in Calcutta only began functioning in 1881, though a Jewish community was extant since the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Torah (Hebrew School) where initially six boys were taught Hebrew and religious studies through the medium of Judeo-Arabic. This was the origin of the Shanghai Jewish School [hereafter SJS] which had ‘the very lukewarm support of the community in general and had even to face the openly avowed opposition of a small minority’. There were also several who were opposed to the education of girls.⁶⁴ It is significant that the SJS, unlike the SMC schools, was co-educational. Sephardi girls and boys were given educational opportunities. The increase in the number of pupils prompted the move to three rooms on the first floor of a house, 3 Seward Road. The first school report pronounced the examination results of its thirty-five pupils ‘very creditable’ due to the devoted voluntary teachers, Mozelle Abraham, D.E.J.’s wife, Maimy Solomon, [the daughter of S.J.Solomon] and M. Perry, B A, who introduced English as the medium of instruction.⁶⁵ The first Prize Distribution Day, a historic occasion in the annals of the Jewish community, was held at the Royal Asiatic Society Hall on 16 May 1904.⁶⁶ The prime mover of the school, Abraham, President of the School Committee [1902-1913], and his wife, affectionately called the ‘mother of the school’, played a dominant role in its organisation,⁶⁷ as did his successor, D. M. David [1913-1926]. The committee comprised respected communal figures who prominently identified themselves with the interests of the growing Jewish community.⁶⁸

The SJS as a Foil to Missionary Activity

The SJS’s objective was ‘to educate its pupils to earn a livelihood and to be a credit to the Jewish Community and to Shanghai’.⁶⁹ Its ‘Hebrew aim’ was that its pupils would read and understand the Pentateuch, Prophets and Holy writings and

⁶⁴ *JC*, 29/3/1907, p.13 and *IM*, 4/7/1919, p.49; ‘There is no valid reason for excluding females, the future mothers of Israel’, *The Hebrew*, 22/2/1907, p.110; *IM*, 25/1/1907, p.11; by 1909, however, the SJS had the ‘wholehearted sympathy of the entire community’, *IM*, 10/12/1909, p.11.

⁶⁵ A list of teachers in 1908 in *IM*, 9/4/37, p.16 and in the *Shanghai Directory July 1939, City Supplementary Edition to the July Edition of the China Hong List Revised and Corrected to July 1939*, (Shanghai, 1939).

⁶⁶ *IM*, 12/1/1906, pp.13-14.

⁶⁷ *JC*, 29/6/1906, p.40. For a retrospective account see Rabbi Mendel Brown B.A., ‘The Modern Jews of China - III: The Shanghai Jewish School, An Historic Survey of its Origin, Development and Growth’, *IM*, 9/4/1937, p.17 and 10/6/1938, p.11.

⁶⁸ Nevertheless, when M. Clare, headmaster for three years died in 1920, finding a replacement was delayed because most of the committee were ‘summering in Europe, Canada and America’, *IM*, 10/9/1920, p.41.

⁶⁹ *IM*, 14/5/1909, p.7, and 4/7/1919, p.49.

prayer book.⁷⁰ D.E.J. Abraham staunchly maintained that the fundamental concern of a self-contained and progressive community was the education of its youth. He underlined that religion figured prominently in the curriculum of the numerous missionary and free schools in Shanghai.⁷¹ The community elders were aware that missionary activity was a threat to their sister community in Calcutta. Musleah depicts the 'bitter tug-of-war' where 'soul-snatching' took precedence over the education of their Jewish students.⁷² While the strategies of the missionaries could be described as sinister in Calcutta, by contrast in Shanghai there was a somewhat pathetic incident when three overzealous missionaries, believed to be Americans, 'invaded' the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue on the Day of Atonement 1927 and distributed anti-Jewish evangelical leaflets printed in English and Yiddish.⁷³ The Shanghai press gave it prominence. A flurry of letters, notably from W. Bruce Lockhart,⁷⁴ expressing outrage at their 'abominable' action, provides an insight into the relationship between the Sephardim and their fellow residents.⁷⁵ 'Many of us have old and valued friends who are of the Jewish race and faith...express sincere sympathy with the earnest God-fearing men and women'.⁷⁶ F. L. Hawks Pott, the historian and principal of St. John's University, Shanghai, called for the severest censure from the missionary body of the discourtesy and the dishonesty of the whole proceeding.⁷⁷

Probably more menacing to Shanghai Sephardim was the fact that a donation of \$10,000 funded an office where Rev. Edgar Strother, a missionary,⁷⁸ printed

⁷⁰ 'Chairman's Speech - Annual Meeting, 1939', *The Southampton University Library Archives and Manuscripts*, [SULA, hereafter] AJ 37/3/3/39 and AJ37/6/4/13; *IM*, 14/7/1939, p.26.

⁷¹ The Public schools were non-sectarian and non denominational. A prayer by Robert Louis Stevenson which had no reference to God was read at assembly, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/1992.

⁷² Musleah, *op. cit.*, p. 275, and 'Jews Baptised in Calcutta', *TJT*, October, 1937, p.16.

⁷³ *IM*, 4/12/1927, p.22. The English pamphlets were entitled 'Charlie Coulson, the Drummer Boy, A True Story of the American War' and 'How did the Jew know his Sin was Forgiven?' The Yiddish tract was entitled 'The Search for Blood', *NCH*, 15/10/1927, p.102. Of course, none of the Sephardim would have understood Yiddish.

⁷⁴ *IM*, 4/11/1927, p.22. Dr. Robert Bickers has described him as a Sinophobic racist hack journalist who hated missionaries unless they were Old Testament fundamentalists and anti-reds, Bickers, interview by author, London, 18/8/1993, and *op. cit.*, pp.34, 81.

⁷⁵ *IM*, 4/11/27, p.24.

⁷⁶ W. Carmichael letter to the editor *NCDN*, Shanghai 10/10/1927, printed in *IM*, 4/11/1927, p.23; 'The Insult at the Synagogue', *The Shanghai Times*, 9/10/1927.

⁷⁷ 'The Synagogue Outrage' reprinted from *NCDN*, 20/10/1927 in *IM*, 4/11/1927, p.23; the deep sense of outrage of the Sephardim is attested to by Rose Horowitz, who numbered many missionary children among her friends, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/1993.

⁷⁸ Edgar E. Strother, *A Bolshevised China: The World's Greatest Peril*, Shanghai, 1927, *passim*.

subversive literature, notably extracts from the virulently anti-Semitic forgery, emanating from Russia, the *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*, (1903) which he distributed freely.⁷⁹ J. R. Jones, a non-Jewish member of the Shanghai British Bar, expressed strong disapproval of the 'campaign of calumny' against the Jewish community, for whom he had the 'warmest regard'.⁸⁰ The *Israel's Messenger* urged Jewish youth to distribute Herman Bernstein's *The History of a Lie* in the Settlement, published in New York in 1921, which provided documentary evidence that the *Protocols* were a fake.⁸¹ Probably because of the meagre support it marshalled, the author of the 'China Edition' of the *Protocols*, after finding it hopeless to induce the local book stores to handle the sale, stopped advertising in the press.⁸²

Against this background, the sustained campaign from 1909 till the mid-1930s by the *Israel's Messenger* to have Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* proscribed from the Settlement and from the curriculum of Shanghai's Public Schools, is significant.⁸³ This seemingly trivial issue, which provoked much quarrelsome debate, highlights the efforts of the community elders to keep anti-Semitism at bay. In 1926, J. J. Jones, the *non-Jewish* headmaster of the SJS, referred to the prevalence of 'a small degree' of anti-Semitism 'even in so cosmopolitan a city as Shanghai'.⁸⁴ To check its growth he counselled Jews to strive towards making: 'our [author's emphasis] community as little defective as possible. Any faults that we as Jews

⁷⁹ *IM*, 1/6/1935, p.25 and 'Anti-Semitism In China ?' and 6/1/1928, p.23; *NCH*, 31/12/27, p.580. The *Protocols* were translated into Japanese in 1924 and 1938. The spread of the *Protocols* by the White Russians throughout the world is examined in N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, Chaps. 5 and 7.

⁸⁰ *IM*, 22/7/1926, p.18.

⁸¹ *IM*, 2/4/1926, p.19, 21/5/1926, p. 9, 4/6/1926, p.15, 6/8/1926, p.8, 3/2/1927, p.18 and 2/3/28, pp.4, 20. Nonetheless some, like Captain A. E. Howard, refused to accept that the *Protocols* had been proved a forgery, *IM*, 4/6/1926, p.16, and 4/11/1927, p.24.

⁸² Copies of the book were posted to residents: 'to be returned if not found delicious', *IM*, 1/6/28, p.23; 'A Warning to Shanghai Jewry' - not to be lulled into a false sense of security', *IM*, 6/1/1928 p.20, 24, 2/2/1928, and 2/3/28, p.21.

⁸³ 'Shakespeare Expurgated', *NCH*, 31/12/1909, p.774 and 7/1/1910; the controversy continued in the press, *NCH*, 15/12/1931 and 22/12/1931, p.424

⁸⁴ For example see *NCH*, 26/7/1919, p. 232, and 11/9/1920, p.686; Some of the foreigners in Shanghai reflected the conventional anti-Semitism of the day that Jews were foreigners, not able to be assimilated, not exactly dangerous, but at the same time, 'not quite like us'; see also Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*, (London, 1979) especially 'Anti-Semitism and society 1919-39', Chap. 14; Gisela C. Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939*, (London, 1978), *passim*.

possess tend always to be magnified in the eyes of our neighbours, so that we must be doubly careful to leave no room for hostile criticism'.⁸⁵

Abraham argued that with the establishment of the SJS there was no justification for Jews 'to make themselves the unwelcome intruders of Christian denominational institutions, and encroach on their funds'. He described their position as degrading, as they were compelled to join in the prayers. 'Jewish pupils even if they do not turn Christian will never be devout Jews'.⁸⁶ The *shohet* was persuaded by the community elders to withdraw his children from the Roman Catholic school they had been attending for three years.⁸⁷ Sassoon Jacoby's father, *hazan* of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue, although not a British subject, was resolute to have his five children educated in English schools; maintaining that 'you can get all the Jewish education you need at home'.⁸⁸ He met the challenge of the high tuition fees by living in inferior housing. Importantly, however, those educated in the SMC schools maintained close ties with the SJS, donating their old text books and school uniforms to its poorer pupils - a demonstration of solidarity and shared responsibility.⁸⁹

The Chequered Career of the SJS

Miss Patterson a teacher in the Shanghai Public School, who examined the SJS in 1904, reported that the school 'does excellent work, and is well worth support...These children, who even if they could attend another school, would probably be only tolerated,⁹⁰ are here taught to feel that they are important members of the community'.⁹¹ She noted that in addition to receiving a secular education, as

⁸⁵ As a non-Jew, Jones' identification with the Jewish community is remarkable, *IM*, 10/12/1909, p.13. Anti-Semitism was inspired by social, economic, political, religious and racial considerations and focused attention on allegedly permanent characteristics of the Jews as a social and national group, fundamentally alien to their fellow citizens. Hostility was provoked by their social cohesion, and the 'religiously sanctioned exclusiveness'. Jews were expelled from England in 1290, France in 1306 and 1394, Hungary between 1349 and 1360, Austria in 1421 and in Germany between the 14th and 16th centuries, Spain in 1495, and Portugal 1497, *inter alia*, solely because they were Jewish, Robert Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism, the Longest Hatred*, (London, 1991), *passim*.

⁸⁶ *IM*, 16/12/1921, p.34.

⁸⁷ *IM*, 3/2/1933, p.20.

⁸⁸ Sassoon Jacoby, interview by author, Jerusalem, 3/6/1993.

⁸⁹ Some, like Edward Ezra, one of the star pupils at Thomas Hanbury, played an important role in the organisation of the SJS, *NCH*, 17/12/21. p.767. Of 36 pupils in Horowitz's class 8 were Jewish, 5 Sephardi, 3 Russian, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/1993.

⁹⁰ Presumably because they were poor and social stratifications were deeply entrenched in the Settlement, 'the school reaches a class of children for whose education suitable provision does not otherwise exist in the Settlement', Levenson to Abraham 14/6/1907, cited in *IM*, 28/6/1907, p.8.

⁹¹ 'Report by a European Lady Teacher', Shanghai, 25/1/1904, cited in *IM*, 19/5/1904, pp.23, 24.

good as that given in many of the state schools of the West, other and more important lessons of morality, patriotism to the British, and religion were imparted.⁹² The SJS curriculum was based on the British pattern with supplementary classes in Hebrew, Jewish history, religious observance and tradition. In time it provided a sound secular education including shorthand, typewriting and bookkeeping, equipping its pupils to earn their living as soon as possible, particularly in junior posts in mercantile firms.⁹³ By degrees the standard of education was raised sufficiently to enter candidates for the Cambridge Local Examinations. The results compared favourably with the other foreign schools in the Settlement. Given that English was not their mother tongue and was seldom spoken in Sephardi homes till the first decade of the twentieth century, it was 'very uphill work' for their tutors.⁹⁴ Voluntary teaching remained a feature in the school and the dedication of the staff is also demonstrated in the extra-curricular activities they organised, even during the summer holidays, when they supervised needlework and other classes.⁹⁵

Most of the primary material on the school's activities is to be found in the SJS Reports and Speeches recorded in the *Israel's Messenger* which tend to overstate the progress of the school and gloss over its inadequacies. Depending almost entirely for its support on public subscription, the school in fact had a chequered career.⁹⁶ Wealthy parents, and more significantly many who were not wealthy, reluctant to accept a lower standard of secular education, sent their children to the non-denominational SMC Public Schools. Clearly they had strong ambitions for acculturation to the British. When, due to a marked decrease in donations in 1905-1906, the Committee found it necessary to charge school fees, some of the pupils left to attend the more expensive Public schools.⁹⁷ Well into the 1930s the SJS attracted

⁹² *ibid.*, p.23.

⁹³ Abraham reported: 'Past pupils are now earning a living in local firms and gaining respect for good conduct and close attention to work', L. Levy [died 6/5/1929] used his influence to find jobs for school leavers, *IM*, 14/5/1909, p.7.

⁹⁴ *IM*, 4/4/1906, p.6.

⁹⁵ Three tram cars were reserved by the host J. R. Elias to transport 70 pupils and their relatives and friends to Elias' home for a garden party and sports events organised by the staff, *IM*, 10/11/1909, p.11; Nora Toeg published the school 'Magazine' monthly, *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.17; swimming was organised for the older boys, *IM*, 13/1/1922, p.25; Cissy Flegg, interview by author, Jerusalem, 11/10/1993.

⁹⁶ *IM*, 6/10/1922, p.10, 4/1/1924, p.15 and 7/4/1922, p.12.

⁹⁷ *IM*, 4/4/1906, p.6. It is important to differentiate between SMC Public Schools, which were run by British teachers using British text books and the British schools which were church affiliated and were attended by barely half a dozen Jewish children. In 1916 the Cathedral and the Public School boasted some 175 British boys of whom 30 were Jewish, Circular Despatch by Sir Haviland de Sausmarez on British Educational Institutions in China,

only pupils whose parents were unable to afford the preferred Public Schools.⁹⁸ According to those interviewed, the SJS was founded and maintained solely to provide schooling for those unable to pay the SMC school fees.⁹⁹

The large influx of Russian children, due to the Russo-Japanese war, swelled the numbers to sixty-six in 1907.¹⁰⁰ The school moved to 9 Seward Road, and Miss Perry was appointed headmistress. Initially the SJS received 'valuable contributions' from the two Sassoon firms.¹⁰¹ In 1909 two generous donations of \$1,000 each from Ellis Kadoorie¹⁰² and A. E. Moses were invested and the yearly interest became the nucleus of the Ellis Kadoorie Prize Fund, a Cup for Sports, and the Flora Scholarship for Proficiency in Hebrew and Religious Studies, both of which were awarded annually.¹⁰³ Free school meals were provided daily from the Sir Ellis Kadoorie and Laura Kadoorie Tiffin Fund, and this was later augmented by Sir Elly and his sons, Lawrence and Horace.¹⁰⁴

Nonetheless a letter in 1908, informing the SJS of the SMC's decision to make an annual grant of Tls500 towards its maintenance, was critical of the community.¹⁰⁵ It pointed out that the list of subscriptions 'should be upon a considerably higher basis than that shown in the accounts last published'.¹⁰⁶ Conceding, however, that the school filled 'a great need among an exceedingly poor

28/12/1916, No.77, FO 671/445.

⁹⁸ In Calcutta, although the Jewish Girls' School was recognised as European from 1886, several Jewish girls continued to attend other schools where they were regarded as non-European and debarred from competing in scholarship examinations, Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.290-291.

⁹⁹ Compare religious school in Singapore, Eze Nathan, *The History of Jews in Singapore 1830-1945*, (Singapore, 1986), pp.30-32; I. S. Abraham, *Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews*, (Calcutta, 1969), pp.35-41; Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.75, 91, 96, 99, 135, 242.

¹⁰⁰ There were 33 Sephardim whose fees totalled \$23 per month and 18 Ashkenazim \$13, *IM*, 25/1/1907, p.11.

¹⁰¹ *IM*, 10/12/1909, pp.11, 13, 3/8/1923, p.1, 19/11/1923, p.10, and 9/4/1937, p.16

¹⁰² In 1909 Ellis Kadoorie, Sir Elly's brother, criticism of 'sluggish Shanghai' with regard to its communal institutions was given prominence in *JC*, 26/11/1909. Infuriated Shanghai Jewry were placated with this donation. Yet they felt a 'certain disappointment' that he did not build a school for them given that he had established six free schools in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Guangzhou for the Chinese, *IM*, 10/3/1922, p.16; 'Re Estate of Sir Ellis Kadoorie', S. Salmon to S. Barton, Consul-General, 26/9/1922, PRO FO671/443/184799/6035/22.

¹⁰³ Due to 'judicious management' of these funds by Abraham 'the prizes and scholarships are assured even if the school shall no longer be in existence', *IM*, 4/2/1927, p.14 and 9/4/1937, p.16.

¹⁰⁴ *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.15. The deficit of \$8,000 was made good by the SJCA. In 1928 R. Joseph donated \$35,000 which formed the Edward M. Joseph School Endowment Fund. Notable are donations from Sun Zewo, and Yi Wenzhe, *compradores* of Messrs. E. D. Sassoon & Co., and Messrs. S. J. David & Co., *IM*, 6/1/1928, p.26; Silas Hardoon solicited donations from his Chinese colleagues, *IM*, 19/5/1904, p.25.

¹⁰⁵ *IM*, 13/1/1922, p.14, 10/3/1922, p.6, and 6/4/1923, p.7; *JC*, 19/8/1907, p.11. Edward Ezra served on the SMC and appointed as Chairman of the Chinese Educational Committee, and as a member of the permanent Education Committee, *IM*, 9/4/1937, p.16.

¹⁰⁶ *IM*, 10/12/1909, p.12, and 6/4/1923, p.7, cites SMC Annual Report, 1909.

class of children who mostly receive a free education',¹⁰⁷ the SMC was prepared to make a small grant of Tls500.¹⁰⁸ Given that the SJS was run on British lines, the SMC considered that the education of British youth in China helped to raise British prestige, promote British influence in the East, and strengthen the national spirit amongst British subjects.¹⁰⁹ Every SMC Annual Report, however, commented adversely upon the 'deplorable state of the building' and the insanitary, dilapidated and cramped conditions'.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, in 1922, the SMC Education Committee threatened to withdraw its grant if the school building was not renovated. The Sephardi elders acknowledged that the SJS was 'a great reproach to the fair name of our community... this indictment should make us all blush with shame'.¹¹¹ A Hong Kong resident, whose visit to the school had left him with a 'none too flattering impression' of Shanghai Jewry, expressed his surprise that an 'important go-ahead community' had been so 'lethargic' in the most pressing need of a modern Jewish School.¹¹² The Zionist envoy Krishevsky's criticism of the deplorable accommodation the school offered was even more scathing.¹¹³ Yet Shanghai Sephardim in general seemed impervious to these reproaches and ignored the *Israel's Messenger's* continual badgering to support the SJS.¹¹⁴ What Shanghai Sephardim seemed to lack was a strong leader at the helm of the school. This is clear from the comparable experience in Calcutta where under the strong leadership of Ezra Arakie, a similar difficulty was overcome.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ *IM*, 6/4/1923, p.7; *JC*, 19/12/1902, p.7.

¹⁰⁸ Abraham, President of SJS to Henry Keswick Chairman, SMC, Shanghai, 10/4/1907, cited in *IM*, 28/6/1907, p.8; Abraham to Levenson, SMC Secretary, 14/11/1910 and Levenson to Abraham, 17/11/1910, cited in *NCH*, 20/11/1910, pp.325-326.

¹⁰⁹ Sir Haviland de Sausmarez, Circular Despatch No. 77, 28/12/1916, FO671/445. This comment is possibly particularly concerned with wartime. In general British education for Britons overseas served to socialise them for easy re-absorption into their homeland, Robert Bickers, interview by author, London, 18/8/1993.

¹¹⁰ *IM*, 6/4/1923, p.7, 10/3/22, p.6 and 4/5/1923, p.20.

¹¹¹ *IM*, 6/4/1923, p.7 and 4/5/1923, p.20, 'The Asiatic indifferent spirit is ruling in Shanghai', *The Hebrew*, 22/2/1907, p.110.

¹¹² Somewhat ironically there was no religious school in Hong Kong till 1935. It closed down within a year 'owing to the lack of interest in parents in sending their children to it to learn Hebrew', W. Buchler, 'The Jews of Hong Kong', unidentifiable journal, 1936, pp.56-57; cited by Dennis Leventhal, 'Environmental Interactions of the Jews of Hong Kong', Paper submitted for the Harvard Symposium, August, 1992, p.16.

¹¹³ It was 'housed in premises in which a strong and young horse would become blind and die of consumption', Krishevsky to Herrmann, 31/3/1935, p.4, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

¹¹⁴ *IM*, 7/9/1923, p.7.

¹¹⁵ Musleah, *op. cit.*, pp.307-308.

The headmaster, J. Jones, emphasised the important role the school played in providing free education to poor children.¹¹⁶ If the SJS ceased functioning,¹¹⁷ the number of the 'unfit members of the Sephardi community would soar, to the detriment of its prestige in the Far East'.¹¹⁸ In the last quarter of 1923, there was talk of 'disbanding' the SJS.¹¹⁹ Yet in January 1924, temporarily housed in the American School in 146 North Szechuen Road, the number of pupils rose to one hundred and thirty.¹²⁰ Regrettably, there was no playground, particularly as Jones was an enthusiastic athlete, and the boys would have profited by his experience in football and hockey.¹²¹ On the other hand, the SJS boasted that Hebrew was 'fast becoming a living language' and hoped to send some pupils to Jews' College, London to be trained for the Rabbinate.¹²² There was also a scheme to build a college for advanced students to promote Shanghai as a centre of Jewish scholarship. 'Shanghai occupies a unique centre in the hegemony of Jewish leadership in the Far East'.¹²³ It would, therefore, be a centre of Jewish learning attracting youth from all the centres of the Far East. Given the SJS's constant lament about its lack of funds to provide suitable accommodation for its pupils, these ideas appear unjustifiably optimistic. The Shanghai Sephardim were certainly never short of ideas. They may, however, be criticised for their inability, or lack of will, to act co-operatively to put the ideas into practice.

¹¹⁶ Ninety percent of its pupils came from poor homes and could not afford the fees. The Education Aid Society, the Jewish Ladies' Benevolent Society and the Edward Minny Trust Fund paid school fees, *IM*, 4/5/1934, p.20.

¹¹⁷ There was 'talk of closing the school' in 1922, 1923 and in 1924, *IM*, 6/10/1922, p.10, 6/4/1923, p.7, and 4/1/1924, p.15.

¹¹⁸ 'They would be forced to beg from door to door thus bringing disgrace to the Jewish name', *IM*, 4/5/1923, p.20.

¹¹⁹ The cost of running the school was over \$13,000 a year which, apart from the SMC grant, was met by subscriptions. The SJCA had made good a deficiency of \$8,000, *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.15.

¹²⁰ Of these 64 were girls. 'Half the total [128] are Russians who arrive in Shanghai knowing no English'. In 1927 the ratio of pupils was 51 Sephardim to 72 Ashkenazim, *IM*, 7/4/1922, pp.14, 15; 'The SJS 'is trying to make good Englishmen of Russian Jews in China', *JC*, 3/9/1937, p.44. Compare Todd Endelman, 'The Contract Theory of Jewish Emancipation and the Anglicisation of the Immigrants, 1880-1914', Paper submitted for the Conference of the Jewish Historical Society of England on 'Patterns of Migration 1850-1914', August, 1993.

¹²¹ The previous headmaster, Clare, had died after one year at the school. Jones was a Dundee University Graduate, *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.13.

¹²² In 1923, J. S. Abraham left Shanghai for Rabbinical training in Jews' College, after which he took up a position with the Egyptian Government, much to the disappointment of Shanghai Jewry, *IM*, 4/1/1924, p.15.

¹²³ *IM*, 8/9/1922, p.12.

New Premises for the SJS

The need for new school premises in the central district was highlighted when the victorious National Revolutionary Army of the Guomindang [GMD hereafter] arrived in Shanghai in 1927. As the school was situated on the outskirts of the Settlement beyond the boundary limits, it was forced to close for six weeks.¹²⁴ A mother of four children who felt 'sick at heart' to see her children attending a non-Jewish school every Saturday¹²⁵ wondered why Shanghai's wealthy Jews, with enough money to build several schools, did not contribute to a well-equipped modern school.¹²⁶ Given that the Sephardi community was the richest in the Orient and boasted several multi-millionaires and millionaires,¹²⁷ the question that needs to be addressed is why Shanghai Sephardim, conscious of the importance of Jewish education in promoting Jewish identity, did not make the SJS a priority? Yosef Ya'acov explains that until 1922 there simply were not enough Sephardi children in Shanghai to warrant a separate full-fledged high school, which would have been justified only if there were enough fee paying children.¹²⁸ By the 1920s the Ashkenazi pupils outnumbered the Sephardim. Rifka Toueg emphasises that the SJS was like a charity school and that the wealthy Sephardim adopted the British colonial attitude and dealt with their poor in the patronising and paternalistic way the British handled the natives: 'keeping them in their place, so that they would not get above themselves'. She argues that the wealthy provided what they felt was sufficient education for children of that class to become traders and clerks.¹²⁹ Several other

¹²⁴ *IM*, 6/1/1928, p.26.

¹²⁵ Rabbi Hirsch, whose children were pupils of the Public School, requested the headmaster not to 'take off marks' from the Jewish children who were absent on Sabbath and Jewish festivals, *IM*, 2/2/22, p.8; This was a long term problem in some Bombay schools, S. H. Hayeem to Dr. Hertz, 2/5/1938, *BDBJ*, ACC3121/E3/512. It is noteworthy that E. A. Arakie, Hon. Principal of Elias Myer Free School and Talmud Torah in Calcutta, obtained permission for Senior Cambridge overseas examinations not to be held on Saturdays, *IM*, 9/6/1939, p.21.

¹²⁶ *IM*, 2/3/1922, p.20, and 8/9/22, p.12; Hardoon promised to build a school 'when he will feel inclined so to do, but does not want to be a contributor for a school where his share would not be 100 percent', Krishevsky to Herrmann, 23/10/1928, *CZA*, KH4/B/1980.

¹²⁷ *IM*, 6/4/1923, p.15. Compare a complaint that Calcutta Jewish millionaires, who made their money in India settled in England and made no effort to better the social position of the Calcutta community, *The Jewish Messenger*, 6/6/1913, p.45.

¹²⁸ Ya'acov, interview by author, 7/5/1993.

¹²⁹ Toueg, interview by author, 6/10/1993. Compare a letter to the editor, *JC*, 26/10/1955 from F.H. Lewis a law student, 'I should be sorry to see them all receiving an equally excellent one [education] for the distinction of class which must to a certain extent be kept up would immediately vanish... A man intended as a butcher should not be educated as a chancellor', cited in Israel Finestein, *Jewish Society in Victorian England Collected Essays*, (London, 1993), p.22.

interviewees emphasised that there was no need for a prestigious Jewish school for the wealthy Sephardim who were completely acculturated into British society.¹³⁰ Shanghai Sephardim would have been influenced by the fact that in England the wisdom of providing a Jewish school for middle-class homes was being questioned by the turn of the century.¹³¹ The more sophisticated Sephardim believed that a good secular education was desirable in terms of acculturation and Anglicisation and would give their children an entrée into business and the ruling circles. They believed that the Jewish education they provided at home was adequate to foster Jewish consciousness. Significantly, most of the children who attended Public Schools had some form of private religious tuition.

The community was given an incentive to rectify the accommodation problem when Isaac S. Perry bequeathed HK \$150,000 for a school, with the caveat that the Shanghai Jewish community raise a similar sum within two years of his death (9 March 1927).¹³² This deadline was only narrowly beaten in 1929, and in January 1930, the trustees of the SJS Building and Endowment Fund authorised the purchase of the property known as the 'Rabbi's House' and the adjoining shop for Tls. 55,000. The grounds of the synagogue were to be available for the use of the pupils as playgrounds.¹³³ By the end of 1929 the requisite HK\$150,000 was raised by the community and the new building was completed at the end of 1930 at a cost of

¹³⁰ Ya'acov, Jacoby, Toueg, Estelle Hillaly, Mercia Grant, for example.

¹³¹ Haham Moses Gaster and Chief Rabbi Herman Adler were prominent advocates of Jewish schools even for the wealthy. [Sir] David Salomons [Lord Mayor of London] thought it was wise for the upper middle classes to send their children to English schools, Finestein, *op. cit.*, p.33; see also 'Jewish Religious Education Board Festival Dinner', *JC*, 17/2/1905, p.17.

¹³² A Jewish philanthropist who had resided both in Hong Kong and Shanghai for many years. Father of the headmistress, *IM*, 5/8/1927, p.12; Ronald Sassoon made a notable contribution of Tls 5,000 for the new building, *IM*, 9/11/1923, p.10; 6/4/1923, p.7, and 3/5/1929, p.24; terms of the bequest are cited in 'Shanghai Jewish School: 11th Hour Appeal', *B'nai B'rith* Archives, [no reference number given].

¹³³ *IM*, 3/1/1930, p.9.

HK \$253,853.09 and the school opened on 20 January 1931 in its new premises.¹³⁴

A month later, Rabbi S. Levin, principal of the Talmud Torah School for Hebrew, Secular Studies and Manual Training in Harbin who was planning a unification of Hebrew schools in China headed by the SJS, condemned the school's failure to satisfy the cultural needs of the community. The school's adherence to antiquated methods of education, he argued, prompted wealthy parents to send their children to more modern schools.¹³⁵ He recommended the SJS offer a sound religious and secular education to attract Jewish parents, as well as funds from the Jewish 'capitalists and philanthropists' who liberally funded synagogues in Shanghai. He argued that the priority was to educate the children to be good Jews; the synagogues would follow as a matter of course.¹³⁶

The teaching methods of the school were revolutionised with the appointment of Rev. Mendel Brown as Director of the Hebrew and Religious Classes, and Inspector and Advisor to the Headmistress and Committee in 1933. Under his guidance more modern methods of teaching Hebrew were adopted.¹³⁷ Hitherto Ashkenazi parents refused to allow their children to learn the Sephardic pronunciation, although it was the recognised one in *Eretz Yisrael*.¹³⁸ For the first time in local history, SJS pupils were able to take Hebrew as one of the languages of the Cambridge Local Examination and three pupils passed with honours in 1934. The SJS continued to function smoothly and in January 1937 boasted 237 pupils. Disruptions resulting from the Sino-Japanese hostilities, however, reduced their numbers to 189 in December.¹³⁹ School hours were changed from two sessions a

¹³⁴ Several bequests and voluntary endowments and contributions enabled the school to function, S.M. Joseph, to the editor, *IM*, 12/7/1938, p.20; for example the 'Edward M. Joseph School Endowment Fund' of \$30,000 and 'Mozelle Joseph Teachers' Fund' of \$5,000 and J.E. Joseph gave the largest donation [Tls10,000] of some 98 donors listed, 'Donations to [sic] the 17th January 1929', *B'nai Brith* Archives, [no reference number given]. Clearly then, there are no grounds for the oft repeated claim that the SJS was a Kadoorie project, although, as shown above, the Kadoorie family did support the school financially, and Horace's 'untiring zeal on behalf of the welfare of the school' is well documented. He served as Chairman of the SJS committee, *IM*, 3/4/1939, p.26, 14/7/1939, p.1, and 18/7/1941, p.6.

¹³⁵ *IM*, 1/2/1931, p.18, and 1/10/1930, p.15.

¹³⁶ *IM*, 1/2/1931, p.18; there was a plea to keep alive the memory of the dead by donations towards education and charity to raise the status of the community rather than costly gifts to adorn the synagogues, *TJM*, 14/11/1913, p.172.

¹³⁷ *IM*, 4/5/1934, p.20.

¹³⁸ With the influx of Ashkenazi pupils into the school some parents objected to their children being taught the Sephardi pronunciation, *IM*, 4/1/1924, pp.14-15. A. Einhorn, an Ashkenazi Jew who taught Hebrew at the SJS from about 1922-1926 probably taught only the Ashkenazi pupils, *IM*, 4/6/26, p.6.

¹³⁹ A retrospective article on the school in *IM*, 12/7/1938, p.20.

day to one long session from 8 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. This worked well and was adopted permanently. It also enabled the SJS to accommodate the SMC schools, the Thomas Hanbury and the Public School in the afternoons. Their buildings were situated either in the war zone or occupied by the Defence Forces. The Sephardi community's self-esteem was high indeed when it announced that its 'beautiful school' had been placed at the disposal of the SMC.¹⁴⁰ Two letters of appreciation testified to the efforts of the staff and the children of the SJS 'to make the guests comfortable'.¹⁴¹ Despite difficult conditions, six pupils passed their Junior Cambridge Examinations in December 1937 establishing a record of 100 percent passes for the third year in succession.¹⁴² Sport was not neglected. Hockey for girls and football for boys were compulsory on Friday afternoons and badminton and physical drill were regular activities.¹⁴³

The prestige of the school was enhanced and its curriculum widened in 1938 with the installation of a modern science laboratory.¹⁴⁴ The number of pupils in 1939 increased to 207. The ratio now was 85 Sephardim to 122 Ashkenazim, 111 girls to 96 boys.¹⁴⁵ The large influx of non-English speaking German and Austrian children raised the average age in each class and interrupted the routine work.¹⁴⁶ By 1940 the number of pupils had risen to 274.¹⁴⁷ Overcrowding was to some extent remedied by the transfer of the fifty-nine European refugees residing north of the Soochow Creek, to the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association [SJYA] school. The SJS's activities were not interrupted despite the rapidly deteriorating conditions in Shanghai at the outset of World War II. During the spring epidemic in 1940 its

¹⁴⁰ *IM*, 18/2/1938, p.5, and 3/4/1929, p.26.

¹⁴¹ *IM*, 18/2/1938, p.5.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁴³ *IM*, 14/7/1939, p.26.

¹⁴⁴ *IM*, 10/6/1938, p.11; the main support for the school came from the Edward Minny and M.J. Moses Trust Funds, Flora Gubbay scholarship, Messrs. David Sassoon, S.A. Hardoon [posthumously], S.S. Somekh, Kadoorie and the AJA, London, SJS Report of the Trustees and Statement of Accounts for Year ending 31/12/1938, *SULA*, AJ 37/3/3/39; AJ 37/6/4/13.

¹⁴⁵ 'Separate Ashkenazim Class Prizes', *IM*, 3/4/1939, p.26. In the ensuing years, Brown collected enough funds to pay school fees for 120 refugees, and supplies of milk, cod liver oil, malt, clothes etc. were donated to the school. The Kadoorie Tiffin Fund continued to provide daily hot lunches.

¹⁴⁶ 'Shanghai Jewish School Annual Report, 1939', *SULA* AJ 37/3/3/1939; AJ 37/6/4/13; *IM*, 3/4/1939, p.26.

¹⁴⁷ 143 girls and 131 boys, *IM*, 14/6/1940, p.17; in 1938, 240 students in the school, were provided one meal a day, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Investigating Committee for International Sufferers*, 5/1/38, cited in Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.73, note 44, he cites Manfred Rosenfeld, [a refugee journalist], 'History of the Shanghai Jewish Communities', Part II, p.4.

pupils escaped with only a few mild cases of scarlet fever and diphtheria.¹⁴⁸ An advertisement in *Israel's Messenger* on 20 December 1940 'Shanghai Jewish School Urgent Appeal : Will You Help Us To Keep Running', categorically stated: 'We have no money with which to pay this month's salary'.¹⁴⁹ The cost of living had soared. The situation was intensified by a decrease in grants and donations from the Anglo-Jewish Association, London, and other SJS's foreign patrons - a loss of approximately \$13,000.¹⁵⁰ To ensure its survival it needed \$31,500 above the usual subscriptions and donations.¹⁵¹ Notwithstanding this, the school continued to function during the war, and was reputed to be one of the best schools in Shanghai, attracting an increasing number of non-Jewish pupils.¹⁵² Conditions during World War II dissolved the economic and social barriers within the Sephardi community. When the British schools ceased to function, many of their teachers and pupils joined the SJS, which became a melting pot for the wealthy and poor, the Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

Fifth Shanghai Jewish Boy Scout Group

...The only drawback is that the latter [youth] find themselves too much occupied in Boys Scouts work and have little or no time for higher Hebrew classes...¹⁵³

The Fifth Shanghai Jewish Boy Scout Group seems to have played an important part in preserving the Jewish identity of Sephardi youth, which is perhaps ironic given the British origin and influence of the Scout movement.¹⁵⁴ It dissolved

¹⁴⁸ *IM*, 14/6/1940, p.17.

¹⁴⁹ *IM*, 20/12/1940, p.17; the SMC gave the SJS a grant of \$6,000, *IM*, 5/5/1939, p.15.

¹⁵⁰ Significantly the AJA earmarked its donation of £100 specifically 'towards the teaching of English', M. Dugoor, Hon. Secretary of SJS to Leonard Stein, 11/8/1939 requested that the grant be increased to £200 from £100; Stein to AJA, 14/8/1939, and 13/10/1939; SJS to A.G.Brotman, Secretary of the AJA, 2/4/1920; 'Owing to circumstances an additional grant was impossible, Brotman to SJS 14/11/1940; SJS to Brotman, 10/3/1941; Brotman to SJS, 30/10/1941; Westminster Bank Ltd to AJA, 25/11/1941, 21/11/1941, and 10/12/1941, all the above correspondence listed here is in *SULA*, AJ 37/3/3/39; AJ 37/6/4/13.

¹⁵¹ *IM*, 20/12/1940, p.17.

¹⁵² Rifka Toueg, interview by author, tape recording, 6/10/1993. The school is now occupied by the Shanghai Municipal Education Bureau.

¹⁵³ *IM*, 9/11/1923, p.10.

¹⁵⁴ *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.17.

the barriers between Ashkenazi and Sephardi children.¹⁵⁵ Ya'acov recalls, 'We got on as a team aware of our Jewish identity and not the Iraqi differentiation'.¹⁵⁶ Considering that until 1931 the SJS in comparison to the other Council-owned schools in the Settlement was parochial, poorly equipped, and catered mainly to the poorer section of the community, the phenomenal success of the Jewish troop was an important boost to the morale of the school, and the self-esteem of its pupils.¹⁵⁷ The Scouts' promise, 'to do my best to do my duty to God, my king and my country' would have engendered strong patriotic feelings towards the British, even among the Jewish boys who were not British subjects. Iraqi subjects felt little patriotic fervour for Iraq, a country which in the 1930s was aligning itself with Nazi Germany.¹⁵⁸ Ya'acov and others saw the Jewish Scout Troop as a substitute for Zionism. Certainly Zionist delegates to Shanghai strove to foster a Jewish national identity among Shanghai youth. For example, at a ceremony in October 1928, H. Kammerling, President of the Zionist Association Kadimah, presented the Jewish Boy Scouts with a Troop Colour; white and light blue silk, with the Scout and Zionist emblems.¹⁵⁹

Inspired by the first competition among Scout troops for the Shanghai Rotary Club Shield in 1921, J. Jones, the headmaster of the SJC, stressed the importance of Scouting. In December, for the first time, the Jewish Scouts participated with other troops in open competition, and came second in the 1922 competition for the Rotary Club Shield. The troop had the distinction of winning the shield seven times and gaining second place four times in the face of keen competition from the six local troops.¹⁶⁰ The astounding achievement of the Jewish troops was attributed to Noel

¹⁵⁵ The Ninth Jewish Girl Guide company comprised only students from the SJS, whereas the Fifth Shanghai Jewish Scouts were from all the local schools. Many Shanghai Sephardi did not join their SMC school's Girl Guides, because the meetings were held on Friday evenings, too close to Sabbath, Toueg, interview by author, 6/10/1993.

¹⁵⁶ Ya'acov, interview by author, 2/5/1993. Compare the Jewish Lads' Brigade in Britain which functioned chiefly as an agent of Anglicisation turning Jewish youth into respectable Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion, Sharman Kadish, 'Ironing Out the Ghetto Bend: The Impact of the Jewish Lads' Brigade on the Jewish Immigrant in England, 1895-1914', paper presented at the International Conference of the Jewish Historical Society of England on 'Patterns of Migration, 1850-1914', August, 1993.

¹⁵⁷ For example, patrol leader Nissim and other Scouts were commended by the Commissioner of Police for their bravery in overpowering an armed robber. Recorded in a retrospective account by Mendel Brown, 'Shanghai Boy Scouts', *IM*, 18/3/1938, p.9.

¹⁵⁸ Horowitz describes her horror at discovering that the King of Iraq was her monarch, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/5/1992.

¹⁵⁹ 'The Totem', founded in 1929, was the journal of the Jewish troop, *NCH*, 3/11/1928, p.183.

¹⁶⁰ *NCH*, 16/11/1938, p.274.

Jacobs, Assistant Commissioner of the Boy Scouts' Association, popularly known to the boys as 'Swiftfoot', who took over as the Group Scoutmaster when Jones became District Scoutmaster in 1922.¹⁶¹ A Wolf Cub Pack was formed in 1923 with E. Whitgob as Cubmaster,¹⁶² and a Rover crew in 1925, with Jacobs as Rover Mate, thus making up the full complement of the three branches of Scouting.¹⁶³ In 1938 the group comprised twenty-four Wolf Cubs, thirty-six Boy Scouts and ten Rover Scouts.¹⁶⁴

The Jewish flag had its place with the other national flags at the Empire Day Jamboree of 1924, when the Scouts and the Cubs carried off both shields. This caused quite a stir within the international community and there were complaints that the Jewish troop had an unfair advantage in being allowed to present their exhibition on a different day, as Empire Day fell on Saturday.¹⁶⁵ Orthodox parents would have objected to their sons' participation in the competitions such as fire-lighting, on their Sabbath. As Jacobs, who was not Jewish, explained: 'to one who understands the Jewish religion, there is a big difference between driving a tent peg and sliding down a chute' on the Sabbath.¹⁶⁶ Given the publicity the incident received in the local press, and the strong feeling it aroused among Sephardi youth and parents, it very likely did much to strengthen the solidarity of the community as well as its Jewish identity, considering the furore focused on Sabbath observance.

After the May 30th Incident in 1925, following the arrival of the Shanghai Defence Force in 1927, and during the 1932 and 1937 Sino-Japanese hostilities, the Boy Scouts played a useful role as messengers, first-aid attendants and in helping to run the telephone exchange.¹⁶⁷ Probably the highest accolade came in a letter from Baden Powell, the Chief Scout, who praised them for their public service among the

¹⁶¹ He was born in England to a Methodist family and married Dora Bogomolsky after converting to Judaism.

¹⁶² Miss Moalem and Miss Bloomfield were successive Cubmasters.

¹⁶³ *IM*, 18/3/1938, p.9.

¹⁶⁴ *NCH*, 27/4/1938, p.146.

¹⁶⁵ It was likely that many of the Jewish boys attended the Jamboree without the knowledge of their parents, 'I used to sneak away on Saturday afternoon and watch the football matches or other sporting events. I got a good hiding from my father for not having attended the synagogue service', 'Playing the Game', letter to the editor signed 'Young Jew', *NCH*, 23/5/1924, p.337 and 31/5/1924, p.337.

¹⁶⁶ Noel Jacobs asked 'Is Ricardo upset because the Jewish boys carried off both the shields, or does he wish to start a religious argument?', *NCH*, 28/5/1924, p.337.

¹⁶⁷ Scouts annual Concert at the Lyceum Theatre 'a clever sketch by the Jewish troop', *IM*, 18/3/1938, p.9, and *NCH*, 29/12/1928, p.530.

refugees, 'and doing a good turn by rescuing an infirm man from being mobbed. Well done Scouts and Thank you'.¹⁶⁸ At a function in 1931 at the home of Abraham, in which all sections of the community were represented, the Jewish Company presented Noel Jacobs with a tea-service. The community 'rejoiced at the remarkable successes and wonderful efficiency of our boys under your faithful and brilliant leadership'.¹⁶⁹ On 18 September, 1938, at a parade held at the Jewish school, Jacobs was presented with a silver plaque in honour of his twenty-five years of service, during which he had been 'a true counsellor and friend' to his troop.¹⁷⁰ It is significant that the strong leadership role played by Jacobs was accepted without qualification by the Scouts and their parents. He was successful in forging a cohesive group with the same value system. Arguably, the Shanghai Sephardi community's lack of a dynamic leader was the crucial factor in its failure to make its communal institutions viable. On the other hand it is likely that the community, made up of individualists, would not have accepted the yoke of one leader.

Many octogenarians still look back upon the achievements of the Jewish Scout group, particularly camping. The fun with which the Scout movement provided Shanghai youth has probably become exaggerated in their memories, by the striking contrast of their years of deprivation in the internment camps and in the war-torn city. Ezekiel Abraham organised a Scout troop in Lunghua internment camp, which merited congratulation from the Chief of Shanghai Police Force, Robertson.¹⁷¹ It is likely that the Jewish Boy Scouts, the Rovers, and when they were older, the Brownies, succeeded in inculcating leadership qualities in the third and fourth generation of Sephardim. It led boys like Ezekiel Abraham to later become ardent members of the Jewish Company of the Shanghai Voluntary Corps.

¹⁶⁸ *NCH*, 2/3/1932, p.111.

¹⁶⁹ *NCH*, 24/3/1931, p.399.

¹⁷⁰ *IM*, 18/10/1938, p.25.

¹⁷¹ Ezekiel Abraham, interview by author, New York, 11/8/1991. On display in a show case in his home are his numerous medals, colours badges and the framed certificate. He made his private papers which contained a great deal of information on his Scouting activities available to the author.

The Jewish Company of the Shanghai Voluntary Corps (SVC)

An important influence in reinforcing Jewish identity was undoubtedly the formation of a Jewish company unit for the SVC, which was first suggested during the 1914 War. Jewish youth regarded it as a matter of prestige and a 'dignified way' of showing the other foreigners that Jews were playing a part in the defence of the Settlement.¹⁷² Initially, the majority of the communal leaders was opposed to the idea, notably Edward Ezra who regarded this as a serious tactical error which would compound the criticism that the Jewish community 'lived too exclusive a life'.¹⁷³ He maintained that it was good for Jewish youth to associate with other creeds and nationalities in order to broaden their views and be seen as contributing to the wider society that was beyond the Jewish community. He predicted that discipline in a Jewish unit would be difficult to maintain, and even the first little difficulty would discredit the whole community.¹⁷⁴

Nonetheless, a Jewish Company of the SVC came into being on 22 May 1933 under Captain Jacobs, although several Sephardim continued to serve in other units.¹⁷⁵ It adopted as its motto 'No advance without security'. It wore on the uniform collar a metal Shield of David with the letters SVC superimposed. Jewish youth were extremely proud of their involvement in the SVC and received valuable training, notably as marksmen, setting up sandbags and barbed wire defensive positions, bayonet drill and mob control.¹⁷⁶ When the Corps was mobilised on 12 August 1937, 'the Jewish Company were not found wanting'.¹⁷⁷ The Council's Emergency Medal was awarded to eight-five of its members. The Kadoorie Cup was awarded annually to the 'high gun' in the Trained Mens' Course on the Range.¹⁷⁸ Those who were interviewed with firsthand knowledge of the Corps, emphasised that it was a social organisation comparable to joining an élite British club. Numerous

¹⁷² Conrad Levy, 'Hebrew Company SVC', *IM*, 2/10/1921, p.32, 13/1/1921, and 10/3/22, p.19; *NCH*, 26/8/20, p.562, 27/5/22, p.545; See also 'Why Men Join the SVC', *NCH*, 23/6/28, p.504, and 30/6/28, p.549.

¹⁷³ *IM*, 2/10/21, p.32.

¹⁷⁴ *IM*, 2/10/1921, p.32, and 10/3/1922, p.19, 13/1/1922, p.27, and 1/3/1932, p.10.

¹⁷⁵ The non-Jewish personnel of 'H' company were transferred thus making it an entirely Jewish unit under Lieutenant Noel Jacobs. It was part of the 'A' Battalion, SVC, I. I. Kounin, *Eighty Five Years of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps*, (Shanghai, 1938), pp.215-216; *IM*, 1/5/1936, p.12, and 5/5/1939, p.14.

¹⁷⁶ Benis M. Frank, *The Jewish Company of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps Compared with Other Jewish Diaspora Fighting Units*, p.21, Unpublished paper presented at the Jewish Diasporas in China Symposium, Harvard, 17/8/1993.

¹⁷⁷ Kounin, *op. cit.*, p.216; 'The Future of the SVC', *NCH*, 16/6/1928, p.266.

¹⁷⁸ Kounin, *op. cit.*, p.216.

pictures in the *Israel's Messenger* display the officers and men of the Jewish Company at annual awards dinners and other social functions. There was a feeling of camaraderie also with the other eighteen units.¹⁷⁹ The SVC afforded Shanghai Sephardim the opportunity to demonstrate their civic responsibility under the banner of the Hebrew company.¹⁸⁰

Jewish Clubs in Shanghai

In the early days of the Settlement the cultural programme of the nascent community centred around the synagogue and took the form of occasional Biblical expositions by learned residents or visitors.¹⁸¹ By 1921 the courtyard of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue, which from 1931 also functioned as the SJS playground, was a convenient meeting place for the youth after the synagogue services. Pupils of the SJS generally felt no need for a Jewish club as their social and sporting activity centred around the school and synagogue. The lack of a social centre to meet the needs of a growing community was offset by entertainment in private homes frequently recorded in the 'Social and Personal' columns of the *Israel's Messenger*.¹⁸² Large private gardens, notably of Abraham, Kadoorie and Edward Ezra were the venues for school picnics and sports days. Communal celebrations were held in private homes. There were annual balls, fun fairs, large wedding, engagement, and cocktail parties which brought the whole community together.¹⁸³ The palatial homes of these merchant princes provided the setting for many gatherings which earned them a reputation for lavish hospitality.¹⁸⁴ Sensational parties for Shanghai's élite hosted by Sir Victor Sassoon, notably the Fancy Dress 'Toy Shop',

¹⁷⁹ Ezekiel Abraham, interview by author, New York, 11/8/1991; *JT* October 1937, p.11.

¹⁸⁰ The Hebrew company played a significant role when the SVC was mobilised on 17/8/1937 for three months and was awarded the SMC's Emergency Medal in August 1938. In February 1942 training was suspended, and in September the SVC was disbanded after 89 years of existence.

¹⁸¹ Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.73.

¹⁸² 'There was tremendous competition between the hostesses', Harriet Sergeant, *Shanghai*, (London, 1991) pp.115-116.

¹⁸³ 'More than 120 guests attended an "At Home" - Cocktails' hosted by Mrs. B.A. Someck at her residence from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m., *IM*, 8/1/1926, p.16.

¹⁸⁴ 'Stately buildings with columnal façades, lofty and spacious rooms and the unlimited hospitality of the old merchant princes of the East', *NCH*, 9/1/1891, p.62; Prominent Chinese leaders were entertained at a dinner and dance party hosted by Arthur and Theodore Sopher, *IM*, 8/1/1926, p.16; Alkow counted fifty sofas and chairs in the Kadoorie's living room, Jacob Alkow, *op. cit.*, p.148; 'British mythical recollections of Shanghai centred on four Baghdadi Jewish families whose eccentricity epitomised so much of the city, the Harpoons, Sassoons, Ezras and Kadoories', Sergeant, *op. cit.*, p.123.

'Circus' and 'Ship Wreck' parties which dominated the social columns of the local newspapers in the 1930s, attracted the attention of historians like Harriet Sergeant.¹⁸⁵ This entertainment catered to the social needs of the wealthy members of the community, whereas, by all accounts, the backyard of D.E.J. Abraham's home was the favourite venue for Sabbath afternoon football - 'the Jacobs against the rest'.¹⁸⁶ The nucleus of the community was undoubtedly Abraham's family. His son Reuben assumed from his father the mantle of its leadership, which he passed on to his sons Ezekiel and Joseph Hayim.¹⁸⁷

Clubs and sport were not a part of Baghdadi culture.¹⁸⁸ Robert Bickers observed that clubs in Shanghai tended to shape and characterise the community: 'it is clear that only through the institutions and processes of socialisation could a sense of community have been established'.¹⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Shanghai Sephardim were able to establish a 'sense of community' through kinship, residential location, commerce, religious traditions and practices which continually reaffirmed group identity.¹⁹⁰ Acculturation to the British meant that sporting activities became very much a part of the lives of Sephardi youth in Shanghai, notably football for boys and hockey for girls. After all, athletics were characteristic of Treaty Port life. Music and amateur dramatic circles were well organised and performed several of their productions in the auditorium of the SJS.¹⁹¹ There were annual fund raising balls, bazaars and funfairs.¹⁹² Baghdadi Jews were fond of gambling. Much of adult

¹⁸⁵ 'In extravagance and unpredictability, he [Sir Victor] surpassed even the British expectations of their Jewish Genies', Sergeant, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 132-134; *IM*, 5/4/1935, p.20, 2/8/1935, p.15, 12/3/1937, p.18, 2/8/35, pp.14-15, and 14/1/38, p.18; 'The Garden Party Scene', *NCH*, 13/5/1936, p.303; 'Sir Victor Sassoon and charity have been responsible for the most of this season's balls to date', *NCH*, 24/2/1937, p.351, 16/6/37, p.462, 464; 'Sir Victor's still talked about Toy Shop party ...included practically all Shanghai particularly the outstanding British and Chinese residents with a sprinkling of other nationalities', *NCH*, 23/4/1937, p.175; Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.235, *NCDN*, 6/2/1937, p.3. p.123; G.E. Miller, *Shanghai The Paradise of Adventurers*, (New York, 1937), pp.48 and 60.

¹⁸⁶ The ultra-orthodox were critical of the Abrahams for allowing the game to be played on the Sabbath, Toueg, interview by author, 6/10/1993.

¹⁸⁷ Ya'acov, interview by author, 2/4/1992.

¹⁸⁸ In fact well into the 1920's in Baghdad Jewish parents were opposed to their children participating in sports. During the British Mandate, schools adopted the Scout Movement, Shiponi, 'Jewish Education in Iraq', *op. cit.*, p.116.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.89. Clubs, according to James Huskey, were essential for any self-respecting national group, Huskey, *op. cit.*, p.13.

¹⁹⁰ Myer Samra, 'Yisrael Rhammana, Constructions of Identity among Iraqi Jews in Sydney, Australia', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1987, p.1.

¹⁹¹ See Illustration, p.156.

¹⁹² Ezekiel and Abe Abraham, interview by author, Shanghai, 10/4/1991.

social life centred around card games and mah-jongg in various homes. Backgammon [*towli*], on which they had been nurtured in Baghdad, remained popular with the older generation.¹⁹³ Several Sephardim, notably Raymond Elias Toeg, were enthusiastic members of the Race Club.¹⁹⁴ As a tribute to M. A. Sopher, the flag of the Race Club was lowered to half-mast on the day he died in September, 1934.¹⁹⁵ 'The doyen of racing men in the Far East' exchange broker R. E. Toeg, dubbed 'Sir John' by his club friends, was a member of the Shanghai Club, the Hong Kong Jockey Club and Qingdao Race Club. His colours were distinguishable by his crimson jacket and violet cap. 'Racing was a fetish with him. He was the last survivor of those old-timers who, having won a classic, spent twice as much as the stakes in celebrating it'.¹⁹⁶ It was acknowledged that its wealthy patrons, notably the Sassoons, who could afford to pay handsomely for better bred horses, raised the standard of the sport in Shanghai.¹⁹⁷ The older members, however, regretted that racing in Shanghai increasingly 'assumed an aspect of grim, hard business'.¹⁹⁸

The life of the early settlers would have been dreary indeed were it not for the various non-denominational social and sporting clubs in the Settlement.¹⁹⁹ Pre-eminent among them was the Shanghai Club, established in 1864, which practically became 'The Exchange' of Shanghai, 'where merchants transacted many important business deals within its spacious hall or bar, between noon and one o'clock'.²⁰⁰ As part of the privileged foreign population, there appeared to have been no barriers to the wealthy Sephardim joining the British clubs.²⁰¹ By all

¹⁹³ Horse racing was an ideal place for the prominent families to display their wealth and compete for prestige, Sergeant, *op. cit.*, pp.106-107.

¹⁹⁴ 'An Old-Time Sportsman', *NCH*, 20/10/31.

¹⁹⁵ R. E. Toeg's ponies figured prominently at Kiangwan and Shanghai races. He gave a dinner party at the Race Club when his horse 'Alligator' won the Poumanning Cup and Shanghai Derby, *IM*, 6/7/1928, p.12.

¹⁹⁶ 'An Old-Time Sportsman', *NCH*, 20/10/1931 also 'The Old Order Changeth', *NCH*, 21/1/1898, p.91.

¹⁹⁷ *TCE*, 15/8/1890, and 7/11/1890, pp.518-519; Sir Ellis Kadoorie owned a very successful stable. *NCH*, 4/3/1922, p.600; *NCH*, 25/5/1938, p.323; Sir Victor reputedly claimed the Derby to be the only race greater than the Jewish race, Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.210-211, 213; Sir Victor's Radiant Morn was four times winner of the Champions Sweepstakes, *IM*, 2/8/1935, p.14, 6/8/1937, p.11 and 14/1/1938, p.18; *NCH*, 9/6/37, p.404; Sir Victor held a strong kennel at the Luna Park dog tracks, John Pal, *Shanghai Saga*, (London, 1963), p.138.

¹⁹⁸ *IM*, 16/10/1908, p.12; Austen Coates, *China Races*, (Hong Kong, 1983), *passim*.

¹⁹⁹ 'The city in which a man is lost if he has not at least one club at his disposal', *NCH*, 18/8/1928, p.287.

²⁰⁰ *NCH*, 24/11/1893, p.818.

²⁰¹ 'Caste in Shanghai', *NCH*, 14/10/1904, pp.847-848. All respondents maintained that wealth was the only criterion for admission. Jews were more readily accepted at the Shanghai Race Club, the Paper Chase Club, the *Cercle Sportif*, and the Masonic Lodges than at the Shanghai Club; 'Baghdadis were not always admitted to the exclusive European clubs in Bombay', Roland, *op. cit.*, p.61.

Shanghai Jewish School

544 SEYMOUR ROAD

TEL. 23243

Shanghai, 26th February 1942.

PROGRAM of Prize distribution and entertainment to be held at the Shanghai Jewish School hall on Sunday March 21st at 3 p.m. As the distribution of prizes is held on the day of the Purim holiday the program is based on the story of Purim.

1. Distribution of prizes awarded to pupils for good work during 1942.
2. The story of Purim played by Form III pupils.
3. The Purim as celebrated today played by pupils of Form IV.
4. A gymnastic number.
5. Kindergarten dance.
6. Parade of the Hebrew Alphabet.
7. Musical numbers piano & cello.
 - a. Pop goes the weasel.
 - b. Twinkle, twinkle little star.
 - c. Old King Cole.

Handwritten Chinese characters: 交 友 之 樂 (Joy of Friendship)

Handwritten notes and signatures at the top of the page.

"THE DEACON AND THE JEWS"
By H. F. HENNINGSEN
Directed by Prof. & Mrs. J. G. ...
List of names: Dora Soren, ...

"THE POWER OF PURIM"
By HMA ARAT
List of names: Sara Eliot, ...

"THE DEACON AND THE JEWS"
By H. F. HENNINGSEN
Directed by Prof. & Mrs. J. G. ...
List of names: Dora Soren, ...

"THE POWER OF PURIM"
By HMA ARAT
List of names: Sara Eliot, ...

THEATRE THEATRICAL ASSOCIATION

PROGRAMME OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE

SHANGHAI JEWISH SCHOOL

SUNDAY 22nd MAY, 1938
8:30 P.M.

"THE MAGIC TOP"

A play for the puppet theatre.
By Emily Slaus-Cohen & Mary Gordon

- A Friendly Tree Eiza Elias
- Geddylen, the top Rose Jacob
- Amertah, a naughty boy Kame Tote
- Nedab, his brother Maxine Bony
- Dinah, their mother Marna Halaly
- The Wizard Tree Eiza Elias
- Deer Isaac Anasau
- Bunny Sussie Anasau
- Joe Isaac Halaly
- Judith the Marcebe Jean Halaly

SCENES

- Prologue
- Scene I Dinah's Kitchen
- Scene II The Magic Forest
- Scene III A Cave
- Scene IV Dinah's kitchen

Our grateful thanks are due to:

Our Advertisers
Committee of the Shanghai Jewish School
Mrs. W. N. Wells-Henderson
Amateur Dramatic Club of Shanghai
Woodcraft Works Ltd.
G. E. Bird & Co.
Western District Public School for Boys

Producers: Aziz Abraham, Moses M. Cohen, David E. Sopher.
Stage & Property: Joseph Hayim Abraham, Solomon Saul.
Rev. Treasurer: Ezra A. Tung.

Music during intervals played by:
Marcia Hilahy
Ezekiel Abraham
Joseph S. Jacob
Archie Isaacs

accounts the strict observance of traditional Judaism did not restrain some from emulating the activities of the urban gentry in England and mixing freely with the other foreigners in the Settlement.²⁰² Eze Nathan, however, observed of the Singapore Jews that the higher they moved up the social ladder, the more they became aware of the barriers that existed between them and their European peers.²⁰³ Evidence suggests that in Shanghai they did at times encounter a certain amount of animosity from some club members. Gordius Nielsen, a stockbroker, gained notoriety by his depiction of the Shanghai Club as an institution of ‘shopkeepers, niggers and Baghdad camel drivers’.²⁰⁴ He made a futile attempt to explain that he considered it a perfectly honourable profession to be a camel driver.²⁰⁵

The inevitable stratification of society did not appear to extend to the field of sport, where Sephardim took advantage of the diverse sporting facilities in Shanghai.²⁰⁶ A book on the history of the Hunts Club was illustrated by Edmund Toeg with caricatures and sketches.²⁰⁷ It provides an interesting insight into how well the Shanghai Sephardim, who cut dashing figures in their elegant riding gear, integrated into the sports clubs. Sephardi names are prominent among the winners, notably Isaac and J. Ezra, with twenty-three wins. In common with the other members, scant attention was paid to the unpopularity of the sport among the Chinese villagers who had to be compensated for damage to their crops and fields. Attention was focused on the Sephardi community in the ‘Baseball scandal of 1919’,²⁰⁸ when Judah Ezra and F. Elias were accused by W. Merriman of bribing the US Cavalry Baseball team to lose their game, but were later exonerated.²⁰⁹

Shanghai Sephardim were well represented in Freemasonry lodges, and several belonged to more than one of the eleven lodges in the North China District in the

²⁰² *IM*, 15/4/1908, p.8.

²⁰³ Nathan, *op. cit.*, p.67; as one Englishman put it, ‘The Kadoories, after all, were almost one of us’, Sergeant, *op. cit.*, pp.127-129; ‘Sir Victor was Jewish but one could not very well snub a man who played golf with the Prince of Wales’, Sergeant, *op. cit.*, p.131.

²⁰⁴ Extensive coverage of the case in Gordon Nielsen v. Shanghai Club, *NCH*, 12/10/1918, pp.110-118. This contradicts Robert Bicker’s claim that the British clubs remained ‘nationally and racially exclusive’ in Shanghai, pp.91-92. He does of course note Sir Victor Sassoon’s membership.

²⁰⁵ *NCH*, 12/10/1918, p.116.

²⁰⁶ ‘Caste in Shanghai’, *NCH*, 14/10/1904, pp.847-848.

²⁰⁷ Noel Davis, *The History of The Shanghai Paper Hunt Club 1863-1930*, (Shanghai, 1930); Toueg, correspondence with author, Herzlia, 3/6/1992. Her father, a traditional Jew, was a devotee of the sport.

²⁰⁸ *NCH*, 21/9/18, pp.697, 715, 11/1/19, p.94, and 5/4/19, p.130; ‘Collapse of the Baseball Case’, 5/4/19, p.38; G.E. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp.160-161.

²⁰⁹ Ezra brought a libel action against Merriman, *NCH*, 5/4/19, p.38.

1920s.²¹⁰ They did not find it to be incompatible with Judaism, as Masonic ritual is based largely on Biblical words, events, and personalities, and the overall emphasis is on ethics, friendship and good deeds.²¹¹ Masonry was an important agent for business advancement and social integration with the foreign community and provided relaxation, away from the less salubrious diversions abounding in Shanghai. Jews had no difficulty in rising up the ranks of freemasonry and many served as Masters of their Lodges.²¹² The District Grand Lodge of North China, constituted at Shanghai on 9 November 1877, had several high ranking Jewish members notably Moses Joseph, Past District Warden, 1900, Past District Grand Directors of Ceremonies, Abraham Rahamin, 1894.²¹³ In these lodges the Sephardim were given the opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism towards the British. D. Sassoon made the presentation address and welcome to HRH the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn on 8 April 1890. A special meeting was held for the funerals of Queen Victoria in 1901 and for King Edward VII on 20 May 1910 at various lodges.²¹⁴ Masons were distinguished for their charitable works, and in this way many Sephardim, whose names figure prominently in the list of donations, contributed to the charities of the wider community.²¹⁵ Many Sephardi children attended the school funded by the Masons which opened in May 1886. It was taken over by Shanghai ratepayers in June 1893 as the Shanghai Public School.²¹⁶

In October 1923 the local press focused on the issue of whether religious restrictions debarred Jews from becoming members of the YMCA. A Jewish correspondent sparked off the controversy when he claimed, erroneously, that the

²¹⁰ To Jews the right to join freemasonry became a touchstone of religious liberty, an agent of emancipation and social integration, 'Judaism and Masonry', *IM*, 21/10/1909, pp.11-12; Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.92.

²¹¹ Rabbi Raymond Apple, 'Perspectives: Focus on the Role of Freemasonry as the Oldest Jewish Lodge in Britain celebrates its Bicentenary', *JC*, 7/1/1994, p.20.

²¹² *NCH*, 28/1/1928, p.140; Christopher Haffner, *The Craft in the East*, (Hong Kong, 1977); Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.87.

²¹³ The first club was granted a warrant in Shanghai in 1849. G. J. Shekury played a prominent role in the formation of the lodge Slatoun, No. 936, F.M. Gratton, *The History of Freemasonry in Northern China*, revised by R. Ivy, (Tianjin, 1913), pp.34-38, 169.

²¹⁴ Gratton, *op. cit.*, pp.54, 201, 230.

²¹⁵ 'Masonic Charity Fund of Shanghai', *ibid.*, pp.243; 247-49, 253.

²¹⁶ Gratton, *op. cit.*, pp.245-247; Jewish Freemasons presented a scholarship to the English classes in memory of District Grand Master Louis Moore, *IM*, 19/5/1904, p.23.

elders of the community had denounced a Jew who had become a member.²¹⁷ Rabbi Hirsch, himself an associate member and 'profound admirer' of the YMCA in England, explained that he had no objection to a Jew joining the YMCA 'so long as he is not impressed [sic] into the religious exercises'.²¹⁸ He considered it preferable to their joining the other Shanghai clubs 'where drinking and gambling are considered a necessary qualification for being a jolly good fellow'.²¹⁹

Given the difficulty the SJS faced to find a benefactor, Sir Elly Kadoorie's gift of the 'Jewish Club', which he intended to be representative of the whole community, is significant. Kadoorie displayed imagination and courage in its grandiose design, and the club would have surpassed in elegance the other Shanghai clubs with its large public rooms, bedrooms, 'a dozen baths', and two separate kitchens for meat and milk food. When the building neared completion in 1920 a fire, deliberately started, caused extensive damage.²²⁰ It appears also to have dampened the enthusiasm of the community, who left the intrepid founder to devise some other purpose for the building.²²¹ In contrast, the Hong Kong Jewish Club, the gift of Elly Kadoorie, 'the finest Jewish institute of its kind', received the wholehearted support of Hong Kong Jewry who attended it almost every afternoon. Its popularity 'as a social rendezvous made it a more efficacious racial preservative than the synagogue which adjoined it'.²²² It is notable, however, that only ten percent of the members were Sephardim. The majority were affluent Russian Jews.²²³

²¹⁷ His refusal, even under the threat of being proclaimed a liar to name those supposedly involved suggests that the report was fabricated, *IM*, 9/11/1923, pp.20-21; letters to the editor from 'Jewish Nationalist' 15/10/1923, and 19/10/1923 and from Hirsch, 17/10/1923, all cited in *NCH*, 19/10/1923, pp.255-256 and 20/10/1923, p.185.

²¹⁸ Hirsch to the editor, *NCH*, 20/10/1923, pp.186; reprinted in *IM*, 9/11/1923, pp.20-21.

²¹⁹ *op. cit.*, p.186.

²²⁰ A detailed description of the club and picture in *IM*, 27/10/1918, pp.51-52; also in Darwent, *op. cit.*, p.142; Israel Cohen, *op. cit.*, p.132; the club stood between the McBain Building and the Union Building, *NCH Supplement*, 1920, p.37.

²²¹ Israel Cohen, 'With the Jews in Modern China Part II - Shanghai, Mukden, Tientsin', *JC*, 24/3/1922, p.3.

²²² *IM*, 27/10/1918, p.51; Israel Cohen, 'With the Jews in Modern China', Part I - Hong Kong and Shanghai; *JC*, 24/2/1922, p.4.

²²³ Mabel Haynes, née Bloomfield, interview by author, telephone, Los Angeles, 30/12/1993.

Several attempts to establish a Sephardi Jewish club to cater to the cultural, social and recreational needs of the community never materialised.²²⁴ The Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), the Kadimah Reading-Room, and the Jewish Girls' Club, which initially attracted large memberships,²²⁵ were forced to close down despite the financial support of the community elders.²²⁶ Whereas the older members of the community had recourse to many places of amusement, some of the younger generation complained that they had 'been practically left out in the cold', and required a youth club to provide a 'happy hunting ground for all'.²²⁷ The Shanghai Jewish Girls' Club which opened in February 1921 at the Jewish school, Whangpoo Road, clearly lacked necessary facilities, nonetheless, it boasted fifty enthusiastic members, 'young ladies representing every sect and class of the community'.²²⁸ The Shanghai Young Men's Hebrew Association opened on 15 January 1922 with Rabbi Hirsch as Chairman. Its premises in 7 Jinkee Road, consisted of two large rooms. One housed a billiard table, the other a small collection of books, the nucleus, it was hoped, of a large library.²²⁹ There were, however, complaints that the boys were 'concentrating on playing and gambling' and disregarded meetings of the Literary Society.²³⁰

The reasons for the closure of the Girls' Club provide an insight into the difficulties encountered by both the club organisers and its members.²³¹ A young member criticised the gloomy atmosphere of the club, which her friends attended only on very special occasions, and even then very unwillingly. The crucial problem, she argued, was that the youth were not 'treated as independent beings', and had no say in the running of the club.²³² Their presence at committee meetings did not entitle them to vote, which was the prerogative of the Senior Committee of ten ladies. She

²²⁴ Compare 'There is no social life in the Jewish circles in India...the individual Jew is apathetic to such an organisation and as a community they are disunited in their aspirations', Edward Brayham, 'Jewish Life in India', *IM*, 8/9/1922, p.24.

²²⁵ The first dance of the Girls' Club at the Palace Hotel in April 1921 was attended by over 200 people, *The Jewish Communal Recorder*, ed., Rabbi Hirsch, 8/4/1921, Vol.1. No.2.

²²⁶ *IM*, 11/2/1921, p.52, and 2/6/1922, p.32; Compare Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.75.

²²⁷ *IM*, 10/2/1922, p.22.

²²⁸ *IM*, 11/2/1921, p.52; 'Joint Meeting of the Senior and Junior Committees', *IM*, 16/12/1921, p.20.

²²⁹ *IM*, 10/2/1922, p.22.

²³⁰ *IM*, 7/4/1922, p.6.

²³¹ *IM*, 13/1/1922, p.21.

²³² Letter to the Editor captioned, 'The Late Girls' Club' signed 'Fair play and H', *IM*, 10/3/1922, p.20. Compare the lack of support for the Judean Sports club in Calcutta, *TJT*, March, 1937, p.13; *The Hebrew*, 14/6/1907, p.187.

put her case forcibly: 'Shanghai girls are quite capable of looking after themselves... we were simply pressed, depressed, oppressed, and repressed in the old club and that is why it had to go out of existence'.²³³ This is a striking illustration of the acculturation of Shanghai youth to the British, given that in Baghdad girls were often married before puberty and were mostly uneducated until 1890, when the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* [AIU] organised a vocational school for girls in Baghdad.²³⁴

The Sephardi-run Jewish Country Club opened in June 1924 in the compound of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue provided facilities for tennis. It advertised that those wishing to join before its inauguration ceremony in October 1925 would be admitted without balloting. The monthly subscription for men was \$4 and \$2 for ladies. In addition the men had to pay \$15, raised later to \$50, which was inexpensive compared with other clubs in Shanghai. Literary meetings, concerts and balls were organised to 'develop the *esprit de corps* lacking in Shanghai Jewry'.²³⁵ Perhaps the most crucial factor for the lack of support for Jewish clubs in general stemmed from the fact that the popular and well organised, *Le Cercle Sportif Français*, British and American clubs, lured the wealthy Sephardim; some ten to fifteen percent of Shanghai's Sephardi community'.²³⁶ In common with Jewish communities world wide, the wealthy Sephardi Jews belonged to the prestigious clubs in the Settlement, which became the venue for their social and athletic activities and, more importantly, their business transactions, depriving the Jewish clubs of their valuable patronage.²³⁷ This does not, however, explain why the sizeable other sections of the Sephardi community were unable to make a success of the Sephardi clubs. After all, the Russian Jewish community demonstrated that this was possible.

²³³ Letter to the Editor, signed H.W., Shanghai, 1/3/1922, *IM*, 10/3/1922. p.20.

²³⁴ Zvi Yehuda, 'Babylonian Jewry and Cultural Changes in the Educational Activities of the Alliance Israelite Universelle', *Babylonian Jewry I*, Autumn 1993; the AIU was called upon by the Baghdadi community to run the first modern school established by the community. The community for some fifty years insisted on formulating its own curriculum in which the media of instruction was either Hebrew or Arabic and held tenaciously to the customs of Baghdad, Zvi Yehuda 'Modernization and Westernization', *Nehardea*, No. 6, March 1993, pp.22-23; by 1910, the Alliance had propagated a secular outlook within large and influential sectors of the population, 'Elie Kedourie, The Jews of Baghdad in 1910', *Nehardea*, No.2, Autumn 1982, pp.15-16.

²³⁵ Its President was B. Somekh, *IM*, 4/7/1924, p.2.

²³⁶ Ellis Hayim, for example, belonged to the Shanghai Race Club, *Cercle Sportif Français*, International Recreation, Shanghai, Chinese Jockey, Shanghai Polo, Shanghai Paper Hunt, Hungjiao Golf, George F. Nellist, (ed.), *Men of Shanghai and North China: A Standard Biographical Reference Work*, (Shanghai, 1933), p.164.

²³⁷ Similarly the Calcutta Judean Club attracted only the less wealthy members of the Community. Rifka Toueg recalls swimming at the Rowing Club, accompanying her father to the Race Course and taking dancing and riding lessons, Toueg, interview by author, Herzlia, 6/10/1993.

In fact the Russian Jews boasted several viable clubs, notably the Jewish Recreation Club founded in 1913 by a few boys.²³⁸ In time it entered teams in practically all sporting activity and received its highest accolade from the Maccabi World Union for its exemplary performance, 'by far the greatest and most efficient'.²³⁹ The *Ahduth* Club, which organised 'circles' to promote cultural, artistic, social and educational activities, had one hundred and sixty-six members in 1924.²⁴⁰ It did not succeed in attracting Sephardi members who noted that there was not 'a single Jewish word among the notices' and inquired: 'Where is the Jewish atmosphere and spirit which one would expect to find in a Jewish club?'²⁴¹ Likewise, few Sephardim were among the one hundred and fifty members of the Maccabean club which opened in 1928.²⁴²

The opening of the Shanghai Jewish Club, the Circle Israelite, at 83 Route Pichon, in August 1932 highlighted the basis of the Sephardi-Ashkenazi divide and partly explains why 'the tendency to keep aloof from each other' was deep rooted.²⁴³ Any hope that the club would fill a gap in 'our monotonous Jewish life and bring together our youth', was dampened for the orthodox Sephardim.²⁴⁴ Its inauguration, just before the 'black fast- *Tisha b'Ab*', did not conform with Jewish custom. Food provided for the evening 'traditional suppers with socials' advertised for Friday evenings, was not *kasher*. In fact the only thing traditional was the *gefilte* fish, an Ashkenazi speciality. The customary Sabbath *pizmonim* and discussions on Jewish topics were conspicuous by their absence. In further desecration of the Sabbath all participants had to sign chits for their meals, after which they played poker, bridge, mah-jongg and card games until the early hours of the morning. Orthodox Sephardim considered this 'flagrant violation' of Jewish law, tradition and

²³⁸ A retrospective account of the club in *IM*, 8/1/1926, p.12, 5/2/1926, p.16; 7/9/1943, p.11; Its subscription was \$3 a month, 'Various sports are carried on in the parks and other places', Darwent, *op. cit.*, p.13.

²³⁹ *IM*, 22/11/1940, p.18.

²⁴⁰ *IM*, 26/9/1924, p.10.

²⁴¹ *IM*, 11/11/1921, pp.17-18; 'We have a centre and a rallying point' to foster cohesion between the Ashkenazim and Sephardim, *IM*, 8/2/1923, p.21.

²⁴² *NCH*, 21/4/1928, p.107.

²⁴³ *IM*, 2/9/1932, p.14. 'Shanghai Jewish Club opened by Sir Elly Kadoorie-Shanghai Jewry Getting Together Instead Of Drifting Apart-Initiative Taken By The Ashkenazi Community', *IM*, 7/9/1934, p.17; 'Supplement to the Statute of the Shanghai Jewish Club-Bye-Laws and Regulations', 'Shanghai File', *Yivo* Archives, New York.

²⁴⁴ *IM*, 1/10/32, p.19.

customs and a disgraceful affront to local Jewry.²⁴⁵ Sephardim were inhibited from joining the Russian clubs because Russian was the *lingua franca*. Perhaps most importantly, given the Sephardi attitude to marriage between Sephardim and Ashkenazim even in the 1930s, parents would have been at pains to ensure that they mixed 'with their own kind'. The way the Circle Israelite was run virtually excluded the Sephardim, and may have had the effect of promoting Sephardi unity against what they perceived as a threat to their identity.

The success of the Russian clubs may be attributed to the Russian competence at community organisation, their numerical strength and the fact that few of their wealthy members joined the Shanghai British clubs. The Russians felt isolated in Shanghai and not quite at home within the prevailing English culture.²⁴⁶ Being stateless and strictly functioning in the Russian language was the limiting factor. Unlike the Russians who 'make a fetish of going to the club - at least twice a week' and were 'terribly involved' with associating themselves with the Jewish clubs,²⁴⁷ all the informants in this study maintained that they did not feel the lack of a formal Sephardi club which they considered would have been superfluous.

B'nai B'rith Shanghai Lodge No. 1102

The Shanghai Jewish community was exceedingly complex in its social and political characteristics. Although each group retained and accentuated its peculiarities, and national divisions were sharp, the Shanghai Lodge No.1102 *B'nai B'rith* had the unique distinction of providing a common meeting ground:

...It is the one place where there can be no distinction between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, between Jews of various nationalities, among Jews of divergent social and economic stature. It transcends differences and finds that unity which alone perpetuates our historical mission...²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ About 20 percent of the membership of the Jewish Club Ahduth was non-Jewish, 'Sephardim and Ashkenazim compare notes', *IM*, 1/10/1932, p.19.

²⁴⁶ British prejudice against the Russians generally is noted in Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.115.

²⁴⁷ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 11/2/1992; this is notable also in Harbin and in the *Igud Yotsei Sin* in Tel Aviv.

²⁴⁸ George Sokolsky, '*B'nai B'rith* Ideals in the Far East', *B'nai B'rith Magazine*, [hereafter *BBM*], May, 1931, p.298.

The charter of the lodge was granted on 6 May 1928 and the first meeting of twenty members was held on 10 December 1928 at the American Masonic Temple. The membership increased to fifty by the end of 1929. The Shanghai Lodge No. 1102 of the *B'nai B'rith* was initiated in 1930.²⁴⁹ Its object was to identify itself with the work of the various Jewish institutions in Shanghai and to assist them 'morally and materially'.²⁵⁰ It worked to improve the social amenities of Shanghai Jewry and to organise functions to bring all sections of the community together. In 1934 it organised a *seder* night for its members and their families to which American, British and French Jews in the services were invited. It arranged *Hanukkah* services and provided tea for five hundred children. Evening lectures, followed by dinners or buffet suppers, were open to the public.

Its motto of 'benevolence, brotherly love and harmony' found expression in charitable work.²⁵¹ Brother Dr. Rosenzweig provided medical care to the SJS pupils and Brother Mazel attended to their dental needs. The lodge presented the SJS Boy Scouts and Girl Guides a silver shield each, to be competed for annually.²⁵² From its inauguration on 1 February 1934, until 30 June 1935 the Polyclinic and hospital established by the Shanghai Lodge dealt with 1,810 sick. It boasted that the institution was non-sectarian, as at least ten percent of its patients were non-Jews.²⁵³ Through its efforts the Joint Committee of Jewish Organisations of Shanghai was formed to co-ordinate the community's efforts under one central body.²⁵⁴ The achievement of the *B'nai B'rith*, Shanghai Lodge No. 1102 stands out in marked contrast to the numerous failures to establish a common meeting ground for Shanghai Jewry. Significantly, it was organised as late as 1930 when the barriers that separated the Ashkenazim and Sephardim were crumbling.

²⁴⁹ It was organised on the initiative of I. Covitt, application for the charter of the Shanghai Lodge of the independent order of *B'nai B'rith*, *BBM*, June, 1930.

²⁵⁰ It donated \$400 for the Shelter House; \$326 for the relief of Jews in Eastern Europe, and supplied sports equipment to the Jewish Recreation Club.

²⁵¹ President's message at the 1938 convention proceedings *B'nai B'rith* Fifteenth Convention, *BBM*, June 1938, pp.20-21.

²⁵² See a picture of Jewish Boy Scouts and Jewish Girl Guides displaying the silver shields, *B'nai B'rith Magazine*, May 1931, p.298.

²⁵³ *BBM*, January 1936, p.139.

²⁵⁴ *BBM*, July 1934, p.373.

The success of the *B'nai B'rith* in reinforcing a strong Jewish identity among its members is matched with that of the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association which from 1937 generated a strong *esprit de corps* among Jewish youth.

The Shanghai Jewish Youth Association [SJYA]

Founded in February 1937 by Horace Kadoorie, the SJYA probably became the most important influence in fostering a strong Jewish identity in Shanghai Jewish youth and dissolved the barriers between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The aim of the organisation was to 'place at the disposal of youth the ways and means of improving themselves, both mentally and physically'.²⁵⁵ Nominal fees were charged in order that the members 'should maintain their self-respect'.²⁵⁶ The SJYA provided educational, vocational and recreational facilities for Jewish youth particularly from impoverished homes, and in some cases to members of other denominations. The vocational training included engineering, accountancy, book-keeping and stenography. The first Summer Camp held in the Shanghai University from 18 July - 5 August 1937 brought eighty-six Jewish youth together to participate in activities such as yachting, swimming, boating and picnicking. The SJYA boasted that the food provided was strictly *kasher*, despite the higher cost. Owing to the Sino-Japanese hostilities, in lieu of the Summer Camp, Summer Club programmes, which included swimming and picnics, were organised for two hundred children. The Annual Fun Fair in 1940 was attended by over nine hundred people, evidence of its popularity. The SJYA took a keen interest in the activities of Shanghai Jewish youth, and the Jewish Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Wolf Cubs became affiliated to it. It organised and provided the equipment for the SJYA football team and also the SJS's Hockey Team and supported the Jewish Recreation Club. The refugee children from Germany and Austria shared the amenities provided by the SJYA and attended the school in Kinchow Road maintained and founded by the SJYA and directed by Horace Kadoorie.²⁵⁷ The success of the SJYA demonstrates how, under his strong

²⁵⁵ *IM*, 3/4/1939, p.26, 16/8/1940, p.2, and 10/3/1940, p.10.; 'Shanghai Jewish Youth Association Founded February 1937 Its Foundation and a Short History of its Eighteen Activities, 1940', *B'nai B'rith* Archive, [no reference number given].

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*; *IM*, 16/8/1940, p.2 and 10/3/1940, p.10; the importance of the SJYA school to the refugees is evaluated in Chapter Eight.

leadership, the organisation was able to overcome the challenges presented by the deteriorating economic and political conditions in Shanghai.²⁵⁸

Conclusion

The problems that the Sephardim encountered in maintaining their institutions seem to stem from the fact that they were highly individualistic and unaccustomed to working in committees, which was not a Baghdadi method.²⁵⁹ The enormously rich had no need for a common orbit; their wealth gave them the power to act independently. As Rabbi Hirsch observed, they were charming and generous individuals who seemed incapable of working on a communal basis. There was no shortage of good ideas and initial enthusiasm, but this was usually followed by faltering and lack of discipline when faced with challenges. Consequently some worthy projects foundered.

A striking contrast is to be found in the well coordinated Ladies' Benevolent Society which performed a distinguished role in its care for impoverished Jews.²⁶⁰ Perhaps they ran the Society in a democratic manner, whereas the charitable organisations managed by the men were oligarchic and run like businesses.²⁶¹ The Ladies Benevolent Society was not merely parochial; the charity of Shanghai's Sephardim extended to thousands of Russian Jewish refugees who filtered into Shanghai, and to over eighteen thousand Central European refugees from the early 1930s, displaying an all-encompassing Jewish consciousness. The community, faced with the awkward dilemma of prioritising the critical needs of its resident poor and those of the desperate refugees, was conscious of its obligation to the Ashkenazi destitute. Charity has always been a focal point of Jewish practice and regarded as mandatory to all. This concern with care for co-religionists strengthened the Jewish identity of the host community.

²⁵⁸ For his 'devotion for the welfare of their children' Horace was presented with a silver salver, 'Jewish Community Express Appreciation', *IM*, 18/10/1938, p.25.

²⁵⁹ Isaac Abraham, interview by author, London, 25/3/1993.

²⁶⁰ Mrs. D. E. J. Abraham, Mrs. A. E. Moses, Mrs. M. J. Isaac, Mrs. R. E. Toeg and Mrs. N. F. Nissim, were the chief organisers, J. Zeitin, 'The Shanghai Jewish Communal Association, Short Historical Extract', *Almanac*, 1946/47, Shanghai; *IM*, 3/4/1936, p.1; an example of their fund raising efforts in *IM*, 5/1/1923, p.19.

²⁶¹ In Baghdad their place was very much in the home. In Shanghai, after the Great War some started working as secretaries in family firms, telephone operators and nurses, Toeg, interview by author, 2/6/1993.

In Baghdad it had been customary for wealthy benefactors to provide and maintain communal institutions necessary to preserve its Jewish identity. Perhaps this encouraged the members of the community to take these gifts for granted, almost as a birthright.²⁶² It is paradoxical that the SJS was not gifted to the community by one of its several millionaires, as in their sister communities in India.²⁶³ The argument that this may have been the case because by 1927 the Ashkenazi pupils outnumbered the Sephardim is not borne out.²⁶⁴ The Kadoorie school for the victims of Nazi persecution was established in June 1939, at a time when the financial condition of Shanghai Sephardim was far worse than in the 1920s. Both in India and China wealthy Baghdadi Jews contributed to the general education, civic and communal welfare of the wider community.²⁶⁵ The benevolence of the Kadoorie family included several schools for the Chinese run by British staff which were regarded by the British as a method of spreading British ideals.²⁶⁶ Sephardi paternalism towards the host country reflected the policy of the British Government, which attached great importance to this means of improving relations with the indigenous population.²⁶⁷

The crucial difference was that these philanthropists did not make the establishment and maintenance of the Sephardi institutions a priority and dispensed

²⁶² 'Jacob Sassoon could spare Rs 2,500,000 for the Elphinstone College, Bombay, he should have something to spare for the needy of his own faith', *IM*, 27/11/1907; Sir Sassoon David contribution of Rs 40,000 towards the Prince of Wales' visit to India in December 1920 elicited the comment 'It is interesting to know how much he contributed to the *Keren Hayesod*', *IM*, 2/10/1921, p.15. The *IM* complained that 'our great men today' were making little effort to improve and protect the Jewish identity of the future generation of Shanghai Sephardim, *IM*, 8/9/1922. 'There is a tendency to shine in non-Jewish circles as real philanthropists while ignoring the need of their own race', *IM*, 6/10/1922, p.10. 'it is the duty of people who have a social standing to look after the rest of their community', *IM*, 24/3/1905, pp.8-9.

²⁶³ The Talmud Torah and Jeshurun Free School in Calcutta and the Sassoon school in Bombay.

²⁶⁴ *IM*, 7/4/1922, pp.14, 15. As noted above in 1907 the ratio of Sephardi to Ashkenazi pupils was 33:18. in 1907, 51:72, in 1927 and 85:122 in 1939.

²⁶⁵ Cecil Roth, *op. cit.*, p.65. They 'contributed more than their share to civic, communal and charitable causes', Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.55. The Chinese Nationalist Government awarded Sir Victor Sassoon and Sir Elly Kadoorie the First Class Gold Medal and inscribed Tablet for promoting medical and educational work in China, *IM*, 1/8/1935; Hardoon's awards have been noted in Chapter One.

²⁶⁶ Report by the British Chamber of Commerce on the subject of education in China sent to Beilby Alston HM Chargé d'affaires, Peking, 2/3/20, FO671/445. Education was recognised as an extension of the pro-British propaganda that was seen to be needed in China, Bickers, p.165; details of the Kadoorie schools in *IM* 6/3/1908; *TJT*, March 1934, pp.19, 21; *NCH*, 24/2/1902, p.367, 31/10/14, p.328, 14/11/14, p.47, 3/7/20, p.33, 4/3/22, p.600, 15/3/24, p.404, 9/6/28, p.432, and 6/4/29, p.17.

²⁶⁷ Imperialistic paternalism was at times expressed in racial terms, P.T. Etherton, *China: The Facts*, (London, 1927), p.256 and Bickers, p.38. The Germans, recognising the benefits of producing a class of Chinese trained in German thought and methods, were operating about a dozen schools in Shandong in 1914 compared to six British school for the Chinese, 'Report on German Schools in China', 8/3/1920, PRO, FO/671/445.

with the Baghdadi tradition of using their wealth, as David Sassoon had done, to safeguard the identity of the community.²⁶⁸ There were, undeniably, important pragmatic considerations which prompted the early pioneers of the Sassoon family to make these provisions for their employees. Shanghai millionaires seem to have realised that an endowment was not what was required and were not given to making poor investments. Significantly, Perry's bequest came with the caveat that the community raise a similar amount, providing an incentive for the community to invest in its own institutions.

Arguably it was not necessary for the wealthy few to carry the burden of establishing and maintaining all the communal institutions. Given that in Britain the wisdom of establishing Jewish schools for middle-class homes was being questioned, wealthy Shanghai Sephardim were probably convinced that Jewish children who could afford the fees would improve their social and economic prospects by receiving their education in the same institutions as the foreign community. In this case a Jewish school for this sector of the community would have had no place at all. Conspicuously, the community leaders' children, and those of Rabbi Hirsch, did not attend the SJS. Even after the school was housed in a modern building in 1931 it did not attract the wealthy middle class. It is likely that the very definite polarisation of the Jewish community between the wealthy and poor, as has been observed in other Baghdadi communities in the East, encouraged parents to send their children to the SMC non-denominational schools where they could form friendships with their social equals. Given that identification with the British was of paramount importance to the Sephardim, SMC schools which offered an education on a par with British Public Schools were irresistible. These schools were receptive to Jewish pupils, generally industrious, intelligent and high achievers, whose wealthy parents were influential in the Settlement.

Orthodox Jews were confident that their home influence would preserve the identity of their offspring. A large number of Jewish students who attended the British schools received instruction in Hebrew and religious studies at home with

²⁶⁸ For Sassoon philanthropy in Bombay see Roland, pp.17,78; Elias Ezra in Calcutta, Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.115; Sir Manasseh Meyer in Singapore, Nathan, *op. cit.*, pp.28-30. The Sassoons made a crucial contribution to Jewish cultural and spiritual life in Bombay, where thousands received free education, membership to synagogues and funeral expenses, *TJT*, October, 1938, p.42.

private instructors for at least two hours every weekday, usually before school.²⁶⁹ The Shanghai Jewish School played a crucial role in the education of the poorer section of the community, reinforcing its Jewish and Baghdadi identity, and at the same time providing its pupils with the skills required to function in the wider society and become self-supporting. Horowitz confirms that there were no illiterate Jewish poor in the Settlement.²⁷⁰

Probably the most plausible reason for the absence of a Sephardi Jewish club in Shanghai was that no need was felt for one. To a large extent the disparity of wealth and the social stratification within the community made the British clubs the focus of the Sephardi élite. The fact that Ashkenazi clubs were not run on traditional lines and that the *lingua franca* was Russian accounts for their unpopularity among the Sephardim. Acculturated into the British milieu, for political, legal, economic and social advantages, Baghdadi Jews were estranged from their Russian co-religionists who, unlike themselves, had not become part of the British environment, and did not share the enthusiasm of the Sephardim for becoming acculturated to the British.

The Fifth Shanghai Jewish Boy Scout Group from 1921 generated a strong *esprit de corps* among Jewish youth, which compensated for the lack of Jewish youth clubs. It seems to have played a crucial role in reinforcing the Jewish identity of Shanghai youth, dissolving the barriers between rich and poor, Ashkenazi and Sephardi children. The success of its Boy Scouts in inter-school competitions was a tremendous boost to the SJS, and to the self-esteem of its pupils. General acceptance of the strong leadership of Jacobs enabled him to forge a cohesive group. Similarly, the success of the SJYA demonstrates how, under the dynamic leadership of Horace Kadoorie, the organisation was able to overcome the challenges of deteriorating economic and political conditions in Shanghai. Again, it promoted solidarity erasing social barriers between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and between rich and poor. This was undoubtedly a major factor in generating a strong Jewish identity amongst Shanghai Jewish youth.

²⁶⁹ Fred Ezekiel, interview by author, Florida, 5/12/1992.

²⁷⁰ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/92.

Chapter Five: Trade and Wealth

Sephardi Merchants: Opium and Real Estate

For a fuller understanding of its unique identity, the Sephardi Jewish community of Shanghai should be studied in the context of the gentile environment of the International Settlement and French Concession. How did the Sephardim present themselves to their non-Jewish neighbours, and how were they perceived by them? The Sephardi community in Shanghai was comprised mainly of merchants. Shanghai's open port, as shown in Chapter One, had from 1845 attracted Sephardi pioneers from Baghdad and India, many of whom, after serving an 'apprenticeship' in the Sassoon firms, generally branched out as independent merchants.¹ Before the 1880s they dealt mainly in the export of tea and silk and the import of opium. In the Hong Lists they are listed as: 'merchants and exporters', and 'general import and export merchants', trading in a wide range of commodities such as piece-goods, hides and skins, rubber, pongee,² tobacco leaf, cotton yarn, linen, embroidery, and lace lingerie.³ Trading companies, including those that were not registered as British, adopted the organisation and practices of British trading firms that operated in India.⁴ Sephardim were well represented on the Shanghai Stock Exchange,⁵ the Shanghai

¹ Merchants were placed at the bottom of the social ladder yet 'the welfare of the State depended on the activity, energy and the capacity of the merchants', Sir Ernest Satow, HM Minister to Japan, 'The Value of the Merchant', *NCH*, 17/7/1896, p.116.

² Soft silk made from cocoons of a wild silk worm; a fine cotton.

³ The Shanghai *Who's Who* with over 8,000 references supplies a list of business addresses; advertisements in the *Israel's Messenger* are noteworthy; court cases in HM Supreme Court involving Sephardim mercantile disputes provide an insight into the goods they traded in and how they conducted their business, for example *Sassoon Silas Sykes v. Silas Simson Levy*, *NCH*, 14/7/1905, pp.91; 're J.A.B. Ezra and S. Moosa, trading as Albert & Sons', *NCH*, 23/1/15, pp.285-286; 'A Partnership Suit', involving R.K. Raphael, *NCH*, 23/6/28, p.524; 'Tobacco Brokerage Dispute,' S.H. Levy, a commission agent, v. E. Manesseh, *NCH*, 25/3/30, p.485.

⁴ Wei, *op. cit.*, p.110; Betty Peh-T'i Wei, interview by author, Hong Kong, 3/4/92 and London, 7/10/93.

⁵ Ellis Hayim was the Chairman of the Shanghai Stock Exchange from 1928-1929, and 19 of the 42 members listed were Sephardim. For a comprehensive list of its members in the 1920s and the shares they dealt in, see PRO, FO917/2653/XC186451, FO656/270/185603 and FO917/2300/186098; there were 16 Sephardim among the 44 members listed in [undated] FO917/2653/XC186451; there were 33 Sephardim among the 96 members listed in, [undated] FO656/270; *China Stock and Share Handbook*, compiled by C.R. Maguire, (Shanghai, 1926). Several Sephardim itemised their share holdings in their wills, for example Maurice Benjamin, 9/11/38, FO 917/3743/XC79; Jacob Menashih Joseph, 5/3/30, FO656/270/185603; Isaac Joseph in FO917/2772/2500 and Raphael Aaron Gubbay in FO 917/2570/2300, see Illustration, p.172; numerous cases involving Sephardi stockbrokers give an insight into the way they carried on their business; the best examples are the bankruptcy case of Judah Ezra, *NCH*, 16/8/21, pp.210-214; Carmen Carlyle v. J.S. Gubbay, *NCH*, 27/3/20, p.856; Ellis v. Odell and Behar, *NCH*, 21/5/27, and 28/5/27, p.388; A. Rosenfeld v. D.H. Benjamin, *NCH*, 7/7/28, p.30 and 14/7/23, p.72; Ginsburger v. Meyer Shibbeth, *NCH*, 21/1/30, p.110.

Chamber of Commerce, real estate and financial institutions such as insurance agents and commission agents. Wealthy Sephardim were active in banking, shipping, industries and in public utilities.⁶ Although by the 1920s some were attracted to the professions they remained essentially a mercantile community.⁷

Some Shanghai Sephardim made vast fortunes from the opium trade, which was a strong inducement for settlement in the East. David Sassoon and Co. had a considerable foothold in the purchase of opium in India in the 1870s and 1880s.⁸ In order to keep control of the entire market, they sought their own outlets for their goods in China. They recruited Jews from Baghdad and India who risked their health and their lives to learn this profitable trade. Besides the Sassoons, there were a few Baghdadi pioneers who traded independently in opium. By 1917 the majority of the Sephardi community was directly or indirectly involved in this trade from which it derived most of its wealth and power base.⁹ Prosperous Sephardim were able, consequently, to maintain a high profile in Shanghai and to achieve social parity with affluent non-Jews who were also involved in the trade. As opium trading became linked with Sephardi Jews, it assumed considerable importance for the identity of this community, and as such it is crucial to this study. If entrepreneurs were considered to be the heroes of the day, and the Jews were successful, this would have a positive effect on the view of non-Jews towards the community. Conversely, if stigma were attached this would result in a negative view. Whatever these views might have been at different times between 1850-1917, they had an important effect on the behaviour of the Sephardim, prompting them either to defend the trade tooth and nail or to dissociate themselves from it. A further option taken by some was to detach

⁶ Edward Ezra was one of the most enterprising Sephardi Jews whose successful dealings in Indian imports enabled him to engage in many enterprises: Managing Director of the Shanghai Hotels Ltd., Chairman of the Far Eastern Insurance Co. Ltd., and of the *China Press* and *Evening Star*, and China Motors Ltd., *inter alia*, *NCH*, 17/12/1921, p.767; Edward Shellim's range of business was as eclectic, *IM*, 4/1/1929, p.21, and 6/3/1908, pp.13-14; David Arakie, financial editor of the *China Press* and the editor and publisher of *Capital and Trade*, a leading financial weekly journal published in the Settlement was hailed 'A Jewish Leader in Commercial China...A Moulder of Opinion', *IM*, 3/4/1926, p.19.

⁷ See the *July Edition of the China Hong List Revised and Corrected to July 1939*, *City Supplementary edition to the China Hong List*, (Shanghai, 1939); Charles F. Remer, *Foreign Investments in China*, (New York, 1968).

⁸ Edward Le Fevour, *Western Enterprise in Late Ch'ing China, A Selection of Jardine Matheson and Company's Operations, 1842-1895*, (Harvard, 1986), pp.27-29.

⁹ By 1881 the opium trade was left in the hands of a few Indian houses and native merchants, before that any British merchant 'could give a quotation for opium offhand....almost all dealt in the drug or at all events watched the market carefully', *NCH*, 20/5/1881, p.474.

Income Tax Account

Account of the particulars of the personal state of the above named decedent in respect of which the estate is to be assessed and of the estimated value of such particulars.

Table with 3 columns: Description of property, Approximate value of property, and Net value. Rows include 'Invested effects', 'Jewels and ornaments', 'Shares in the Shanghai', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Description of property, Approximate value of property, and Net value. Rows include 'Lot of land and building No. 15 Huxiang Road', 'Lot of land and building registered in the French Consulate General', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Description of property, Approximate value of property, and Net value. Rows include 'Debts and Payments', 'Amount due to Juan Ezra and Company', 'Interest on loan due to the Chartered Bank of India, London, and China', etc.

The amount of Estate to amount to be deducted for debts funeral and testamentary expenses \$ 3,167.15

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'Total amount of first account of particular indebtedness liable to duty', 'Total amount of this account account liable to duty', 'Difference Paid', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'Duty on the 34,543.61 \$1333.32', 'Duty on the 31,237.91 \$1155.77', 'Difference \$ 177.55', etc.

Amount of duty to be returned \$ 177.55. In case of fee \$ 5.00. Total \$ 172.55.

Dated this 30th March 1927.

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'Assets and Cash Balances of Mr. Ezra at 19th December 1921', 'Balance on Current Accounts', 'Savings Bank of India, Australia and China', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'Forward - 200 Ordinary Shares of Loou Keng Yow Co. S. & W. Co., Ltd. \$ 300', '25 Ordinary Shares Weeks & Co., Ltd. \$ 125', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'Forward - 145,156.08', 'Shanghai Hotels, Ltd. - repairs on above Property recoverable 77.87', 'Office Furniture at No. 14 Kiang Road occupied by Messrs. Hare & Co. per valuation by Messrs. Hoel Murray & Co., Ltd. of 7th June, 1922. 4,616.00', etc.

NOTE: Above is exclusive of Three Motor Cars and Personal Effects claimed by Mrs. Ezra of her property.

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'THE SCHEDULE above referred to: NIC MAJESTY'S SUPREME COURT FOR CHINA AT SHANGHAI.', 'EDWARD EZRA EZRA', 'Estimated value of such particulars', 'PERSONAL PROPERTY', 'REAL ESTATE', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Description, Amount, and Balance. Rows include 'Brought forward - 59,194.77', '1,000 Shares Perma Rubber Estates Ltd. @ 0.80 = 800.00', '25,000 Bonds Chinese Government 1st year 1921 @ 75 = 18,750.00', etc.

Table with 3 columns: Name of Creditor, Description of Debt, and Amount. Rows include 'Hongkong & Shanghai Bank. Loan on shares. 148,442.86', 'Debenhams Trading Socy. 40 = 150,201.28', 'Eiu Cheung Banking Corp. 40 = 59,200.00', etc.

Total debt \$ 2,501,704.66. FUNERAL EXPENSES (Reasonable funeral expenses only to be included) \$ 100.00. Total debt & funeral expenses \$ 2,501,804.66.

Details of Edward Ezra's Estate

themselves personally by living abroad, but where their accruing wealth brought them titles and an entrée into the highest echelons of society.

The involvement of Sephardi Jews in the very lucrative opium trade affected their own perception of it. This explains why they both justified it and continued to ply it despite growing adverse public opinion and objections put forward first by the Chinese Government, and in later years by the British Government. The trade was placed on a legal footing in China by the Treaty of Tianjin of 1858 and continued to be so until the end of the Ten-Years Agreement in 1917. In fact the Government of India, with the approval of the Home Government, invited traders to purchase the opium in the first place, and in this they were acting with both US and British merchant ships carrying opium to China.

The decline and then the termination of the trade meant that the Sephardi merchants were forced to diversify their business interests by the turn of the century. They began to invest in land and property, railways and public utilities. The buildings they erected were seen as symbols of wealth and power and provided a sense of security to all foreigners within the International Settlement. It was also an expression of confidence in their future in China, although the country was beset with civil disorders and near anarchy.

Before examining the connection of Sephardi merchants in the opium trade, it should be made clear that even before David Sassoon had landed in Bombay from Bushire, nearly one third of Bombay's trade came from the export of opium.¹⁰ Between the 1830s and the 1860s the Sassoons had a fifth share of the opium trade.¹¹ Long before Britain colonised India, opium had been introduced to the

¹⁰ Roland, 'Jewish Diasporas in China', p.6. Although the East India Company ceased to carry opium in its own ships after 1796 it cultivated the poppy as a monopoly and sold the opium to private traders knowing that it was grown for the prohibited China market. More than 4,000 chests were imported in 1790, H.G.W. Woodhead (ed.), *The China Year Book, 1921-1922*, (Tianjin 1921), p.789. A more conservative estimate is of 2,000 chests imported in 1800, John Macgregor, [secretary of the Board of Trade], *Commercial Statistics*, (London, 1850), V, xxi p.74. The British Government 'pushed to the utmost' the growth of the poppy, and the manufacture and sale of the drug, for the sake of revenue. It affixed its own stamp to the drug and ensured that it was manufactured to suit the taste of the Chinese, Joshua Rowntree, *The Imperial Drug Trade*, (2nd edition London, 1906), pp.26-27.

¹¹ Zhang Zhongli and Chen Zengnian, *Shaxun jituan zai jiu Zhongguo*, [The Sassoon Group in Old China], (Shanghai 1985), pp.21-23; 25. Between 1885 to 1905 the two Sassoon firms each imported some 10,000 chests annually, Sassoon Archives China B 8994(35-1); B 7495 (7-1,5,6,7) A 396(4-2,3,4); B 8494 (35-2), by courtesy of Prof. Gong Fangzhen. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the English firms withdrew from the opium trade, leaving it increasingly in the hands of the Jews, Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.24; David Owen, *British Opium Policy in China and India*, (New Haven, Conn., 1968), pp.259-260; Wei, *op. cit.*, p.113.

Chinese by Portuguese, Arab and Indian merchants and was also grown in the country.¹² Sir Edmund Hornby, the first Chief Justice at the Shanghai Supreme Court [1865-1876],¹³ who was called on to report on the trade in August 1880, expressed the widely held view that: 'nothing we could do would materially lessen the consumption of opium in China', even if the British Government was willing to sacrifice a revenue of £8,000,000. A ban on the opium trade would justify the absolute prohibition of the manufacture of spirits and beer in England, or the introduction of French brandy and foreign wines. Everyday experience, he argued, demonstrated the inability of legislation to crush a trade in an article such as tobacco and alcohol for which there is a demand.¹⁴

Nineteenth Century Background to the Opium Trade

An examination of the opium laws helps to place the trade in the socio-cultural context of the age. Social Darwinism, during the last three decades of nineteenth century Europe, sanctioned overseas expansion with the philosophy that nations as well as species struggled to exist and that only the strongest were fit to survive.¹⁵ Britain's trade offered scope for those characteristics which Anglo-Saxons at the time valued highly - self-help, commercial initiative and free trade. It is therefore understandable that Commissioner Lin's sincere and logical plea to Queen Victoria in 1839 to remove the 'source of the evil' by prohibiting its sale and manufacture, rather than its consumption, appeared to have little effect on the opinions of the day. Contrary to Lin's assertion, opium was *not* prohibited in Britain at the time.¹⁶

¹² Several historians argue that the origin of the drug traffic lay first of all in the Chinese demand for opium.

¹³ *NCH*, 28/1/30, p.160.

¹⁴ Hornby to Earl Granville, 17/6/1880, PRO, FO 881/4269, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, 5/8/1880'; 'No reasonable man can afford to lightly interfere with a trade the annual return of which amounts to some nine million sterling unless he is prepared to show some method in which the void can be filled', *NCH*, 19/5/1877, p.489. Even today, eager for an alternative to the shrinking market in the West, with 1.2 billion people and the world's fastest growing economy, China, is the most coveted target of the multinational tobacco companies. The efforts of American Government trade negotiators to force open tobacco markets overseas are noteworthy. Most governments in Asia have launched anti-smoking campaigns, which have proved ineffectual although physicians warn that the health implications of the tobacco boom in Asia are terrifying, *The New York Times*, *Weekly Review*, 15/5/1994, pp.1,4.

¹⁵ Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, (New York, 1989), p.313.

¹⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, (New York, 1990), p.151; Hsin-pao Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War*, Harvard, 1964; on opium use in Britain see Virginia Berridge, and Edwards Griffith, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England*, (London, 1981), *passim*.

Undoubtedly, the continuing prosperity of the trade was essential to the British Treasury for its excise duty, as well as to the East India Company for its revenue before 1834.¹⁷ Even some forty years after the death of David Sassoon, John Morley, Secretary of State for India in the Liberal Government of 1905, told the House ‘you must not satisfy your own righteousness at the expense of other people’s revenue’ although he agreed that the opium question ‘touches the consciences of the people of this country very deeply’.¹⁸ The problems for China’s national economy caused by the enormous amount of Chinese silver which flowed out of the country in payment for imported opium was hardly taken into account by the British Government and the opium merchants. In the 1820s this was about two million taels annually, and by early 1832, nine million taels.¹⁹ The imbalance caused to China’s bimetallic monetary system seriously disrupted taxation and commerce. As silver grew scarcer and more valuable in terms of other commodities, real tax rates more than doubled.²⁰ It was the opium trade that turned the balance against China, in Britain’s favour, to the extent that Britain was able to further the colonisation of India.²¹

Fairbank regarded the First Opium War as the consequence of a clash of two cultures.²² Immanuel Hsu has even argued that opium was the immediate, but not the ultimate cause of the first Anglo-Chinese War, which was inevitable owing to the incompatibility between Western commercial ideas and the self-sufficiency of the Chinese. Certainly, ‘the Smithsian idea of free trade and the Chinese contempt for trade could not co-exist’.²³ Some historians, notably Henry Norton, even suggested

¹⁷ In this way the East India Company could obtain the silver to buy tea without draining Britain of it, James Bromley Eames, *The English in China*, (London, 1909), pp.564-566; Hosea Morse, *Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), *passim*.

¹⁸ Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series 3, Vol. LXIII, 3/4/1843, pp.362-470 and Vol. CCCLII, 10/4/1891, pp.286-343.

¹⁹ Spence, *op cit.*, p.149.

²⁰ John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842 - 1854*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1964, 2nd. ed., 1969), p.77; Frank King, *Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1845-1895*, (New Haven, Conn., 1993), pp.140-143.

²¹ Dennis Twitchett and John Fairbank, (eds.) *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 10, Late Ch’ing, 1800-1911, Part 1*, (Cambridge, 1978), p.173; opium provided the chief means of paying for the teas and silks which England and America required and who were afraid to drain their silver to the East, *NCH*, 20/5/1881, p.474.

²² Twitchett and Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, p.74, and ‘The Opium War, 1840-42’, pp.74-83.

²³ Hsu, *op. cit.*, p.313. Although the campaigns which Britain launched against China in 1840, 1857 and 1860 would be condemned by British standards of conscience today, they were entered into by the responsible English statesmen against what were felt to be intolerable restrictions on freedom of trade. Hubbard argued that if no opium ship had ever come to Guangzhou the wars would still have taken place, G.E. Hubbard, *British Far Eastern*

that the terms of the Treaty of Nanjing in August 1842, which brought the Opium Wars to an end, indicated that the objective of the British was not one of conquest, but to obtain a footing in China in order to be able to trade freely. The fact that opium was not mentioned in the Treaty, or in subsequent regulations and tariff schedules, appeared to lend weight to the British claim that the war was not fought over opium.²⁴ Nevertheless, the important point is that the laws of extraterritoriality in the Treaty Ports enabled British subjects to defy the prohibition of the Chinese Government against the import of opium to China, as they could only be tried in their own consular court, where it was less likely they would be found guilty of any offence.²⁵ In effect, therefore, all restrictions on the import of opium were removed and a flourishing trade was openly carried out at every Treaty Port by foreigners.²⁶

When opium was sent from Calcutta and Bombay by private companies, including the British firms Jardine Matheson, and Dent, and the American firms, Augustine Heard and Russell, and consigned to agents in Guangzhou, such trade was legitimate under British law and a source of considerable revenue to India.²⁷ It became contraband, however, when it reached the Chinese coast, which meant that it had to be smuggled into the country. Selling was done while the opium was still afloat. This was within the letter of the law. The *Henry Ellis*, owned by Messrs. David Sassoon and Sons, was the only Jewish-owned hulk of the six well manned and armed opium ships moored at Saddle Island, at the mouth of the River Pearl in the vicinity of Guangzhou, in 1854. *The Shanghai Directory 1855* records the names of the opium-receiving ships stationed outside Shanghai, of the officers in charge of them, and of the firms in whose control they were, as openly as for any other business.

Policy, (New York, 1943), pp.8,11. For Chinese opinion *vis a vis* the Opium trade see *The Opium War*, [compiled by members of the history departments of Fudan University and Shanghai Teachers' University], 1976, and Waley, Arthur, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes*, (London, 1958), *passim*.

²⁴ Henry Norton, *China and The Powers*, (London, 1927), p.54.

²⁵ Cleife, H.H.T., *England's Greatest National Sin: Selections and Reflections on our Asiatic Opium Policy and Traffic*, (London, 1892), *passim*.

²⁶ Chatham House, *Survey of International Affairs 1925*, (Oxford, 1928), pp.564-569. The matter of the legality of the trade is explained in John King Fairbank, *op. cit.*, 'The Opium Settlement in Practice', pp.226-247, and Owen, *op. cit.*, pp.214-241.

²⁷ Wei, *op. cit.*, pp.113-114.

The open traffic in opium escalated rapidly after the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842: in 1848, 16,500 chests were disposed of and in 1857, 31,907 chests.²⁸ When Lord Elgin went out to China in 1858, he concluded that legalisation was the only remedy for the smuggling.²⁹ The Treaty of Tianjin, 1858, permitted the Chinese Government to levy an import duty.³⁰ Furthermore, a *likin* tax was levied from 1853 on all goods passing the inland barriers and the revenue went to the governors of the different provinces and to the Imperial Treasury.³¹ The treaties with China placed the trade on a legal footing, thus assuring large revenues both to the Imperial Government of China and to Great Britain. Certainly, the merchants involved in the opium trade were considered respected members of the foreign community.³² Wealthy Sephardi opium dealers appear to have dissolved social barriers. For example, a party celebrating the launching of Messrs. Moses and Gubbays' opium receiving ship, *Wellington*, in June 1880, was attended by eminent members of the foreign community, who hoped that 'she will long continue to store in safety her enterprising owners' cargo'.³³

The cumbrous hulks became an institution along the coast of China long after the Treaty of Tianjin, 1858, legalised the landing and sale of opium and bonding facilities became available on shore.³⁴ The failure of the Chinese to impose prohibitive internal duties, which might have curtailed opium consumption, and the unimpeded increased cultivation of the poppy in China was seen as proof of the

²⁸ F.L.Hawks Pott, *A Short History of Shanghai*, (Shanghai, 1937), p.46.

²⁹ The 8th Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, James Bruce Elgin served as Special Commissioner to China in 1857-59 and 1860-61. He was Postmaster General in Lord Palmerston's Cabinet, in 1859-60 and Viceroy of India in 1862.

³⁰ Chatham House, *Survey of International Affairs*, p.565.

³¹ I. Johnstone, Chairman, British Chamber of Commerce, to E. Fraser, 22/4/18, PRO, FO 671/C.50/184590/16349/18; Likin, [literally 1 part of 1000] was applied to the system of interior toll barriers introduced in 1853 during the Taiping Rebellion when dues were levied on merchandise in transit within the country. Local collectors enjoyed considerable latitude in fixing rates until a fixed rate of likin was included in the consolidated duty on foreign opium, under the additional article to the Chefoo Agreement in 1885, *NCH*, 18/12/1901, p.1170.

³² See for example, Don Sinibaldo de Maas, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of HM the Queen of Spain in China, *L'Angleterre, la Chine, et l'Inde*, (Paris, 1858), extract printed in *NCH*, 12/1/1894, pp.26-59, particularly p.58.

³³ *NCH*, 29/6/1880, p.570.

³⁴ 'It is hoped means will be found to do away with these cumbrous features...They are an eyesore, and a nuisance and an anachronism', 20/7/1906, p.129. 'Their removal would be received by the community with applause. Why should these unsightly hulks be allowed to shut out our view of Pootung?', *NCH*, 11/11/1875, p.469; 'The Opium Hulks: it is a pity to destroy relics of the past that have any charm in themselves', *NCH*, 29/5/1901, p.1025; *NCH*, 20/7/1906, p.129.

insincerity of its protest that it wanted to put an end to the trade.³⁵ It must, however, be emphasised that the Imperial Government lacked control even before the Taiping Rebellion of 1851, and its power was considerably weakened after the rebellion was curbed. The official Chinese view was that the Opium War had to be considered as China's standing protest against the legalisation of the opium revenue; the sole aim of the Chinese Government in taxing opium was to repress the traffic, not to gain revenue from this source;³⁶ and the unlawful cultivation of the poppy no more demonstrated Government approval than other crimes committed in the Empire by lawless subjects.³⁷

The Anti-Opium Movement

By the 1890s the opium trade was condemned by the anti-opium movement in Britain, led by Sir Joseph Pease M.P. for Durham. A motion was moved in the House of Commons, in April 1891, condemning the trade as 'morally indefensible'.³⁸ Increasingly, moral pressure was applied on the British Government by the international concern over opium.³⁹ Public opinion, manifested in the form of petitions, pamphlets and public meetings played a significant role in the policy adopted towards the trade by the Liberal Government.⁴⁰ A Royal Commission

³⁵ As much might be argued about the Americans and prohibition, Sir Eric Teichman, *Affairs of China: A Survey of the Recent History and Present Circumstances of the Republic of China*, (London, 1938), pp.44-59. Some believed that the Imperial Decree on Native opium implied that the Chinese Government intended to use the vast revenue which the growth of native opium offered, *TCE*, 5/7/1890, Vol. XXV, No.1; *NCH*, 1/5/1908, p.1 and 28/12/1912, pp.871-872.

³⁶ The Chinese official attitude was that the native opium had been legalised, not because China approved of it, but to compete with and drive out the foreign drug, then the Chinese would stop the habit in their own way, Sir Robert Hart, *These from the Land of Sinim*, (London, 1903), p.119.

³⁷ *NCH*, 2/9/1881, p.266, cites Li Hung-Chang letter to Turner, secretary to the Anglo Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade. For British ambiguity on the opium trade, see 'The Opium Debate', *NCH*, 3/8/1880, p.118. There was considerable opposition to the import of opium among Chinese intellectuals, higher officials and from the Central Government, A. W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912*, (2 Vols., Washington, 1943, and 1944), passim; the anti-opium crusade was part of the 'rights recovery' campaign of the Chinese, Stephen King-Hall, *Western Civilisation and the Far East*, (London, 1924), pp.48-49; 'The Chinese Response to Western Contact', in Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, Chap.9, pp.176-199 and 'Breakdown of the Treaty System: Anglo-Chinese Friction', Chap.XV, pp.267-284.

³⁸ Owen, *op. cit.*, p.310.

³⁹ Emphasis was generally placed on the deleterious effect on other branches of British commerce in China, and the feelings of hostility to British subjects and interests it engendered in the minds of the Chinese, for example, *China's Millions*, April, 1902, Vol. X-New Series (London), p.52; 'Copy of Memorial about to be presented to the Royal Commission on Opium by British Missionaries in China of 25 or more years' standing', in *NCH*, 4/5/1894, p.695, and 4/54/1894, p.672.

⁴⁰ The registers and indexes of the Revenue and Statistics [R&S] department at the India Office for 1907-1914 give some indication of the enormous number of memorials and protests concerning the opium trade that were received by the Government from anti-opiumists and missionary societies. Pressure was particularly pronounced

inquiry into the opium question, however, proved a bitter disappointment to the anti-opium lobby in 1895, as it served 'to whitewash' the opium policy of the Indian Government.⁴¹ An American initiative, the International Opium Commission, attended by thirteen countries with permanent territorial possessions in the Far East, held at Shanghai in February 1909, put the seal of world disapproval upon the opium trade.⁴² The International Anti-Opium conference held at The Hague (1911-1912) called for the termination of the trade and placed the production and distribution of raw opium under rigid control. In January 1913 the Indian Government announced the suspension of sales of certified opium from April.⁴³

The anti-opium group was opposed to the 'Ten-Years' agreement, which allowed for a gradual reduction of the trade, and lobbied the Foreign Office for an immediate end to it.⁴⁴ Throughout 1910 the Foreign Office insisted that it was Britain's moral duty to release China immediately from any treaty obligations which might impede her struggle against the drug.⁴⁵ The most vociferous opposition to revision of the opium treaties came from the Chambers of Commerce, the foreign banks, and the Sassoon firms, whose influence probably penetrated political and government circles.⁴⁶ The close friendship of Albert, Arthur and Reuben Sassoon with the Prince of Wales, even when he became King Edward VII, was public knowledge.⁴⁷ The Sassoons were clearly a force to be reckoned with. As Margaret Lim has pointed out, the influence of these commercial concerns operated in the

between 1909-1912, probably as a result of the International Opium Commission and First Hague Conference and because of the renewal of the Ten Year Agreement with China, Margaret Lim, 'Britain and the Termination of the India-China Opium Trade 1905-1913', Ph.D., Thesis London University, 1986, p.404.

⁴¹ S. E. Robson, *Joshua Rowntree*, (London, 1916), p.78.

⁴² *NCH*, 4/7/1908, pp.1-2, 9/1/1909, p.93 and 6/2/1909, p.323; Jordan to Campbell 4/3/1909, Alston Papers, PRO, FO800/244.

⁴³ Government of India to India Office, 4/1/1913, PRO, FO371/1596; tel., encl. in India Office to the Foreign Office, 8/1/1913, FO371/1596.

⁴⁴ James Maxwell, Chairman of the Board of British anti-opium societies, to Grey, 5/11/1909, PRO, FO371/616.

⁴⁵ PRO, FO371/846, FO371/847, FO371/848, FO371/850, contain appeals and protests from anti-opium bodies and from church organisations, and letters from the Bishop of Durham and the Archbishop of Canterbury during 1910; 'Annual Report, China 1910', PRO, FO405/201; see also Bassett, *op. cit.*, pp.269-270; 'Synopsis of the Arguments in the Debate in the House of Commons on the Opium Question', *NCH*, 3/8/1880, p.118.

⁴⁶ 'It is impossible to give up a business of this magnitude at a moment's notice', Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 7/7/10, No. 498-499, China Association, China Association Circular Correspondence for the General Committee [hereafter CACC] No. LXXXVII.

⁴⁷ 'King Edward has a great respect for money, therefore Sassoon came to bask in the sunshine of royal favour', 'Monarch and Jew', *IM*, 15/11/1907, 29/11/1907 and 10/1/1908, p.1; see Illustration, p.180.

הקיסר סולטאן עבדול עזיז... כבוד

ביום ה' (מחצית) על שם הוסיף אלכסנדר... הקיסר



הטסה האנגלי... "ALBERT PRINCE CONSORT. Deat to science, dear to art, dear to thy land and ours, a prince indeed." Dedicated by David Sassoon, 1864.

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The Sassoon Coat of Arms

Advertisement for David Sassoon & Co., Ltd. featuring the royal coat of arms and the text: "God Save The King Present their Loyal Greetings to THEIR MAJESTIES KING GEORGE VI and QUEEN ELIZABETH DAVID SASSOON & CO., LTD. 251 Kuang Road Telephone 10008"

Handwritten correspondence in Hebrew, including a letter from Windsor Castle and Sandringham, Norfolk, dated 1911.

Handwritten correspondence in English, including a letter from Clarence House, St James's S.W., dated May 8 1902.

Correspondence relating to the friendship between the Sassoons and British Royalty

earlier years to maintain the status quo. Later it was brought into play to slow down the abolition of the trade and to insist upon its gradual cessation.⁴⁸

The opium traders in Shanghai came in for increasingly bitter criticism from American and British Protestant missionaries who petitioned their Governments to prohibit opium traffic,⁴⁹ emphasising that the trade was:

...chiefly in the hands of people who, though nominally British merchants by the *accident* [author's emphasis] of Bombay and Calcutta being British possessions, are in reality not British merchants but Oriental under British protection. Their interests are not identified with British prosperity...⁵⁰

Accident or not, the ultimate reality was that the British Government had the power to act. This must have been clear even without the benefit of hindsight. The opium merchants accused the missionaries of exaggerating the effects of the drug, using it as a convenient excuse for their failure to convert the Chinese to Christianity,⁵¹ and of prejudicing the public to look upon the merchants as villains. Missionaries were reminded that Prince Kung, the Emperor's younger brother and Imperial Commissioner, had asked Sir Rutherford Alcock, the Consul General, to take away opium *and* missionaries.⁵² Wolfgang Franke, recalled that for most Chinese, opium and Christianity 'were two evils which had been introduced in the same way, by trickery and by force, by the foreigners'.⁵³

By December 1912, the anti-opium lobby increasingly condemned the opium traffic.⁵⁴ The attitude of the consular officials to the numerous letters of protest they received from the anti-opium lobby is noteworthy. A petition to the King imploring HMG to prohibit the import of opium from India, signed by 25,850 members of the

⁴⁸ East India, 'Statistical Abstract relating to British India from 1903-1909 to 1917-1918', *Accounts and Papers*, Vol. 49 CMD.725(1920), pp.52-53; statistics cited by Lim. *op. cit.*, p.405.

⁴⁹ 'Roman Catholic Missionaries were 'prudently silent about opium', the editor of the *NCH* expressed regret that so little sympathy appeared to exist between merchants and Protestant missionaries in China, *NCH*, 31/8/1872, p.173; Missionaries were the only foreigners permitted to reside and purchase land outside the Treaty Ports, *NCH*, 26/9/1855, p.18, and 6/5/1923, p.295.

⁵⁰ Letter to the editor, signed 'anti-opium', *NCH*, 7/9/1872, p.192, 2/9/1872, p.195, and 19/5/1877, p.489.

⁵¹ *NCH*, 10/10/1878, p.349, 20/5/1876, p.477, 24/10/1878, p.402, and 1/9/1855, p.18.

⁵² 'It is true we have forced our way into China as we have in nearly everywhere else where the English flag floats and maintained our supremacy by force. Why is it not claimed that we should withdraw altogether from China and leave them to their native barbarism, 'Missionaries and Opium', *NCH*, 20/5/1876, p.477; Chatham House, *Survey of International Affairs*, (Oxford, 1925), p.192.

⁵³ Wolfgang Franke, *China and the West*, (Oxford, 1967), p.77.

⁵⁴ *Peking Daily News*, 20/12/1912, Enclosure in Sir J. Jordan to Foreign Office, 23/2/1912, PRO, FO371/1596/500.

Chinese Volunteer Anti-opium Association, was dismissed by the consular officials at Shanghai as ‘not worth reading unless to show how lamentably ignorant some missions are of the true position of the opium question. They write as if there was no such thing as native cultivation’.⁵⁵ On the other hand consular officials regarded as ‘well meaning and sane’ a letter from Robert Thurley, ‘an old friend of China and a true Englishman’, a resident of Hastings, England. Thurley asked HMG to do its utmost to discourage the ‘speculators’, who had accumulated an enormous quantity of opium in Shanghai, hoping to use the British flag to force it into China, and to make huge profits. It is significant that most of the criticism highlights the fact that the opium dealers were ‘almost all aliens who are *merely* registered as British subjects, or are not genuine British merchants’. Again the reality was denied:

...in the name of mercy and justice England should wash her hands of the opium traders, or there will be such a howl of hatred throughout her vast millions, and such a boycott of British goods and British interest as *will cause unspeakable loss to our genuine commerce...*⁵⁶ [author’s emphasis].

Significantly, this plea suggests a pragmatic, rather than moral, platform to the anti-opium lobby.⁵⁷ Thurley denounced the leading British conservative papers which advocated the cause of the opium traders. He was informed that Sir Edward Grey shared his desire of seeing China rid herself of the opium habit, but there was ample evidence to show that the Chinese were preventing the importation of Indian opium, without doing anything to suppress native cultivation.⁵⁸ Thurley and others were very concerned about the deleterious effect the opium traffic was having on general trade with China. Mrs. Archibald Little, the wife of the eminent missionary, emphasised the crux of the matter when she suggested that ‘ordinary morality’ and common sense might have led the opium merchants to decide to make money in some

⁵⁵ Opium Trade Minutes, 1/1/1913, pp.42-44, PRO, FO371/1596/42.

⁵⁶ Robert Thurley to the Secretary of State, 26/12/1912, PRO, FO371/1596.

⁵⁷ ‘The paramount advantage to the real British, American and European trade that would result from the suppression of the opium traffic ought to make all non-opium merchants agitate to attain it’, letter to the editor signed ‘anti-opium’, *NCH*, 7/9/1872, p.195; ‘They should keep as quiet as possible about the National [British] connection with the opium traffic. It is not a dignified position for a great people to occupy, putting aside altogether all considerations of morality’, *NCH*, 20/5/1881, p.474.

⁵⁸ Foreign Office to Thurley, 2/1/1913, PRO, FO371//1596, Registry No. 325, p.28.

other trade, had it not been for their confidence in Britain's support. Britain had never officially warned them to stop trading in opium.⁵⁹

Britain's vested interests were undoubtedly the reason for the British flag safeguarding a trade that had come into disrepute. Many of the arguments put forward by the opponents of the opium trade underline their fear that Britain's general commerce with China would be at risk. Professor Ian Nish has observed that the British Government appeared unwilling to approve the trade, and were 'divided and ill at ease over the opium issue'. Though not prepared to go so far as to condemn it, they wanted to preserve the normal trade which was being prejudiced by the opium traffic.⁶⁰ Grey obviously feared the risk of a boycott by the Chinese against all British trade if Britain incited further unpopularity because of opium.⁶¹

The Demise of the Opium Trade

The Ten-Years Agreement in 1907 which stipulated that, if China reduced the cultivation of opium, the number of chests exported from India to China would be reduced annually by one-tenth, bringing the trade to an end in 1917, alarmed the opium merchants.⁶² In a Memorial [undated] to the Marquis of Crewe, Secretary of State for India, several merchants in London described how the cultivation and manufacture of Bengal opium was a strictly protected monopoly of the Government of India, managed by the Indian Opium Department, the profits forming part of the public revenues of India.⁶³ They appealed for the suspension of auction sales of certified opium in India, warning that the accumulated stocks in Shanghai, worth some £9,000,000 would create a financial crisis.⁶⁴ The continuation of these auction sales placed them in the dilemma of having either to undertake the heavy risk of

⁵⁹ Mrs. Archibald Little, 'The Tragedy of Peking - The Opium Problem', printed in *Peking Daily News*, 8/1/1913, enclosure in 31/1/1913, p.287, PRO, FO/371/4803.

⁶⁰ Ian H. Nish, 'British Mercantile Co-operation in the India-China Trade', *Journal Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (London, 1962), p.87.

⁶¹ Langley to Jordan, 28/12/1912, PRO, FO350/1.

⁶² Foreign opium merchants at Shanghai to Warren, 7/1/1907, encl., in Jordan to Grey, 21/1/1907, PRO, FO228/2415, No. 32. The letter was signed by representatives of both of the Sassoon firms, and nine other importing firms with head offices in Bombay. Their appeal was reported in the *Times*, 10/1/1907.

⁶³ Copy of Memorial, pp.1-3 in CACC, No. CXL; the Government policy was to control production in order to maintain prices. For a comprehensive description of the history and workings of the monopoly see Owen, *op. cit.*, pp.280-310

⁶⁴ Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 9/5/11, CACC, No. CX and Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 28/6/12, CACC, No. CXXXII; 'The Indian Opium Monopoly', *NCH*, 21/11/1879, p.506.

carrying congested stocks by supporting the market value with their bids, or of facing a position of complete paralysis of the trade by abstaining from bidding - thus causing values to fall still lower.⁶⁵ If the sales could not be stopped they suggested that the Government of India should take over their stock on an 'equitable basis'.⁶⁶ The Government of India, however, adamantly refused to stop the auction sales and discounted the merchants' fears of imminent bankruptcy. The failure of the larger opium firms, it argued, was inconceivable as 'financially they are very powerful' and the opium held by them 'stands at prices far exceeding those paid at sales'.⁶⁷ According to Zhang Zhongli's estimates for the years 1899 to 1907, the two Sassoon firms imported a total of some Tls 8,000,000 worth of opium annually. Opium, which cost some Tls 2,000 per chest at Calcutta in the 1911 auction sales, was sold in China at Tls 3,000. Given Jardine's estimate that the net profit was some thirty percent, the net profit of the Sassoon firms was over Tls 20,000,000 annually.⁶⁸

It seemed clear to Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, that the high prices they accused the Indian Government of charging were determined by the merchants themselves 'on what must be speculative grounds'.⁶⁹ Stung by this attack, the Sassoons protested that it was unfair to blame the British merchant with carrying on a speculative business, if, in his attempt to continue his regular trade, he was forced by competition to pay the Indian Government high prices.⁷⁰ Opium merchants felt slighted when, in a speech in the House of Commons on 14 February 1913 Francis Acland, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, declared that they were engaged in a highly speculative business and could not expect that 'this or any other Government should secure for them good and comfortable bargains for their goods'.⁷¹ The merchants pointed out that no reference had been made to the

⁶⁵ They complained that it was a 'gross injustice' to permit the Indian Government to continue selling without regard to the obstacles preventing buyers disposing of their purchases, Messrs. E. D. Sassoon to the Foreign Office, No.500, 26/7/1910, CACC, No. XC; J.G. Alexander, *India's Opium Revenue: What it is and how it should be dealt with*, (London, 1890).

⁶⁶ The merchants estimated that the depreciation in their stocks was £2,000,000 and commitments of the banks £6,000,000, Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 30/5/1912, PRO, FO371/1331/220.

⁶⁷ Jordan to Gray, 9/5/1912, PRO, FO371/1331/220.

⁶⁸ Tls 20,000,000 were equivalent to about 2,500,000 Chinese silver dollars, Zhang Zhongli and Chen Zengnian, *op. cit.*, pp.24-25,28.

⁶⁹ Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 19/7/12, p.2, CACC, No. CXXXIV.

⁷⁰ The Sassoon firms had continually complained that the Indian Government, by continuing to sell large quantities of 'uncertificated' opium encouraged it to be smuggled into China, E. D. Sassoon & Co. to the Foreign Office, 3/10/12, and Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 17/7/12, and 6/11/12, CACC, No. CXXXVIII.

⁷¹ Acland to Messrs. Sassoons, 20/2/13, pp.4-5, CACC, CXLV.

Secretary of State for India, acting through the Government of India, which, as the monopolist producer and vendor of opium, had increased its own revenue by between 100 percent to 200 over recent years.⁷² It would appear plausible that the most compelling reason for not halting the opium auctions was the heavy loss of revenue that the British and the Indian Governments would thus incur, and the prospect of the Sassoon firms gaining practically a monopoly of the whole opium trade in the East.⁷³

The Liberal Government's Attitude to the Sephardi Merchants

Far from keeping a low profile, the British opium merchants made strident protests when their trade in certified opium faced restrictions.⁷⁴ They held the British Government 'doubly responsible both morally and legally to see justice done'.⁷⁵ As British merchants they proclaimed that they were entitled to have its support in the 'legitimate pursuit of our trade', particularly since the opium was bought from the Government of India on the clear understanding that no interference with the freedom of its sale in China would be allowed.⁷⁶ The China Association Circular Correspondence for the General Committee, leaves no doubt that the Sephardi opium merchants considered opium a legitimate article of trade. With the increasing loss of control by Central Government, and the arbitrary imposition of taxes and restrictions on foreign opium by the authorities, notably of Shandong, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Guangzhou and Soochow, early grumbling expressed in letters to the British Government grew into a crescendo of protest with the Sassoon firms at the forefront of the complaints.⁷⁷ Whitehall was constantly importuned to take strong measures against the violation of treaties governing the trade.⁷⁸ A memorandum in 1868 by Gubbay of Sassoon's firm decried the 'sad effect' the increase of the native

⁷² Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 4/9/1913, No. 155, CACC, CO CXXXVIII; E. D. Sassoon to the Foreign Office, 2/10/12, and W. Langley of the Foreign Office, to Messrs Sassoon, London, 11/3/1913, CACC, CO CXXXIII.

⁷³ Lim, *op. cit.*, pp.347-348.

⁷⁴ Messrs. Sassoon to the Foreign Office, 28/6/12 CACC, No. CXXXII, London; China Association, Shanghai to China Association, London, 6/12/12, No. CXXXIX.

⁷⁵ Messrs. Sassoons to HM Under Secretary of State, 6/7/10, pp.2-4, CACC, No. LXXXIV.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp.2-4.

⁷⁷ Foreign opium merchants, Shanghai, to Sir P. Warren, Consul-General Shanghai, 3/2/1909 enclosed in Warren to Jordan, 23/3/1909, Shanghai, PRO, FO228/2425.

⁷⁸ Messrs. Sassoons to Sir F. H. May, KCMG, Colonial Secretary, No. 626, Hong Kong, 8/11/10, CACC, No. CXXXIII; David Sassoon & Co. to A. Thomson, Colonial Secretary, Hong Kong, 29/9/10, CACC, No. CXXXIII; E. D. Sassoon & Co. to the Under Secretary Foreign Office, 9/7/12, pp.5-6, CACC, No. CXXXIII; NCH, 28/12/12, pp.871-872.

opium had on the imported drug market.⁷⁹ 'If the whole supply from British India were cut off,' he protested, 'there would not be one smoker the less in China'.⁸⁰ As S. Couling was to observe half a century later, 'any sad effect on morals or economics or politics was of course not under consideration'.⁸¹

The Foreign Office informed the Shanghai opium merchants that Britain's only weapon in dealing with illegal provincial actions was diplomatic pressure.⁸² Yet the merchants appeared reluctant to comprehend that Britain was virtually powerless to coerce the Chinese Government into upholding the treaties.⁸³ Max Muller, counsellor at the Beijing legation in 1912, complained that 'the Sassoons were bothering us about the new licensing regulations in various provinces' and it was 'very hard to answer them' without committing the legation to an attitude of more active opposition to the opium suppression movement than the British Government was likely to approve'.⁸⁴ Clearly the British Government's obligation to uphold the treaty rights of its nationals against Chinese discrimination towards foreign opium conflicted with its desire to help China's anti-opium crusade. Correspondence in the British legation files suggest that Grey, Morley and Jordan were sensitive to the stigma attached to the opium trade and were supportive of what they considered the Chinese Government's sincere crusade for reform. They were prepared to turn a blind eye to minor violations of Britain's treaty rights.⁸⁵ Notwithstanding this, Grey was as determined that the Chinese should not exploit British leniency to penalise the foreign opium trade.⁸⁶

In order to keep on good terms with international and domestic opinion and the Chinese Government, Sir John Jordan, Minister to China, decided that it was best not to 'show our hand too clearly' to the foreign merchants and instructed his consul

⁷⁹ From 1905 to 1907 Sichuan province produced some 4-5 times more opium than the Indian import, Zhang Zhongli, *op. cit.*, p.21; John Newell Jordan noted in 1906 that China produced six times more than opium imported from India, *NCH*, 18/7/08, p.21.

⁸⁰ *NCH*, 25/4/1874, p.356.

⁸¹ G. Lanning and S. Couling, *The History of Shanghai Part I*, Shanghai, 1921, pp.181-182.

⁸² Max Muller, minute on an interview with a Shanghai opium merchant at the Foreign Office, 11/7/12, PRO, FO371/1332.

⁸³ E. D. Sassoon to H.C. Wilcox, Secretary of the China Association London, 18/8/10, CACC, No. XC.

⁸⁴ Max Muller to Alston, 19/10/1909, No.382a, PRO, FO228/2427.

⁸⁵ India Office to the Foreign Office, 3/3/1909, and Foreign Office to Jordan, 10/3/1909, PRO, FO 228/2425/70. The Colonial office also held this view.

⁸⁶ The British Government made repeated representation to the Chinese Government, Sir John Jordan, to Messrs. E. D. Sassoon & Co., Beijing, October, [undated] 1909, pp.6-7, CACC, No. LXXV.

at Nanjing to be 'very careful as to how you commit yourself to the representatives of Messrs. Sassoon and Company, in regard to our general line of policy...only telling them generally that you have received instructions to protest against interference with the wholesale trade in foreign opium'.⁸⁷ The authorities suspected that the foreign opium merchants and their native Chinese agents were attempting to use the support of the British officials to evade legitimate anti-opium measures.⁸⁸ Their suspicions were confirmed when an opium shop opened by the Sassoons in Nanjing had been closed by the provincial authorities for operating without a licence. Max Muller saw it as 'a mere try on' to test the relative powers of the provincial authorities and the British officials.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of evidence to show that when it served the interests of the British Government, it did not turn a deaf ear to the merchants' grievances.⁹⁰ The Sassoons were assured that HMG would continue to 'shield them from undue and improper interference and to ensure that no unjust discrimination was exercised in favour of native opium *vis-a-vis* foreign'.⁹¹ 'You may rest assured', wrote W. Langley, a senior clerk in the Far Eastern Department, 'that the whole question of the opium trade with China is receiving the unremitting and instant attention of His Majesty's Government'.⁹² Although the correspondence of British Government officials was couched in language broadly supportive, no specific assistance was offered to the merchants. The letters, devoid of substance, clearly indicate that the British Government was not prepared to commit itself. The opium merchants emphasised that by taking strong measures HM Government would maintain British prestige. Perhaps the most convincing demonstration of their absolute confidence in the legitimacy of their trade is the suggestion of the two Sassoon firms to the Foreign Office that a 'show of force by Britain', a naval

⁸⁷ Goffe to Jordan, 2/8/1909, Nanjing, No.45 and Jordan to Goffe, 13/8/1909, No.28, in PRO, FO228/24267.

⁸⁸ James Jamieson to Jordan, 29/12/1909, Guangzhou, No. 119, encl., in Jordan to the Foreign Office, 19/1/1910, No.14, PRO, FO228/2429.

⁸⁹ Description of the case at Guangzhou in Jordan to the Foreign Office, 2/12/1909, PRO, FO228/2428/448.

⁹⁰ Messrs. Sassoons emphasised that the British shareholders of the Exchange Banks would 'suffer heavily' if the trade in opium was halted, Messrs. Sassoon to the Foreign Office, 19/7/12, CACC, No. CXXXIV.

⁹¹ Max Muller to Jordan, 25/11/1909, telegram No. 64, PRO F0228/2428.

⁹² Langley, later Assistant Under Secretary of State, Superintending Under Secretary Far Eastern Department, to Messrs. Sassoons, 8/6/1912, tel., No.128, PRO, FO371/1331; see also Jordan to the Wajjiao-Bu, 4/3/12, encl., in Jordan to Grey, 5/3/1912, F0371/1331/109.

demonstration or a landing of troops, would obtain China's adherence to the treaties.⁹³ No doubts about the morality of their trade were expressed, on the contrary, they maintained that:

...The British public, as a whole, is too generous and fair-minded to wish fellow subjects to be ruthlessly crushed out of existence through no fault of their own, but through placing too much reliance upon the willingness and power of their own Government to see that treaties are observed.⁹⁴

The Opium Combine

A memorandum handed to the chairman of the China Association by E. D. Sassoon and Co. in January 1913 depicts the demise of the opium trade in Shanghai: 'The prohibition is now an accomplished fact in all the provinces, and smoking of opium has been made a criminal offence'.⁹⁵ Sassoon's customers, wholesale dealers, were warned that any sales would result in severe punishment.⁹⁶ The merchants were unable to carry on their trade without Government backing. In the case of the Opium Combine, this backing came from the Chinese Government. The price of opium rose rapidly and the Chinese Government netted some Tls 21,000,000 out of the Shanghai opium stocks. The powerful Shanghai Merchants' Opium Combine was formed on 1 May 1913 by a group of foreign firms dealing in imported Indian and Persian opium in order to protect their interests.⁹⁷ The management committee comprised five Sephardi Jews, D. E. J. Abraham, Simon A. Levy,

⁹³ 'They must know that short of coercion we had done, and were doing, everything in our power to bring the Chinese to a sense of their duty in the matter', Gregory, Minute, 4/12/12 regarding a visit by the representative of the Sassoons, 3/12/12, PRO, FO371/1333.

⁹⁴ From Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 4/12/12, CACC, No. CXXXIX; 'the Chinese Government has no business integrity, S. J. David to E. D. Fraser, Consul General, 11/6/21, PRO, FO 671/451/3131; Messrs. Sassoons suggested that the Chinese government should compensate the merchants for their losses caused by 'illegal restrictions' on the trade, Messrs. Sassoons to the Foreign Office, 7/7/10, CACC, No. LXXXVII and 11/6/12, No. CXXXI; several articles in the press condemned China for violating the treaties, for example *NCH*, 19/12/14, pp.859-860; 'The Case Against Sudden Suppression', 29/12/14, pp.929-930.

⁹⁵ Chamber of Commerce, London, to the Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Grey, Bart., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, Downing Street *Far Eastern Section*, 13/1/13, CACC, No. CXIII; 'The Opium Question', China Association, Shanghai to General Committee Memorandum, No. CXLIV.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 13/1/13.

⁹⁷ China Association, Shanghai to General Committee 15/3/13, signed L. Canning, CACC, No. CXLVI; 'practically all' the members of the Combine were British subjects', Pratt Macleod Greysin & Ward [solicitors for the Combine], 4/11/21, PRO, 671/451/6231/680; Details of the Opium Combine in Reports [unsigned] 12/6/18 FO 671/452/18164/18/194 and 28/9/18, FO671/452/21194/18/218.

Edward Ezra, Edward Nissim, Evelyn David, and eight Parsees.⁹⁸ The Chinese Opium Guild contracted to purchase opium exclusively from the Combine.⁹⁹ Foreign Office records show that in April 1914 Jordan reported the opium Combine was maintaining high prices and slowing down the disposal of the stocks, and that Britain was being condemned in the Chinese press for ‘lending her flag to uphold ... a trade conducted by a coterie of eleven merchants’.¹⁰⁰ In an agreement between Feng Guozhang, the Chinese President, and the Shanghai Combine ‘behind the back’ of the legation,¹⁰¹ the Chinese Government agreed in January 1917 to purchase overtly for ‘medicinal purposes and not otherwise for gain’, its remaining stock of some 2,100 chests of Indian opium at an outrageously high price of Tls 8,200 per chest, and in June 1,576 chests at Tls 6,200 taels.¹⁰²

The Legation reported that the purchasers hoped ‘to enrich themselves by their ultimate disposal’.¹⁰³ Their intention was to resell the whole stock to a syndicate based at Shanghai at Tls 8,000 a chest, and give it the monopoly of disposing of the drug.¹⁰⁴ HMG highly disapproved of the transaction and hoped that the Chinese Government would be persuaded to abandon it.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, an editorial in *The Shanghai Times*, a British owned and controlled paper, welcomed the scheme as the only satisfactory and fair solution. It congratulated China for recognising a ‘*moral obligation* to the foreign merchants who were justified in looking for *justice* from the Chinese Government’ [author’s emphasis].¹⁰⁶ Clearly, British opinion was divided at home and abroad between greed and pragmatism.

The editor of the *North China Herald* warned that it would be unfair to Edward Ezra, ‘and a loss to the community’, if his connection with the Combine were

⁹⁸ ‘The Shanghai Opium Combine Agreements’, *TFER*, July 1918, pp.267-271.

⁹⁹ *NCH*, 10/3/17, p.501; Phillips to the Beijing Consulate, 28/9/18, PRO, FO671/452/184677/21194/18/218.

¹⁰⁰ Jordan to Grey, 27/4/14, PRO, FO371/1926/167; Grey to Jordan, 25/5/14, *Confidential*, PRO, FO371/1926/142.

¹⁰¹ Jordan to Lord Curzon, (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), 29/1/19, PRO, FO371/3686/45.

¹⁰² Shanghai to Beijing Consulate, tel., No. 184, 8/8/18, PRO, FO671/452/19676/18, *NCH*, 15/6/18, pp.647-648. See Illustration, p.190.

¹⁰³ Annual Report, China 1919, PRO, FO405/229; Lim, *op. cit.*, p.399.

¹⁰⁴ T. Montagu Bell and H.G.W. Woodhead (eds.), *China Year Book, 1919-20*, (London, 1920), pp.677-678; Government of India to the India Office, 17/9/18, tel. No.18, encl., in India Office to the Foreign Office, 23/9/18, PRO, FO415/12/18.

¹⁰⁵ Macleay to Cloughlin, 3/9/13, PRO, FO415/12/16; Jordan to Lord Curzon, 29/1/19, PRO, FO371/3686/45.

¹⁰⁶ *The Shanghai Times*, 9/2/17.

Shanghai, 25th June 1918.

H P

BRISTOL, No. 297, and three copies.

I have the honour to forward herewith copy of a letter addressed to me by Mr. Edward Ezra with reference to Japanese proposals to purchase Indian opium from India.

16/9/18 6.25

I have etc.

C.C.

25 Thorburn Road Shanghai, 12th July 1918

Messrs. S.A. Hardeon, 56 Rankin Road, Present.

Gentlemen.

I am in the market for pure opium (Indian), and wish to purchase 100 cases, or nearest quantity, if price is satisfactory. Each case to contain 160 pounds net.

I should like to quote as your price "Cost, Freight, Insurance," and I have already obtained licenses from both the Japanese, and Chinese Governments.

In the event that business transpires between us I shall immediately open a Credit in favor of your good offices, for the full invoice cost.

Anticipating your early reply,

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Good on the Indian Opium

Dear Mr. Hardeon,

It might interest you to know that during the last few weeks I have been talking to Calcutta regarding the purchase of Indian opium, and I have been able to obtain from the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

MEMO. EDWARD EZRA & Co.

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It seems to be decided to the part of the Government, I understand, from the fact that the opium will be forwarded through Singapore, probably to purchasers in China. It appears that probably the business in opium hands will

MEMO. EDWARD EZRA & Co.

Shanghai.

Yours sincerely Edward Ezra

MEMO. EDWARD EZRA & Co.

18/7/18 212

Dear Mr. Hardeon,

My forwarded is another shipment to you in the amount of 100 cases. In this case the buyer states the permission of both Chinese & Japanese governments have been obtained.

Yours sincerely Edward Ezra

Dear Mr. Hardeon, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th inst. regarding the purchase of Indian opium.

It is in my opinion to release you of such quantity as to the purchase of Indian opium. The purchase of Indian opium is a matter of great importance, and I have been able to obtain from the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

Mrs. David S. Jones & Co. and Mrs. E. P. S. Jones & Co.

25/1/452 184671

Shanghai

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21 September 1918

Sb1

The Chinese law allows 100 cases to be taken out of the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

I have been able to obtain from the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

I have been able to obtain from the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

I have been able to obtain from the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

I have been able to obtain from the main stock of India, through Calcutta, some 204 cases.

Correspondence pertaining to the Opium trade

allowed to influence the votes for his re-election as a Municipal Councillor.¹⁰⁷ He emphasised that Ezra had never attempted to use his position in order to modify the council's policy towards opium, which had been decided long before he became a councillor. Likewise, an article entitled 'Justice' in *The Shanghai Times*, maintained that the opium merchants included 'some of the most prominent business men of Shanghai; men of clean and clear character, men who have shown business acumen of no mean order'.¹⁰⁸

Probably because of public pressure, the Beijing Parliament, on 30 March 1917 notified the Government to cancel the agreement. The new president Xu Shichang decided to 'make the full sacrifice of public destruction' of the purchased opium, an action that was not to go unnoticed by the powers assembled at the Peace Conference.¹⁰⁹ Some saw this as a historic moment, the first and most important step in a modern reformation. Others argued that the opium was useless to China because it was being undersold every day by the Japanese and was a mere trifle compared with what was being cultivated in the interior of China.¹¹⁰

Opium had been sold and smoked in opium houses in the foreign concessions since 1870, the licences augmenting the Shanghai Municipal financial returns by Tls 61,000 in 1907. Given that the revenue from licences for dens in Shanghai provided one-third of the municipality's income, and that practically every foreign bank was involved with the trade, the SMC, as representatives of a business community, were at pains to ensure that its stoppage would not be attended with serious dislocation.¹¹¹ Whitehall considered Shanghai 'the stumbling block' to the ending of the opium trade and the attitude of the municipal councillors, 'very reprehensible'.¹¹² Eventually strong Foreign Office pressure induced the SMC in 1915 to withdraw one quarter of the opium licences half yearly, until March 1917.¹¹³ A 'dramatic end' to the

¹⁰⁷ It is notable that this article was given prominence on Page one, *NCH*, 3/2/17, p.1.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.1.

¹⁰⁹ Jordan to Curzon, 29/1/19, PRO, FO371/3686/45.

¹¹⁰ *NCH*, 21/12/18, p.713.

¹¹¹ Private note Warren to Jordan, 12/2/1908, PRO, FO228/2421/18 and FO371/216; Lim, *op. cit.*, pp.147-149; If all the licences were revoked it would have a disastrous effect on Chinese trade, S. Couling, *The History of Shanghai*, Volume II, (Shanghai, 1923) p.177 and Chap. XIV.

¹¹² Private note, Holdness to Campbell, 21/1/1908, PRO, FO228/2421.

¹¹³ See correspondence on this subject in 'Opium and Drugs 1917', PRO, FO671/452. The SMC was impervious to the criticism of some of its ratepayers, notably Edward Little, *NCH* 16/1/15, p.181; 2/1/15, pp.94-95. Rosa Pendleton Chiles, 'The Passing of the Opium Trade', *The Forum*, xivi (July 1911), 22 - 39, and Wright, Hamilton, 'The End of the Opium Question', *The American Review of Reviews*, 51 (April, 1915), pp.464-466.

foreign trade in opium was intended when, in January 1919, the remaining opium stocks were publicly burnt and the ashes dissolved in the Yangtze river.¹¹⁴

The test of the strength or weakness of identity is never clearer than at a time of crisis. For the Sephardim this came when the opium trade fell into disrepute and stigma was attached to the whole community. The close connection between British royalty and the Sassoons led to accusations by the anti-opium lobby that Baghdadi Jews were using royal protection for a dishonourable trade.¹¹⁵ There is no evidence of any cleavage or dispute within the Shanghai Sephardi community on the opium issue. The crisis served only to unify their defensive stand against consequent anti-Semitism. When the trade became illegal in 1917 there was strong general condemnation of those Jews and non-Jews who continued to pursue it. A number of lawsuits show that there were some Sephardi traders who were implicated, and wide adverse publicity would have made an impact on the identity of Shanghai Sephardim, probably by making them defensive.

The silence of *Israel's Messenger*, in refraining from reporting events concerning the opium trade, or in commenting in editorials, is significant. This was clearly not the policy of other local newspapers. The absence of letters to the editor, Ezra, from the community on this issue, but publication of their defence and justification in the non-Jewish local press, suggests that they saw no point in preaching to the converted. The exceptions to mention, among references to the opium trade in the *Israel's Messenger*, are: acknowledgements in 1909 of the philanthropy of the Opium Guild to the SJS,¹¹⁶ Salem David's integrity in his opium dealings as manager of Messrs. E. D. Sassoon,¹¹⁷ and extensive coverage in 1925-1926 of the Canton Opium Case, when N. E. B. Ezra used the paper as a platform to defend his own involvement. Arguably, opium had become a political issue in

¹¹⁴ Owen, *op. cit.*, 'The Ending of the Trade', Chap. XII, pp.329-354; 'The Last of the Opium Shops', *NCH*, 7/4/17, p.24. For details regarding the destruction of opium stocks see 21/12/18, No. 417 [5270/18] PRO, FO671/452/23437/18/232; Jordan to Curzon, 29/1/19, PRO, FO371/3686, and *Annual Report, China*, 1919, PRO, FO405/229. Yet opium smuggling into the Settlement continued and in 1925-1926 assumed enormous proportions because of the unchecked cultivation of poppy in the interior, SMC Report 1921; Confidential Memo for Commissioners on Opium Smuggling by Gordon Londir, 4/7/21, No.440, PRO, FO671/452/3641/21/433; Kotenev, *op. cit.*, pp.262-264.

¹¹⁵ 'King Edward and His Jewish Friends', *JC*, 13/5/1910, p.28.

¹¹⁶ A donation of Tls 2,000 by the Opium Guild, *IM*, 10/12/1909, p.16 and Tls 2,000,000 by the Chinese Opium Guild, 29/9/1909.

¹¹⁷ *IM*, 8/7/27, p.16.

Britain and in China, and the policy of the *Israel's Messenger* was to 'shun politics'.¹¹⁸ Ezra could have used this as an excuse to avoid the opium issue, but it did not prevent him from reversing 'policy', either when it suited his private interests in opium trading, or his personal passion for Zionism which was the subject of repeated discussion.

Buildings: Worthy Monuments to Sephardi Jewish Enterprise

Much of the wealth generated by opium was invested in real estate in the Foreign Concessions.¹¹⁹ By the turn of the century many Sephardim believed they were making a vast contribution to the development of Shanghai and regarded China as their permanent home. Men like Elias Sassoon, Benjamin David Benjamin, Silas Hardoon and Sir Victor Sassoon showed their confidence in the future of Shanghai by investing money in the port, fostering local trade and industry.¹²⁰ The splendid buildings they erected reflected their business acumen. It also provided tangible proof of wealth and power to themselves and to those around them. The *Israel's Messenger* in a series of articles, 'Modern Shanghai-Jewish Contributions', emphasised that Sephardi entrepreneurs were proud to be identified with the development of the British Empire and acknowledged that it was largely under the British flag that they had progressed.¹²¹ Given the jostling for economic and political domination in China among the foreign powers, notably Britain, America, France, Russia, Germany, Holland and Japan, it was advantageous for Britain to be associated with wealthy Sephardi entrepreneurs. It gave them prestige. 'Face', after all was felt to be all important to the Chinese.¹²² By 1920 Jewish capital to the extent of at least \$4,100,000 had been invested in Shanghai in registered land and property.¹²³ In April of that year, A. G. Stephen, General Manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation emphasised that the buildings represented the financial power

¹¹⁸ *IM*, 4/10/25, p.6.

¹¹⁹ *IM*, 4/1/35; Jacob Alkow emphasises that much of the money earned by Sephardim from the opium trade was invested in Shanghai in industry, utilities, transport and electrics, Alkow, interview by author, Herzlia, 10/6/93.

¹²⁰ *IM*, 1/6/28, p.9.

¹²¹ *IM*, 1/6/28, p.5.

¹²² 'Code of face', to lose face was to sacrifice dignity which was equivalent to spiritual death, Rodney Gilbert, *What's Wrong With China*, (London, 1926), p.34.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p.5; *TCE*, 7/2/1890, p.48.

of the firms and by extension the pre-eminence of British economic interests in the International Settlement.¹²⁴

As early as 1873 David Sassoon and Sons realised the potential of the Bund [embankment of a muddy water front] as a location for their Honggs.¹²⁵ On record is the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for its new building which replaced the old one on the same site on the Bund. A brass plate was laid bearing the inscription:

Foundation Stone Laid 11th Ab 5633 Jewish Era 4 August 1873
Christian Era By Miss Flora Gubbay, XXXVIIth year of Queen
Victoria XIIth year of Tung Che...¹²⁶

It is significant that the Jewish calendar date is given precedence, suggesting that at this time they considered themselves Jews first and then members of the wider society.

The International Settlement and French Concession remained privileged havens for economic enterprise.¹²⁷ Like his father Benjamin David Benjamin, Maurice Benjamin was considered an expert on real estate.¹²⁸ Elected to the SMC Board of Councillors in 1919, he served as Acting Chairman of the Public Works Committee. As director of the large Shanghai Land Investment Co. he saw its net profits rise 145 percent between 1924-1928.¹²⁹ Old Chinese houses were demolished and replaced with modern structures like Pearce Apartments, which comprised seventy apartments with shops on the ground floor.¹³⁰ Broadway Mansions was hailed as Maurice Benjamin's masterpiece. It boasted sun rooms and

¹²⁴ Speech made at a lunch given by Edward Ezra, Managing Director of the Shanghai Hotels Ltd., *IM*, 1/6/20, p.5; similar sentiments were expressed by E. Pearce at the opening of the Edward Ezra Building, *NCH*, 8/2/19, p.348; see also Frank King, (ed.), *Eastern Banking: Essays in the History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, (London, 1983, passim.

¹²⁵ Jon Huebner, 'Architecture on the Shanghai Bund', *Papers on Far Eastern History*, March, 1989, pp.127-165; William F. Mayers, N. B. Dennys and Charles King, *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan, A complete Guide to the Open Ports of Those Countries*, (London and Hong Kong, 1867), p.376.

¹²⁶ The names of the firm's directors were also inscribed. As customary, a hollow had been cut in the bottom of the stone in which were deposited coins and local papers, *NCH*, 9/8/1873, p.115. Compare the pomp and ceremony which accompanied the laying of the foundation stone of the Sassoon Hospital at Poona in 1863, *IM*, 24/8/1906 and *NCH*, 4/7/1863 p.109.

¹²⁷ Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.272.

¹²⁸ *IM*, 5/10/28, p.4, 4/1/29, p.4, 3/7/31, p.8; see Chapter One.

¹²⁹ *IM*, 1/1/32, p.6; *Shanghai Stock and Share Handbook, 1929*, cited in Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.61; see also Review of the Shanghai Realty Market by the Asia Realty Co. Inc. November Report, 1/12/28.

¹³⁰ *IM*, 7/2/30, p.6, 4/10/29, p.10.

roof gardens and a squash racquet court.¹³¹ Several disastrous fires in godowns emphasised the need for the modern ones to be well constructed. His seven storeyed Lyceum godown and office building was strategically situated near the Chapoo Road Bridge with access to the Hongku Creek, where much cargo was handled. As tea tasting was best done in the godown where large numbers of samples were available, the advantages of offices in close proximity to the godown were obvious.¹³² Perhaps the most befitting monument to Maurice Benjamin was the Ben Building, an imposing structure, completed in 1929, on the Avenue Edward VII and Route Montauban.¹³³ He retired early from business, disposing of all his property to the Shanghai Land Investment Company of which he remained a director.¹³⁴

Sir Victor Sassoon transferred millions of dollars from Bombay to Shanghai in the late 1920s and invested in real estate.¹³⁵ The Feetham Report in July 1931 which suggested that Chinese control of Shanghai should be postponed as long as possible, encouraged heavy investment in real estate.¹³⁶ By the 1930s the Bund was transformed by the construction of monumental buildings into what Huebner calls the 'architectural showcase' of Shanghai 'the New York of the Far East'.¹³⁷ At this time three of the tallest buildings were owned by Sephardi Jews, the Palace Hotel, Sassoon House and Broadway Mansions; a lasting tribute to the energy and business capacity of its founders.¹³⁸

It is indeed remarkable that this heritage has survived to this day.¹³⁹ Cathay Mansions, Metropole Hotel, Embankment House¹⁴⁰ and Hamilton House suggest

¹³¹ *IM*, 3/7/31, p.5, and 1/1/32, pp.5-6.

¹³² *IM*, 5/10/28, p.4.

¹³³ *IM*, 4/1/29, p.4.

¹³⁴ *IM*, 5/10/28, p.4, and 4/1/29, pp.4, 6.

¹³⁵ The Jewish Advocate, July, 1931, p.195-196, and October, 1931, p.243; *NCH*, 21/7/31, p.86, 26/8/31, p.1, 1/9/31, p.1; Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.210-218. Sassoon bought a factory in Budapest and transported it to China, *IM*, 4/1/35, p.6. A special feature of Sassoon's investments in Shanghai was his employment of prominent Chinese in his firms, also as directors, positions previously restricted to European members. The International Investment Trust set up in 1930, and Shanghai Land Investment Company included many Chinese, King, History, Vol. 3. p.362; Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.191.

¹³⁶ Thorne, *op. cit.*, p.46; The Feetham Report is summarised in the *China Year Book 1931-32*, pp.45-86.

¹³⁷ 'Shanghai's New Billion-Dollar Skyline', *The Far Eastern Review*, *FER*, Vol.23, No.6, (June 1927): p.254. This Shanghai-based monthly covered construction developments in East and South Asia, *IM*, 2/7/31, p.9.

¹³⁸ *IM*, 4/7/30, p.8.

¹³⁹ Lucian Pye, 'Foreword' in Howe, *op. cit.*, p.xv; Huebner, *op. cit.*, p.128.

¹⁴⁰ *IM*, 3/7/31, p.9; The title of the Embankment Building owned by Hsu Run, a taipan of Dent & Co, was sold to E.D.Sassoon in October 1883, for Tls 95,000. In 1941 the site alone cost 1,630,000 yuan, Zhang Zhongli and Chen Zengnian, *op. cit.*, pp.37, 52.

that the Cathay Land Company, launched by Messrs. E. D. Sassoon and Co. made the largest single contribution to the transformation of the International Settlement and to accelerating its growth and development between 1910 and 1940.¹⁴¹ Its directors H. and C. Anhold, F. Davy, Charles Gubbay, B. Webb and Captain R. Sassoon dominated the local real estate market.¹⁴² They were responsible for Sassoon House, the 'Claridges of the East', which contained the renowned Cathay Hotel.¹⁴³ It ranked with the most celebrated hotels in the East, the Taj Mahal in Delhi, Raffles in Singapore, and the Great Eastern in Calcutta.¹⁴⁴ The bathrooms of the Cathay hotels retain in the 1990s the bulky British fixtures of an old London hotel: 'washbasins and toilets built to last as long as the Empire itself, but which have outlived the Empire, a triumph of plumbing over politics'.¹⁴⁵ The labels on two doors on the first floor of the Sassoon Building - one 'Gentlemen', the other quite as conspicuously 'Chinese' - had to be changed because of the uproar it provoked from educated Chinese.¹⁴⁶ Cathay Mansions, built in 1931, the largest construction attempted in Shanghai at the time, was an imposing twenty-one storeyed structure in Route Cardinal Mercier.¹⁴⁷ By their investment of five million dollars in one construction the Sassoons pronounced their faith in the future prosperity and expansion of Shanghai, despite the civil war raging in China and the dislocation of trade between 1928-1932.¹⁴⁸ The *Israel's Messenger* boasted that Jewish financiers

¹⁴¹ *IM*, 1/6/28, p.9, 5/4/29, p.7, 4/10/29, p.8, 4/7/30, p.10, 3/7/31, p.9, 1/1/32, p.5, 1/1/33, p.22, 18/10/38, p.3; The firm's real estate investments soared from Tls 2,375,753 in 1916 to some Tls 13,299,348 in 1921, Zhang Zhongli, *op. cit.*, pp.41-42; Sassoon Archive Shanghai, A 428.

¹⁴² *IM*, 5/4/29, p.7, and Zhang Zhongli, *op. cit.*, pp.67-76.

¹⁴³ NCDN, 3/5/28, p.1; 'Many believed that it would be a white elephant,' *IM*, 1/6/28, p.10, 5/4/29, p.13, 5/7/29, pp.7-8, and 2/8/29, p.3; its tower served as a lookout post for the SMC Fire Brigade watchman,' *NCH*, 3/8/32, p.178; the site was sold by Augustine Heard & Co. in November 1844 at Tls 42 per acre for the 15,292 acres. On 13/10/1877, E.D. Sassoon paid Tls 80,000 for it, and by 1941 the site alone was worth 4,170,000 yuan, Zhang Zhongli and Chen Zengnian, *op. cit.*, pp.37,52. See Illustration, p.197.

¹⁴⁴ *NCH*, 3/8/32, p.161; construction of Sassoon House began in 1926 and was completed in 1929. The Cathay was renamed the Peace Hotel in 1949. Sassoon House is now the North building, *TFER*, April 1928 and May 1929, pp.213-214.

¹⁴⁵ Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.39.

¹⁴⁶ One irate Chinese wondered whether an audience should be addressed as 'Jews, Gentlemen and Chinese', *The People's Tribune*, August, 1939, pp.68-69.

¹⁴⁷ *IM*, 5/4/29, p.7; *TFER*, November, 1932, p.514-517. In fact it was the biggest engineering fiasco in the Orient. The building not only subsided some 20 feet but actually re-orientated in another direction, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/93.

¹⁴⁸ *IM*, 1/6/28, p.9. The value of the Sassoon Group's real estate rose from Tls 13,000,000 in 1921 to Tls 86,893,000 in 1941, an increase of Tls 73,590,000. From 1921-1941 the income from rent was Tls 55,820,000, its net profits were Tls 47,450,000, allowing for 15% taxation and management fees, Zhang Zhongli, *op. cit.*, pp.42, 50, 53.

"Cathay Hotel"

The Hotel will be opened for the Reception of Guests on Thursday evening, 1st August, 1929. Applications for tables for dinner on that night should be addressed by letter to the Manager.

Thursday, August 1st, Diner-Dansant \$10. (Diners only).

Friday, August 2nd, Diner-Dansant \$5.

Entrance to Ballroom after dinner \$2.

Saturday August 3rd, Diner-Dansant \$5. (Diners only).

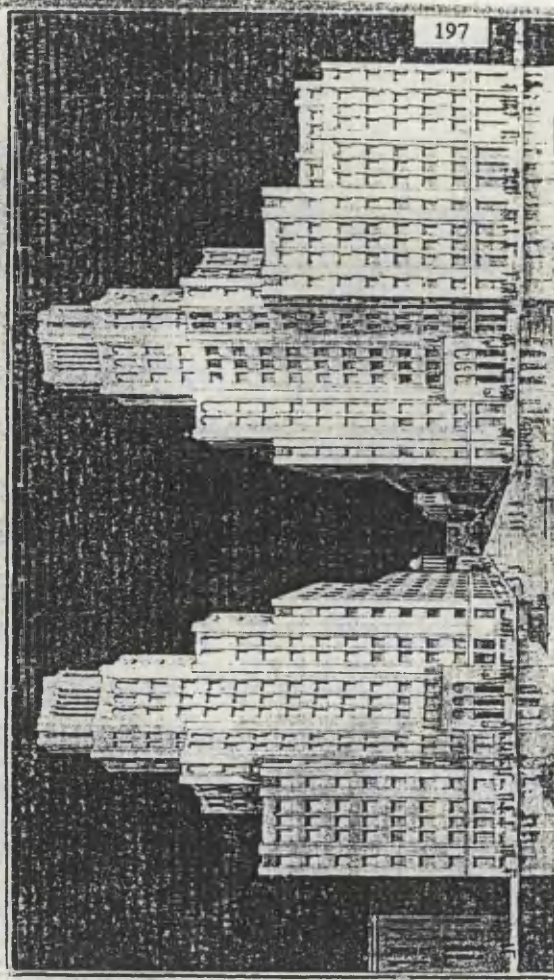
Sunday August 4th, Diner-Dansant \$5.

Entrance to Ballroom after dinner \$2.

The accommodation provided and the situation of the various rooms is as follows: Access to all floors is by express lifts, three special lifts running to all Public Rooms, etc., on upper floors of building.

GROUND FLOOR: Spacious Lounge, American Bar and Reception Office
FOURTH, FIFTH, SIXTH AND SEVENTH FLOORS:—

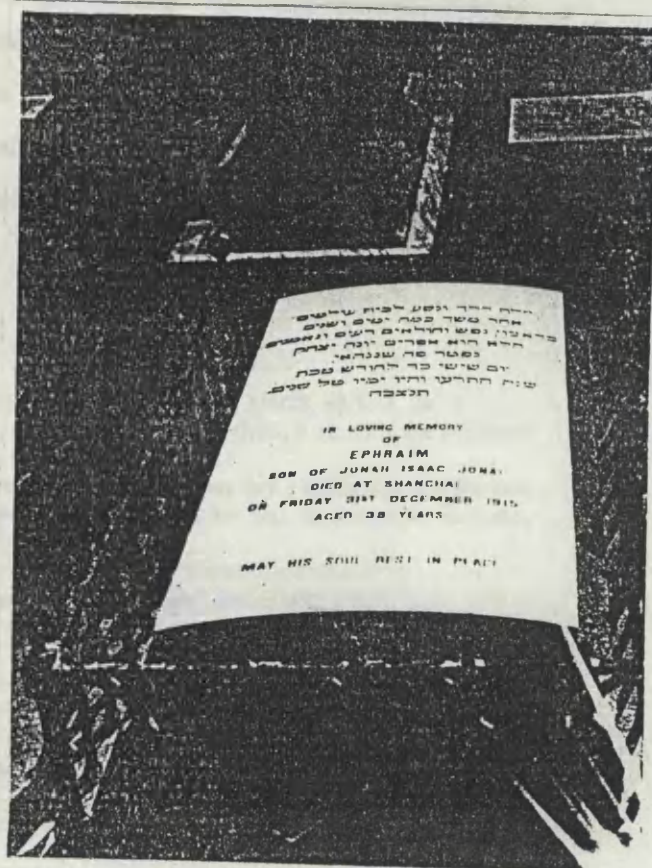
HOTEL METROPOLE, HAMILTON HOUSE BUILDINGS NOW IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION



Architect G. L. Wilson's perspective of the Hotel Metropole and Hamilton House, being built on the northwest and 4.24 and corners of Kinngye and Fenchow Roads. Preliminary construction work is underway on both projects. Left, the Hotel Metropole, existing work 2,000,000, will be opened as a hotel for businessmen, and will be under the management of the Cathay Hotel Co. Construction work will be completed by October, 1931. Right, the Hamilton House involving an expenditure of 2,500,000. The building will accommodate space for offices, banks and apartments. The structure is scheduled to open in the spring of 1932.



THE CATHAY MANSIONS, THE LARGEST APARTMENT BUILDING IN THE FAR EAST



IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
EPHRAIM
SON OF JONAH ISAAC JONES,
DIED AT SHANGHAI
ON FRIDAY 31ST DECEMBER 1915,
AGED 38 YEARS

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE

kept the architects busy with their large investments in apartment buildings, theatres, hotels, offices, godowns, residences, factories and cinemas.¹⁴⁹ Housing estates for rentals called 'terrass' as well as huge apartment complexes, were also to a large extent Jewish owned.¹⁵⁰ The Town Hall, and the Municipal Public Market to its rear, were sold to Silas Hardoon, probably the largest property owner in Shanghai, for Tls 1,300,000, one of the highest prices recorded in real-estate until 1929. The sale was negotiated by Fred Nissim, a real estate broker, who had organised the sale of the Town Hall twice within a period of two years.¹⁵¹ Land in the eastern industrial section of the city doubled in value between 1929-1931. Properties in Bubbling Well Road were valued by F. S. Sparke at over Tls 2 million.¹⁵² There was a growing demand for modern apartments and offices which were being rented far ahead of completion.¹⁵³ One hundred million dollars had been involved in land deals alone, several fetching astronomical prices.¹⁵⁴ At no time in the history of the Settlement was there such activity in land deals with property yields ranging from 10-15 percent per annum.¹⁵⁵

The deluxe property developments initiated by wealthy Sephardi Jews were in keeping with their palatial homes that epitomised the unlimited hospitality of the merchant princes of the East.¹⁵⁶ Marcella Crohn Rubel, an American visitor to Shanghai in 1925, recorded that almost half the shopping, business and residential district, and elaborate private estates, were owned by Baghdad Jews, who had made their fortunes in the Orient. The gardens of the Edward estate, 'reminiscent of fairy tales' boasted an open-air swimming pool, outdoor gymnasium, with electrically

¹⁴⁹ S. H. Shahmoon & Company's Capitol Building housed a theatre, *IM*, 1/6/28, pp.5, 7, 10.

¹⁵⁰ For example, Rivers Court Apartment built for Mrs. R.E. Toeg, *IM*, 4/7/30, p.12; Ellis and Frederick Elias' Apartment building on Avenue Haig, *IM*, 5/9/30, p.23 and 2/1/31. p.4.

¹⁵¹ *IM*, 4/1/29, p.4, and 2/1/31, p.4; the maverick Fred Nissim was 'one day a millionaire and the next down and out'. He attempted to sell the Empire State Building when he was in America, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/93.

¹⁵² Article in the special Christmas edition of *The Shanghai Sunday Times*, December 1931.

¹⁵³ "'Annus Mirabilis" for E. Shahmoon, Ellis Ezra and Fred Nissim', *IM*, 1/1/32, p.6.

¹⁵⁴ *IM*, 3/1/31, p.8.

¹⁵⁵ *IM*, 4/1/29, p.4.

¹⁵⁶ Tess Johnston and Deke Erh, *A Last Look at Western Architecture in Old Shanghai*, (Hong Kong, 1994), pp.16-17; T.V. Parasuram, *India's Jewish Heritage*, p.103. The wealthy Jewish families owned property at vacation spots. Like the British they fled the hot humid Shanghai for Weihaiwei, Kuling, Kobe. Their holidays are recorded in the 'Social and Personal' columns of the *Israel's Messenger*.

operated apparatus, nine hole golf course, and several tennis courts.¹⁵⁷ Sir Lawrence Kadoorie recounts that Marble Hall had been commissioned to be built during the family's absence from Shanghai. On their return they found 'the architect in hospital with the D Ts and their residence converted into a palace with a ballroom 65' high, 80' long and 50' wide not to mention other huge rooms and a verandah 225' long'.¹⁵⁸ 'Eves', Sir Victor Sassoon's Tudor style country house built on some fifty-seven mows, adjoined the Hungjao Golf Course. Completed in January 1934 it became the venue for his spectacular parties.¹⁵⁹ The fabulous residences of Hardoon, discussed in Chapter One, outstripped all these.

The *Israel's Messenger* expressed the hope that when the history of Shanghai was written historians would give credit to the Jewish merchants who had developed the city into one of the largest cities in the world. Sassoon House, the Capitol Building the Edward Ezra, Hardoon and Somekh buildings, located in the heart of the city:

...are all worthy monuments to Jewish enterprises, which have helped to make Shanghai what it is today the Paris, or as some would say, the Tel-Abib [sic] of the Far East...¹⁶⁰

Rose Horowitz recalls, 'When we were there we felt we had built Shanghai'. As children they chanted along with the Chinese labourers as they worked in unison.¹⁶¹ Local Chinese industries benefited from the buoyant property market. Almost all of the contractors working in the International Settlement and French Concession were Chinese, notably Chow Jinkee.¹⁶² Several, like the Taishan Brick

¹⁵⁷ 'Jewish life in Shanghai as Others See Us, Individual Consciousness of Jew Factor in Having Kept Race Intact 12,000 Miles Away', *IM*, 9/10/25, p.7; Israel Cohen describes a Zionist function at Ezra's home, *op. cit.*, pp.129-130.

¹⁵⁸ During the war Marble Hall was reserved for the use of Wang Chingwei, the puppet Governor. Today, under the PRC, it has become a Children's Palace where thousands of students are trained in the arts. Lawrence Kadoorie, 'The Kadoorie Memoir, Being a Letter from Lord Lawrence Kadoorie of Hong Kong to Mrs. Luba Arkin of Israel, dated 6 February 1979', in Dennis A. Leventhal, *Sino-Judaic Studies: Whence and Whither; An Essay and Bibliography and The Kadoorie Memoir*, (Hong Kong, 1985), pp.88-89; 94.

¹⁵⁹ *IM*, 1/1/34, p.4. It was used as a meeting place for the Gang of Four during the Mao era, and is now a guest house.

¹⁶⁰ 'Modern Shanghai - Jewish Contributions', *IM*, 1/6/28, p.5, 5; see also *IM*, 5/10/28, pp.4, 6, 5/7/29, p.7 and 7/2/30, p.5.

¹⁶¹ Horowitz, correspondence with author, Los Angeles, 12/2/92.

¹⁶² *IM*, 5/7/29, p.4.

and Tile Co., owed their prosperity to the Sephardi entrepreneurs for whom they began manufacturing cement, ceramic, and tiles.¹⁶³

The *Israel's Messenger* believed that these useful enterprises would 'go a long way to tie the bonds between the Chinese and the foreigners and help to establish confidence in the future'.¹⁶⁴ Urging the Foreign Powers to support the projects of their nationals by investing money in the city, it predicted that: 'Shanghai will ever remain a monument of the foreigner's goodwill to China and the Chinese people'.¹⁶⁵

Political Background

Chinese nationalists, however, paid scant attention to the fact that the foreign settlements afforded them and Chinese businessmen a security that their own country did not provide. They protested that the 'imperialist parasites' were draining China of its wealth for the benefit of foreigners. The mere presence of the structures on the Bund spoke of foreign domination, and must have been a daily affront to Chinese patriots and a constant reminder of the arrogance of the foreigners.

... they look round their magnificent buildings and are surprised that China is not grateful to them for these gifts, forgetting that the money to build them came out of China... and forgetting that it is the trade that is valuable to England and not the magnificent buildings which profits and small taxes allowed them to erect.¹⁶⁶

In fact, 'foreign devils' were never welcome in Shanghai. In the Treaty of Tianjin 1858, it was found necessary to stipulate that foreigners should not be referred to as barbarians in official documents issued by the Chinese authorities. The term '*La-le-loong*' [pirate], nonetheless, was hurled at foreigners in derision. The Boxer Rebellion 1900 aimed to rid China of all aliens.¹⁶⁷ It was Chinese nationalism that presented the main challenge to the Imperial Powers in China in the 1920s.¹⁶⁸ Growing nationalism was stimulated by China's annoyance that the

¹⁶³ *IM*, 7/2/30, p.7; Huebner, *op. cit.*, p.145.

¹⁶⁴ *IM*, 5/4/29, p.7, and 4/10/29, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ *IM*, 5/4/29, p.7, 8, 1/6/28, p.9 and 'China and the Abolition of Extrality,' 1/4/31, p.20.

¹⁶⁶ Nicholas Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire Westerners in Shanghai: Chinese Revolution of the 1920s*, (Middlebury, 1991), p.282; see also Hallett Abend, *Tortured China*, (New York, 1930), pp.136-145; Leonard Wolfe, *Economic Imperialism*, (New York, 1970), *passim*.

¹⁶⁷ *NCH*, 4/7/1900, p.225; Wang Kai-Ke, 'The Relations between Foreigners and Chinese', *NCH*, 18/7/1900, p.113; *NCH*, 21/8/1903, p.423, and 5/1/1906, p.33.

¹⁶⁸ Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933*, (London, 1972), p.29.

Versailles conference agreed to the Japanese acquisition of Guangdong province. Beijing students demonstrated against the action of the Powers on 4 May 1919. It swelled into a far broader movement against foreign domination which was the genesis of the Communist party and Sun Yatsen's nationalist party, [GMD].¹⁶⁹ The awakening of a passionate national consciousness manifested itself most strongly in Shanghai where the Ministry of Education openly authorised anti-foreign propaganda.¹⁷⁰

The 30 May 1925 student riots, protesting against all foreign privilege, were concentrated first against Japan and then Britain.¹⁷¹ The foreign community continued to suffer until October 1926 from the General Strike and boycott that began after the Shamian shooting a year earlier, which pressured foreigners to surrender some of their zealously guarded privileges.¹⁷² They conceded to China tariff autonomy, a return to its authority over the Mixed Court, and the promise of a commission to consider the end of extraterritoriality.¹⁷³ By 1930 the Chinese occupied five seats on the SMC and more Chinese were moving into the higher levels of the Settlement's administration.¹⁷⁴ In the 1930s Shanghai was not only the centre of Western economic activity in the field of commerce, industry and finance in China but had also become the focal point of the emerging Chinese capitalist

¹⁶⁹ Richard Rigby, *The May 30 Movement, Events and Themes*, (Canberra, 1980), p.2; Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.13.

¹⁷⁰ 'Anti-Foreign Propaganda in Chinese Schools', PRO, F0676/9997/60A/1931, p.6. The local press condemned the anti-foreign riots as being officially inspired; 'Extraterritoriality meddles with our national sovereignty and insults our Nation', leaflet from 'the Society to Petition for the Return of the Settlement and Legal Rights', SMP D 4060 29/8/21.

¹⁷¹ A general strike unparalleled in China was launched by the Chinese students in protest against the shooting at a mob of students by the police, *IM*, 11/9/25, p.20; 'Summary of Labour, Student and Bolshevik Activities and Diary of Events Leading to the Shooting Incident on the Nanjing Road near the Louza Police Station on 30/5/25', and 'Précis of Anti Foreign Articles and Statements of Facts in Connection with the Shooting Affairs on May 30 1925 and Subsequently', 30/5/25, SMP D IO XXX; Rigby, *op. cit.*, pp.19-22; James Huskey, *op. cit.*, p.72 and Chap.3.

¹⁷² 'Boycott Seriously Affects Japanese traders in Both North and South China', *The China Weekly Review* 8/12/28, p.53; 'The Boycott as a Weapon', *The Canton Gazette*, 22/11/28; H.G.W. Woodhead, *Extraterritoriality in China: The Case Against Abolition*, (Tianjin, 1929), and *Current Comment on Events in China: The Extraterritoriality Problem*, (Shanghai, 1931), *passim*.

¹⁷³ Clifford, *op. cit.*, pp.165,153 and 'Shanghai on Strike', pp.127-143. Even in 1938 Anthony Eden was still describing Britain's Far Eastern need as being to maintain 'white race authority'. Many British residents resisted any concession to Chinese nationalism especially over extraterritoriality, Thorne, *op. cit.*, p.45; Sir Eric Teichman, *Affairs in China*, (London, 1938), p.97.

¹⁷⁴ Marie-Claire Bergere, "'The Other China": Shanghai from 1919 to 1949', in *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis*, (ed.), Christopher Howe, (Cambridge, 1981), p.17; Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.265.

community.¹⁷⁵ During the temporary absence of foreign competition caused by the Great War, Shanghai capitalists had expanded into manufacturing and modern banking, areas previously dominated by foreign interests. The return of foreign competition in the 1920s, with the consequent pressure on the Chinese industrialists, intensified their resentment of foreign economic intrusion. Resentful of the racial aspects of imperialist privilege in China, they supported the anti-imperialist movement in the hopes that a strong Chinese Government would reduce foreign economic influence.¹⁷⁶ Awareness of this political background is crucial to an understanding of the situation in which Shanghai Sephardim found themselves. Political issues were fundamental to their existence in China and were the cause of concern and tension and an important subject of discussion.

While Western countries were reeling under the shock of the worldwide economic depression in the inter-war years, Shanghai benefited from a boost in her exports due to the devaluation of her silver currency.¹⁷⁷ China was the only major country still using a silver monetary standard, and a drop of fifty percent in silver prices caused a drastic devaluation of its currency. This expanded the market for China's exports, shielded domestic industry from imports, and increased the supply of credit. Foreign investment was attracted and, while world wide prices tumbled with the spread of the Depression during 1926-1931, in Shanghai they increased by almost twenty-five percent.¹⁷⁸ Virtually all sectors of the Shanghai business and industrial community prospered during this period. However, continuation of civil war in the interior and the withdrawal of the British troops from Shanghai added to the tension, causing great losses in the stock market. Several Sephardim were seriously affected by the collapse of the rubber market, notably Simon Levy and D. H. Benjamin who were bankrupted. A. Cohen had lost half a million dollars in one

¹⁷⁵ Parks M. Coble, Jr., *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nationalist Government 1927-1937*, (Harvard, 1980), p.17.

¹⁷⁶ Coble, *op. cit.*, p.26. They faced competition from foreign imports on which the tariff was set by treaty at five percent. The actual tariff rate was only 3.5% in 1927; Yu-kwei Cheng, *Foreign Trade and Industrial Development of China*, (Washington, 1956), p.57.

¹⁷⁷ Denis Twitchett, John Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China General, Volume 13, Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2*, p.263; Marie-Claire Bergere, "The Consequences of the Post First World War Depression for the China Treaty-Port Economy, 1921-3", pp.221-245; Ramon H. Myers, "The world Depression and the Chinese Economy 1930-6, pp, 253-274 in Ian Brown, (ed.), *The Economies of Africa and Asia and the Inter-war Depression*, (London, 1989).

¹⁷⁸ Coble, *op. cit.*, p.85.

stroke at the Exchange. Some stockbrokers like Ellis Hayim moved to England until conditions improved. Most of the prominent businessmen were forced to convert their firms into limited share companies from which they gradually removed their own capital, and several made preparations to leave Shanghai.¹⁷⁹

In the latter half of 1931, England, Germany, Japan and Canada abandoned the gold standard, [the US followed suit in March 1933] causing silver prices to rocket and increasing the foreign value of China's dollar by almost a hundred percent. This sudden monetary appreciation depressed China's economy and was further exacerbated by the severe flooding of the Yangtze in 1931, and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in the same year. The increase in the price of bullion, and the destruction of Shanghai's industrial suburbs of Woosung and Chapei during the Sino-Japanese hostilities of 1932, adversely affected the real-estate markets.¹⁸⁰ The situation worsened in 1933, when America, in pursuance of the policy of her Silver Purchase Act, bought up silver at a price well above world market rates. This had the devastating effect of siphoning silver currency out of China, causing severe shortages and a monetary crisis.¹⁸¹ Exports declined, the money supply contracted and commodity prices fell drastically, resulting in massive deflation until 1935.¹⁸² China, with the assistance of the British economic mission led by Frederick Leith-Ross, carried through a monetary reform in 1935 which substituted a managed paper currency for silver, and backed the paper currency partly with reserves of foreign exchange.¹⁸³ This stabilized the international value of China's money and supported a banking system independent of foreign powers.¹⁸⁴ Recovery began in 1936 and continued till July 1937, the start of the 'China Incident'.¹⁸⁵

Property owners regretted that the managed currency introduced by the Chinese Government had not improved their plight, although it benefited many

¹⁷⁹ G. Krishevsky to L. Herrmann, 5/2/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

¹⁸⁰ Fairbank, Reischauer, Craig, (eds.), *East Asia: the Modern Transformation*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p.792.

¹⁸¹ Sir Victor Sassoon interview by Reuter, *NCH*, 10/7/35, p.69 and 13/11/35, p.266, 'Silver Clauses'. 26/12/34, p.449.

¹⁸² Twitchett, Fairbank, Feuerwerker, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.513.

¹⁸³ Stephen Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy, 1933-1937*, (Manchester, 1975), pp.102-149; 'USA Silver Policy "Extraordinary" Attitude', *NCH*, 10/7/35, p.69, 'Sir F. Leith-Ross', 14/8/35, p.1, and 'Silver Clauses', 13/11/35, p.266.

¹⁸⁴ Fairbank, Reischauer, Craig, (eds.), *op. cit.*, p.792.

¹⁸⁵ This view of economic change is supported by statistical studies and by contemporary analysis, Coble, *op. cit.*, pp.140-142 and 299.

sections of the local trade and export market. The economic Depression accentuated the fact that Shanghai was overbuilt as many buildings remained vacant. Landowners denied that overpriced properties had caused the recession in real-estate, which they blamed on the world wide Depression. Nevertheless some in the foreign community linked the outrageously high cost of living in Shanghai with overpriced properties, and argued that land prices had been disproportionate and were merely returning to sanity with the Depression.¹⁸⁶

The Landlord-Tenant Controversy

Shanghai Sephardim were identified as landlords, although the majority were tenants. The *Osaka Mainichi*, the Japanese newspaper, in August 1922, gave prominence to the allegation of a Japanese lawyer, that the Jews in Shanghai, as the landlords of many foreign residents, exercised considerable influence over the lives of their tenants.¹⁸⁷ In the acrimonious dispute between the landlord and tenant that featured prominently in the local press, Meyer Solomon, a Sephardi Jewish lawyer in Shanghai, became the protagonist for the landlords, and P. Prevot for the tenants.¹⁸⁸ Landlords, who were censured for insisting on their rents being paid in silver, blamed the financial institutions which had as early as 1930 initiated the silver clause in the repayment of overdrafts and mortgages. When expected to pay interest in silver, it seemed logical to the landlords to demand payment of rent in silver.¹⁸⁹ Chinese and foreign rent payers observed that they would have to rely on their own efforts to keep the rents down. Any appeal to the local authorities seemed futile in a city 'run by the rich for the comfort of the rich'.¹⁹⁰ At the Property Owners Association annual general meeting in 1935, N. Sparke, the American Chairman, insisted that the municipal rate was essentially a tenant's liability.¹⁹¹ The landlord

¹⁸⁶ *NCH*, 2/2/1936, p.407.

¹⁸⁷ 'As Others See Us', *IM*, 1/12/22, p.16.

¹⁸⁸ *NCH*, 9/10/35, p.69, 2/9/36, pp.406-407, and 9/9/36, p.457; 'Solomon was the laughing stock of the Jewish Community'. During World War II he formed the Iraqi Resident Committee at the request of the Japanese, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/92.

¹⁸⁹ 'The Rent Issue', *NCH*, 22/5/35 and 29/5/35, p.354.

¹⁹⁰ *NCH* 31/3/37, p.534; The Land Regulations of 1845 drafted by Consul Balfour established the authority of the British consul. They were replaced in 1854, giving the SMC power over taxation, finance and security. Stringent property qualifications for franchise meant that both the Ratepayers' Meetings and the SMC were plutocratic. Residents paying ten dollars in taxes qualified for the franchise and those paying fifty dollars were eligible for election to the SMC, *NCH*, 30/1/1901, pp.212, 38, 44.

¹⁹¹ *NCH*, 3/4/35, p.18.

on the other hand, was obliged to pay land taxes based on the assessed value of the land, whether the property was occupied or not. Sparke maintained that the Association was not anti-tenant and had no sympathy with owners whose properties were insanitary.¹⁹²

Numerous legal battles in HBM Supreme Court, The American Court and the Mixed Court involving Sephardi Jews, both as landlords and tenants, reveal that increased rents were a bone of contention between them.¹⁹³ Tenants condemned landlords 'whose self-interest and greed cause living conditions to become extremely difficult. So long will we have to pay homage to Moloch and high rents'.¹⁹⁴ Solomon set the cat among the pigeons when he declared that Shanghai ought to be grateful to the property owners who were the main prop of the realty market: 'It is at the expense of every drop of their blood that we can be proud of many magnificent buildings or modern structures in Shanghai'.¹⁹⁵

The influx of thousands of Chinese refugees into the foreign concessions during the Sino-Japanese hostilities in 1937 almost doubled the population to four million, highlighting the overcrowding and congestion.¹⁹⁶ There were misgivings that the refugee situation was being turned to the advantage of profiteers, who were able to extract extortionate rents for meagre accommodation.¹⁹⁷ Landlords of apartment houses justified the increases by the higher maintenance costs, notably the high price of coal, and the accelerated dilapidation of property due to gross overcrowding. The anti-landlord lobby suggested that the extortionate rents charged to sub-tenants and the consequent overcrowding could easily have been prevented by the landlord, whose approval was required by the usual terms of a lease, before sub-letting was permitted. They insinuated that the landlords had in fact connived at the

¹⁹² *ibid.*, p.18; Arthur and Theodore Sopher were joint commentators on the real estate businesses, 'Angle of the Situation' in *The Shanghai Times*; See also Arthur and Theodore Sopher, *The Profitable Path of Shanghai Realty*, Shanghai, 1939, pp.333-334 and 380-388 focus on the Shanghai Jewish community.

¹⁹³ Notable court cases for non-payment of rent are *E.D.Sassoon v. Mei Hua Lou*, *NCH*, 3/7/1899, p.42; *Simon Abraham Levy v. Mrs. Howard*, *NCH*, 17/3/1910, p.641; *Messrs Algar & Co v. David Arakie*, *NCH*, 1/12/28, p.3; *David, v. Abraham*, *NCH*, 25/8/28, p.334.

¹⁹⁴ Prevot, 'Landowners have practised and are still practising the noble art of strangling the tenants', *NCH*, 2/9/36, p.408.

¹⁹⁵ *NCH*, 2/9/36, p.406.

¹⁹⁶ Compare the astronomical rise in rents caused by the huge influx of Chinese refugees during the Taiping Rebellion, and the ensuing crash of the property market when they left. Also in 1938 when the refugees from Nazi persecution arrived in Shanghai the demand for accommodation led to soaring prices.

¹⁹⁷ *NCH*, 27/7/38, p.137, and 23/8/39, p.334.

overcrowding and pocketed the proceeds.¹⁹⁸ Typical was the indignation expressed by a tenant at the extraordinary surcharge made by the Cathay Land Co. increasing his rent to C\$105 from C\$85 in 1937.¹⁹⁹

Some general conclusions can be drawn from this study of the Sephardi architectural heritage. In a wider context, these buildings still stand for the financial power of the firms, and by extension, the pre-eminence of British economic interest in the International Settlement. This factor was appreciated in the 1920s and 1930s by other foreigners who applauded the Jewish contribution to the development of the British Empire.²⁰⁰ The superior quality of the architecture was significant, projecting the image that Shanghai had never been a 'paradise of adventurers' where foreigners made their fortunes from the opium trade. Rather, as Huebner observed, it conveyed the optimism of an expatriate business community that had established an enduring presence in Shanghai under the social and economic order which had been created by extraterritoriality.²⁰¹ Little attention was paid to the fact that the presence of foreigners in China was resented by the Chinese. This architectural legacy forms an important part of the history of the Sephardi Jewish Community of Shanghai. Even after the demise of the International Settlement, they remain monuments to Jewish commercial enterprise, and one of the few remaining testimonials to a once vibrant community. They seem to establish an enduring presence of the Sephardim in Shanghai, particularly as their tombstones and cemeteries are no longer distinguishable, and their communal records untraceable.

Conclusion

When the opium trade is seen in context, it seems that the Sephardi merchants considered they were justifiably trading in a commodity which brought them the greatest returns. The trade had been put on a legal footing by the Treaty of Tianjin 1858 until the end of the Ten-Years Agreement in 1917. The Government of India, with the approval of the Home Government, had invited the traders to purchase the opium in the first place. The concern of the British Government to carry on a

¹⁹⁸ 'Live and Let Live', and 'The Rent Racket', *NCH*, 23/8/39, p.334.

¹⁹⁹ *NCH*, 15/11/39, p.289.

²⁰⁰ For example *IM*, 1/6/28, p.5.

²⁰¹ Huebner, *op. cit.*, pp.140; 146.

lucrative trade with China and to assist its protégé in so doing cannot be understated. There has been much critical comment on the participation of the Sephardim in the opium trade. Even today allusions are made to the opium magnates in Shanghai who built their fortunes on this 'illicit and immoral trade'. At the time they were, nonetheless, considered respectable members of the International Settlement by the foreign community and many of them served on the SMC, just as Bass, Allsopp and Guinness sat in the British House of Commons, although malt liquor was susceptible to abuse.²⁰²

There is a danger that objective historical interpretation can become clouded if viewed only from the moral high ground of the twentieth century. Professor Ian Nish has observed that there are layers of historical justice, and the opium trade has to be judged in history according to the scale of justice applied by contemporaries.²⁰³ Indeed, there appears to have been a multitude of layers of historical justice, many of which were platforms for those who had vested interests in the opium trade, but not to be forgotten was the voice of those who objected at that time on moral or on pragmatic grounds which were put forward on a moral basis. Notwithstanding the opium traders' conviction of the legitimacy of their trade, they were the targets of trenchant criticism, notably from the missionaries. It must be remembered that groups, spurred by missionaries who had their own interests to protect, were indeed protesting against the trade on moral grounds at the time. They gained sufficient momentum to use political methods to bring an end to the opium trade. Both the British and the Chinese Governments appear to have been hiding behind the merchants who were in the forefront of attack from governments and missionaries. Clearly China's concern about the traffic in opium was not entirely humanitarian.²⁰⁴

The Sephardi merchants presented themselves to the foreign community in the Settlement primarily as plying both a legitimate and lucrative trade in opium and in other commodities, which is the *raison d'être* of all in such a position. They projected an image of generators of wealth for themselves and for their government,

²⁰² NCH, 25/4/1874, p.356.

²⁰³ Ian Nish, interview by author, London, 20/10/92.

²⁰⁴ For example see Hornby to Earl Granville, 17/6/1880, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, 5/8/1880, PRO, FO 881/4269.

in order to pressure the government into supporting their trade. The British Government offered support to the merchants involved in the opium trade in broad terms only, as adverse public opinion made firm commitment untenable in the international community. This ambivalent policy enabled the British Government to contain for several decades the agitation of merchants for unqualified support, and the anti-opium lobby of the missionaries and the foreign community in the Settlement. Not least, it was necessary to consider the risk of boycott of all British goods by the Chinese Government.

The social psychologist Simon Herman argues convincingly that the essence of ethnic identity is the group members' perception of group membership, as opposed to membership in the majority society. Members of a minority group must see themselves as 'marked-off' either on their own or through discrimination from the wider society. They must see themselves as aligned with other members of the minority group with a sense of interdependence.²⁰⁵ Most of the third generation Shanghai Sephardim interviewed stress that the pernicious effects of the drug had not been fully appreciated at the time. They themselves were too young to have remembered, and their impressions must be based on hearsay from family and friends. Their opinions are likely to reflect the arguments that were put forward in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by those who favoured the continuation of the trade. Some emphasise that the money made from opium was largely ploughed back into the economy by way of investments, as opposed to being siphoned off and sent abroad. It seems plausible that the Sephardi opium connection would have drawn together into a cohesive group those Shanghai Sephardim who believed in the right of the opium merchants to ply a legal trade. The opium trade had an important bearing on the identity of the Sephardi Jew in Shanghai, and therefore justifies close attention in this thesis. It gave them a common interest. They were people of similar background, financial and economic interest and discussion on the opium issue extended to their social life and reinforced group closeness. When opium fell into disrepute the finger was pointed at the whole community. They reacted by justifying their position, and on this point there was no voice of dissension among them.

²⁰⁵ Herman, 'Jewish Identity', pp.40-44.

The silence of the *Israel's Messenger* on the opium question is of great significance. Perhaps no need was felt to justify their position in their own journal. Rather this was done through the wider press where it was a contentious issue. The *Israel's Messenger* may have avoided the subject because the opium trade became a political matter and the journal's policy was to steer clear of politics, at least when it suited the editor.

The Sephardim are still proud to be identified with the monumental buildings that were constructed in Shanghai in the 1920s, earning them the distinction of being in the forefront of the development of the city. Furthermore, it gave them prestige to be associated with the advancement of the British Empire. The mercantile activities of the several multi-millionaires among them had an unquestionable influence on commerce, trade, finance, and culture in the Settlement. They dominated the Shanghai stock exchange and the shipping, utilities, trams, buses, and the major businesses.²⁰⁶ Although small in number, the Shanghai Sephardi community wielded a disproportionate share of influence in the International Settlement, thus attracting friends and foes, admiration and deprecation.²⁰⁷ The positive results gave Shanghai Sephardim a sense of security and the belief that they would continue to flourish in China. Pride in 'Sephardi' achievements and confidence in the future were influences which would have therefore helped to reinforce the solidarity and the Sephardi identity of the community. It made them slow, however, to appreciate the activities of the burgeoning Chinese nationalist and communist movements which reflected pride in their own culture and their struggle to end the 'unequal treaties' and the extraterritorial rights of the 'foreign devils'.

²⁰⁶ Jacob Alkov, interview by author, Herzlia, 20/5/93.

²⁰⁷ There were some 500 Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai in 1921, Israel Cohen, 'Jews in Far Off Lands', interview for the *Jewish Chronicle*, *JC*, 3/6/21, p.16.

Chapter Six: The Changing Status of Iraqi Jews Political Identification with the British

The Shanghai Sephardi entrepreneurs were proud to be identified with the development of the British Empire. The monumental buildings they erected were an ostentatious display of their wealth and power and provided a sense of political security within the International Settlement. In contrast their mercantile enterprises outside Shanghai were not without danger from bandits. The Lincheng Incident of 1923 is examined to highlight the hazards to which foreign and Chinese merchants were constantly exposed from bandits, kidnappers and extortionists, and provides an insight into the general response of the Shanghai Sephardi community when there was a threat to some of its members. It illustrates the crucial value of British nationality and the protection it afforded to Sephardi merchants in China where central authority was very weak. The paramount importance of the issue of nationality, affecting as it did the very fabric of the lives of Shanghai Sephardim, will be examined in the light of political, legal and economic benefits that accrued to British subjects in Shanghai by virtue of their nationality.¹ Focus on their determined efforts to procure this classification emphasises its importance to them. The reasons for their intense patriotism and allegiance to the British government will be investigated.

The Lincheng Outrage 1923

...the captives...most of them were Shanghai Jews of various nationalities and well known here - I was tickled to death to learn that these birds were in clink...²

For very different reasons than those expressed by Police Sergeant R. M. Tinkler, it is fortunate for historians trying to piece together the lives of Shanghai Jewry, that there were eight Jews among the twenty-six foreign captives³ in the bandit attack on the Tianjin-Pukou Express, travelling between Nanjing and Beijing

¹ Socially the Jews were never quite accepted by the British, Roland, *Jews in British India*, p.61. "Non-white" British subjects in China were never considered by "white" Britons as British, although neither were British Jews', Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.22.

² Tinkler's letter to his sister, 17/6/23, Imperial War Museum, R.M. Tinkler Papers, by courtesy of Robert Bickers.

³ Sidney Barton, Consul General, Shanghai to Nanking, 6/5/23, Tel., 2432/23/1 PRO, FO671/507; *IM*, 8/6/23, p.14; *NCH*, 19/5/23, p.380.

on 5 May 1923.⁴ The train was attacked by a force of about a thousand brigands who, jabbing the twenty six foreign captives with cocked revolvers, forced them and some hundred Chinese, to walk the precipitous path up a dry rocky ravine to their lair on top of Mount Paotzu-ku.⁵

The foreign community had rarely been as deeply stirred since the Boxer Uprising of 1900.⁶ Provisional military *Tuchun* [warlords] exercised almost despotic powers within their own provinces. Bands of unemployed ex-soldiers turned to banditry, looting, kidnapping and murder.⁷ Foreign Cabinets were forced to recognise that China had been received on equal terms with the Western Powers at the Washington Conference 1922, although in an anarchic state.⁸ In fact the timing of the Lincheng attack suggested that it was designed to test the sincerity of the Washington Conference Powers, who had agreed to abandon their old spheres of influence, and later signed the Nine Power treaty guaranteeing not to interfere in China's domestic affairs.⁹ Sidney Barton, the Consul General at Shanghai, was convinced that the incident was carried out by Zhang Zuolin and Sun Yatsen in conjunction with the Anfu Combine in order to force withdrawal of foreign recognition from the Chinese Government.¹⁰

Focus on the Lincheng Incident provides one of the few first-hand examples of the energetic and co-operative efforts of the Shanghai Sephardi community. This was not the first time its members had been involved in bandit incidents. At Kohat on the northwest frontier Mrs. Ellis was murdered and Miss Ellis abducted.¹¹ The mercantile interests of the Sephardi Jews necessitated frequent business trips through bandit ridden territory. In the 1920s, burglary, murder and kidnapping were a

⁴ *NCH*, 12/5/23, p.380; Lau Kit-ching Chan, 'The Lincheng Incident: A Case Study of British Policy in China between the Washington Conference (1921-1922) and the Nationalist Revolution (1925-28)', *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 10, No.2. (1972), pp.172-186.

⁵ A report on the attack in PRO, FO228/3257/10/529/23/123/469.

⁶ *NCH*, 26/5/23, p.501, 11/5/23, p.467, and 2/6/23, p.1. The gravity of the situation is depicted in The Association of British Chambers of Commerce to the Shanghai Consulate, 22/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/2925/23/56/A16.

⁷ *NCH*, 20/10/23, p.166; Diana Lary, *Region and Nation: the Kwangsi Clique in Chinese Politics, 1925-37*, London, 1974, 'Soldiers of the Revolution', Chap. 4, pp.64-87.

⁸ *NCH*, 2/6/23, pp.606-607.

⁹ *NCH*, 8/5/23, p.394 and 26/5/23, p.521.

¹⁰ Ronald Macleay, Consul General at Beijing to Barton, *Confidential*, PRO, FO288/3253 3272/23/10; Macleay to Barton, *Very Confidential*, 9/5/23; PRO, FO671/507; see also 'Very Confidential despatch', B. Tours to Macleay, 25/5/23, FO671/507/XC197231; *NCH*, 9/6/23, p.673.

¹¹ *NCH*, 23/6/23, p.792; see also 'The Kidnapping Scandal in Shanghai', *NCH*, 22/10/27, p.148.

common occurrence even within the confines of the Foreign Concessions. The Green Gang, Ch'ing-pang, was one of the world's most powerful illegal organisations. Du Yuesheng, a leader in the syndicate that controlled the vice establishments in the French Concession wielded tremendous influence in its local government.¹² Shanghai Municipal Police Reports disclose several cases of kidnapping, notably the attempted abduction of Theodore Sopher in July 1932 by a gang of Russian kidnappers.¹³

In reaction to the Lincheng Incident, the Chinese Foreign Office, the Waijiao Bu, announced that no permits would be issued to foreigners to travel in bandit ridden areas. In effect, China relinquished its responsibility for the safety of foreigners who would now travel at their own risk in about nine-tenths of China, including those areas crossed by the principal railways.¹⁴ The foreign community had always maintained that the Home Government should attach more importance to the China trade.¹⁵ The Foreign Office, however, strongly opposed foreign intervention by force, believing it would provoke serious friction between the Foreign Powers.¹⁶

The Lincheng Incident highlighted the importance to the Sephardi community of a strong central government capable of keeping law and order so that they could pursue their business without interference.¹⁷ The chaos in China was having disastrous effects on trade with the interior.¹⁸ The foreign community placed no

¹² On criminality in the 1920s and 1930s see PRO, FO228/3252; 3253; 3254; 3255; 3256; 3257; 3258; see also Brian Martin, 'The Pact with the Devil: The Relationship Between the Green Gang and the French Concession Authorities 1925-1935', *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 39 (March 1989), pp.93-125; a good account of Caucasian prostitution in Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West: Society and Culture 1815-1937*, (London, 1979), pp.215-217.

¹³ SMP, D File C & S.B.Registry, D 3830, "A" Central 19/11/31, and Confidential, 6/7/32, 1845/31.; NCH, 8/12/31, p.353.

¹⁴ Peking Legation to Foreign Office, 19/5/23, tel., No.102, (2914/23), PRO, FO228/3257.

¹⁵ 'Efforts to Rouse Great Britain Over Lincheng', NCH, 16/6/23, p.744.

¹⁶ Confidential Memo, 20/6/23, PRO, FO228/3257/3776/23/23; copy of telegram received by Hong Kong and Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce from Hong Kong, 1/6/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231; Britain was only prepared to take action in close co-operation with the other Powers, 'Sir Robert Macleay's Speech on HM Government's attitude to Lincheng', copy in 18/7/23, FO228/3257/41680/23/56 No. 395 (4168/23); Anne Trotter, *Britain and East Asia, 1933-1937*, (Cambridge, 1975), p.4; the role of 'prestige' in the maintenance of British power abroad should not be underestimated, Bickers, *op. cit.*, p.25. Even a decade later the Western Powers continued to avoid becoming involved, and were interested in preserving the status quo. Britain was not prepared to use military force to preserve the Open Door in China, Christopher Thorne, *Limits of Foreign Policy, The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933*, (London, 1972), pp.53, 23, 41, 48.

¹⁷ Beijing Legation to Shanghai Consulate, 19/5/23, Tel., PRO, FO228/3257/102 (2914/23), NCH, 16/6/23, p.725.

¹⁸ NCH, 1/9/23, p.580; J.B. Powell, *My Twenty-Five Years in China*, (New York, 1945), p.92-124.

reliance on the Chinese army, 'bandits in uniform', and believed that: 'Shanghai would have been looted long ago if it were not for the fear inspired by the SVC.¹⁹ At the risk of seeming callous, the foreign community emphasised that the freedom of the captives was a secondary matter compared to the crucial issue of taking punitive action and preventing a loss of foreign prestige in China.²⁰ Certainly Sidney Barton could not have put it more bluntly: 'it is better that sixteen would suffer rather than the 16,000 foreign residents all over China'.²¹

Apart from its important international and political implications the Lincheng Incident demonstrated how the threat to some of its members united Shanghai Sephardim in their attempts to free the captives. Initially public attention was focused on the only captive to be killed, Joseph Rothman, a 62 years old Rumanian Jewish merchant, well known in Shanghai, though formerly employed in Tianjin.²² British Foreign Office files record a letter from 'Rabbi Hirsch, the religious head of the local Jewish Community and a much respected man'.²³ He explained that 'A Jew generally wishes to be buried in a Jewish cemetery and I assume that this was his desire'.²⁴ He asked for the authorities at Lincheng to send Rothman's remains to Shanghai to be interred in the Jewish cemetery. N. Rashin, Secretary of the Tianjin Hebrew Association, also applied for permission to bury Rothman according to Jewish rites.²⁵ However, his body, too decomposed to be examined, was buried in the presence of Chinese official representatives in the foreign cemetery at Jinan. Nonetheless, 'A friend of Rothman' asked the Shanghai Consul General if the body could be exhumed and sent to Shanghai for a Jewish burial. Barton gave his

¹⁹ Letter from a correspondent in Swatow to the *NCH*, 12/5/23, p.300, 15/5/23, p.468 and 26/5/23, p.501.

²⁰ The outburst of public feeling was voiced in a number of resolutions passed by various foreign public bodies, Confidential Memo, 20/6/23, PRO, FO228/3257/3776/23/23; *NCH*, 16/5/23, pp.431 and 19/5/23, pp.428,431.

²¹ Barton to Eric Teichman of the Beijing Legation, 26/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/2866/23/53.

²² Tours, at Jinan, to Barton, Telegrams, 7/5/23, 2439/23/2, and 8/5/23, 2453/23/8, PRO, FO671/507.

²³ Barton to Macleay, 19/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC186466; Barton to Hirsch, 30/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/2924/23/59.

²⁴ Hirsch to Barton, 15/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/2649/23/34/ a/16; see Illustration, p.214.

²⁵ B. Zasnikoff (in charge of Jewish Cemetery) and N. Rashin (Secretary) to Macleay, 22/5/23, PRO, FO671/501; Barton to Hirsch, 30/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231.

27/10/21/507

My dear Billie,
 I am very glad to hear from you and hope you are all well. I am well at present and hope to see you all soon. I am very glad to hear that you are all well and hope to see you all soon. I am very glad to hear that you are all well and hope to see you all soon.

FO 671/507
 X 186485

Monday, 16th.
 My dear Billie,
 This is really hell. We have been here now eleven days, but we have got no mail at all. For God's sake, please write to me as soon as you can. I am very glad to hear from you and hope you are all well. I am very glad to hear that you are all well and hope to see you all soon.

Always Freddy.
 Make them get out the fancy stuff in the newspapers and let the public know the real truth, and that we are going through.

Relating to the Lincheng Incident

6. I am very glad to hear from you and hope you are all well. I am very glad to hear that you are all well and hope to see you all soon. I am very glad to hear that you are all well and hope to see you all soon.

FO 671/507
 X 186486

Shanghai, 16th, June, 1932.
 H.B.M.'s Consul General,
 Shanghai.

I suffered direct losses as below. The valuation is a fair and just one to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1 Ruby ring	...	\$ 1,985
1 pair slippers	...	80
1 pair shoes	...	34
3 silk shirts	...	16
3 knitted ties	...	24
1 gold pin	...	45
3 pair socks	...	25
1 pair silk pyjamas	...	18
4 silk coloured handkerchiefs	...	10
1 gold cigarette case	...	25
1 gold watch box	...	15
1 tortoiseshell cigarette case	...	400
1 pair platinum cuff links	...	70
2 gold studs	...	60
1 gold watch	...	150
Various other things which I cannot remember	...	12
Total		4,175

THE CHINESE TELEGRAPH ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICE
 115 N. 1st St. (Opposite the Post Office)
 Shanghai

FO 671/507
 X 186486

Shanghai, 16th, June, 1932.
 H.B.M.'s Consul General,
 Shanghai.

I suffered direct losses as below. The valuation is a fair and just one to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1 platinum signet ring	...	\$ 3,211
1 gold signet ring	...	250
1 pair hairbrushes	...	25
1 pair scissors, nail files etc	...	90
2 suits underwear	...	10
1 comb	...	18
2 Buchill pipes	...	3
1 tobacco pouch	...	25
1 leather suitcase	...	12
1 razor	...	65
1 shaving brush	...	7
2 doz. Gramophone records	...	12
1 gold pen knife	...	35
1 pair silk brose	...	25
1 leather pocket book with gold name & border	...	6
500 cigarettes	...	100
Various other things which I cannot remember	...	10
Total		\$ 3,844

Obel Rachel Sznagouque
 2407/10/1932
 1508 No. 102
 No. 114

FO 671/507
 X 186486

Shanghai, 16th, June, 1932.
 H.B.M.'s Consul General,
 Shanghai.

I suffered direct losses as below. The valuation is a fair and just one to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1 pair slippers	...	80
1 pair shoes	...	34
3 silk shirts	...	16
3 knitted ties	...	24
1 gold pin	...	45
3 pair socks	...	25
1 pair silk pyjamas	...	18
4 silk coloured handkerchiefs	...	10
1 gold cigarette case	...	25
1 gold watch box	...	15
1 tortoiseshell cigarette case	...	400
1 pair platinum cuff links	...	70
2 gold studs	...	60
1 gold watch	...	150
Various other things which I cannot remember	...	12
Total		4,175

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1 pair slippers	...	80
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1 gold pin	...	45
3 pair socks	...	25
1 pair silk pyjamas	...	18
4 silk coloured handkerchiefs	...	10
1 gold cigarette case	...	25
1 gold watch box	...	15
1 tortoiseshell cigarette case	...	400
1 pair platinum cuff links	...	70
2 gold studs	...	60
1 gold watch	...	150
Various other things which I cannot remember	...	12
Total		4,175

authorisation on the assumption that Rothman's friend would pay all expenses. Barton's annotation: 'This shows that the man had some friends', demonstrates the importance the community attached to ensuring that every Jew was buried according to religious rites.²⁶

Among the captives were three British protégés from Shanghai, 'persons of Mesopotamian origin, somewhere around the Garden of Eden', known in the Consular trade as 'Baghdad Scotchmen'.²⁷ Theo Saphiere, employed by Harvie Cooke & Co. also carried on an import and export business on his own account paying his employers a commission on turnover.²⁸ His claim for compensation presents an interesting insight into the entrepreneurial skills of the Shanghai Jews. Saphiere stated:

I do not keep any books but only rough notes of the business done by me. On a very conservative basis I estimate my profit during 1922 amounted to at least Tls 9,000. Last year's turnover of business I did through Harvie Cooke and Co. amounted to over Tls 25,000, and my diamond turnover to Tls 45,000.²⁹

His cousins, the Elias brothers, Frederick Sassoon Elias and Edward Elias lived with their father 'in luxurious circumstances' on Seymour Road.³⁰ Frederick was employed as a stockbroker by the well known local firm of Messrs. Benjamin and Potts at a monthly salary of Tls 1,337. Edward had joined the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, [HSB, hereafter] on a temporary basis to get an insight into banking. He received a nominal monthly salary of Tls 120.³¹

The rumour that the Elias brothers had escaped soon after the attack was scotched when Gensburger's father received four letters signed Freddy, Emile, Theo and Eddie dated 11 May: 'Having good treatment all well don't worry expecting

²⁶ Memo by Tours, 22/5/23, PRO, FO288/3253/56651/23/52/92.

²⁷ Tours to Macleay, 21/5/23, PRO, FO228/3253/29/5337/23/16; Edward and Fred Elias were first registered in 1915 at the Shanghai Consulate as British Protected Persons of Mesopotamian origin, memorandum by Barton, 8/5/23, FO671/507/2450/23/17.

²⁸ Harvie Cooke & Co. to Barton, 19/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/2718/23/43; Saphiere, a mercantile assistant first registered as British subject in 1916, 11/8/23, PRO, FO228/3257/10537/23/124 No.134 (6202/23).

²⁹ Declaration dated 11/8/23, PRO, FO228/3258/456.

³⁰ Moss, Acting Consul General at Shanghai, to Teichman of the Beijing Legation, 25/8/23, PRO, 671/507/XC197231/6202/23/110/A/16. No. (6202/23).

³¹ *ibid*, 25/8/23; Elias' father, Reuben Elias to Moss, 1/11/23, PRO, FO617/505.

release'.³² It was some weeks before the public realised that the first accounts of the supposed comfort of the prisoners' lives were merely the invention of 'brave men' seeking to reduce their families' anxieties: 'all honour to the men who for the credit of the white race have kept so stiff an upper lip through their great trial'.³³ It is open to conjecture how nationalistically motivated the captives actually were. The telegram that Edward Elias, one of the last of the foreign captives to be released, requested be sent to HM the King, probably displays more pragmatism than patriotism: 'Remaining two British captives of Lincheng brigands offer respectfully birthday congratulations, and petition increased efforts effect release Elias and Rowlatt'.³⁴

It nevertheless underlined the importance of being British subjects. Edward appreciated the efforts of the British authorities on behalf of his brother and himself. Indeed the voluminous correspondence in the Consulate files displays its concern for its protégés: 'It is impossible to thank Mr. Tours [of the Shanghai Consulate] sufficiently for all he did for us in his official capacity and otherwise. We felt we indeed had a friend within call and his letters to us were most encouraging'.³⁵

It is valuable to examine the accounts of the Jewish captives, because the frequency of kidnapping, even within the Foreign Concessions, posed a very real threat to some Sephardim.³⁶ In his attempt to be reunited with his brother and cousins Edward received a forceful blow on his shoulder from his captor's rifle which left him with two nasty open wounds. The captives had been forced to move continuously for practically two weeks 'over the most cruel country imaginable' on what they referred to as their 'Grand March', many with bleeding feet and sprained ankles. Saphiere recounted how in the first three days he walked nearly seventy miles

³² Shanghai Consulate to Foreign Office, tel., No.92, 10/5/23, PRO, 228/3252/2620/23/47; Pratt, Acting Consul General Nanking, at Siakwan, to Barton, 11/5/23, PRO, FO671/507 2579/23/28.

³³ *NCH*, 26/5/23, p.1.

³⁴ Freddy was released on 12/6/23 after 38 days in captivity, Edward on 2/6/23 after 27 days, 16/5/23, PRO, FO617/507; see Illustration, p.214.

³⁵ Edward Elias, 'My Experience in the Hands of Shantung Bandits', [14 pages] PRO, FO 671/507/XC197231; There was friction between the foreign captives who believed that the American negotiators were trying to secure the prior release of Americans, B. Tours to Barton, 28/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/3041/23/66; Barton to Macleay, 13/6/23, FO822/3253/6617/23/148, No. 5052/23; Edward Elias to Barton, 11/6/23, FO288/3253/306.

³⁶ HSB., to Barton, 11/6/23, encl., Edward's letter, 7/5/23, PRO, FO228/3253/306/7.

and for about thirty miles rode a mule which threw him off at least eight times, on one occasion down twenty-three stone steps.³⁷

The captives had nothing to eat except for two raw eggs from May 6th-9th and the food they were served during captivity left much to be desired; veal stew was in fact Shandong dog, 'a particularly tough type of mangy cur', and scorpion 'tamales', resembled shrimps once the stingers and shells were removed and the bodies boiled in salt water.³⁸ The particular problems that the Jewish captives encountered are humorously related by an American captive, Leon Friedman a motor car dealer from Shanghai: 'What is a Jew supposed to do in these circumstances? First we starve, and a missionary³⁹ sends us ham, then when we want something to read, he sends us the New Testament'.⁴⁰ Elias portrays their bodies eaten by lice and thick with vermin; night raids by the bandits who even tried to rob them of the clothes they were wearing; the continual threat of diseases, and of being shot:

This is really hell...I have told the others not to write depressing letters to their people, as all at home must be worried to death... Make them cut out the fancy stuff in the newspapers and let the public know the real truth and what we are going through.⁴¹

The parents of the captives were deeply concerned.⁴² Saphiere's father requested that the Foreign Office make special efforts to secure his son's release. He offered to put up a cash security for Theo to have his injured feet attended to at the Jinan Hospital.⁴³ Ellis Hayim, the brother-in-law of the Elias brothers, was informed that unless the Chinese troops surrounding the bandits were withdrawn, one of the Elias boys and one American would be shot.⁴⁴ Hayim left no stone unturned

³⁷ For Saphiere's account see PRO, FO228/3258/441/537/23/124, No.134 (6202/23). His injuries are recorded in Barton to Macleay, 19/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC186466; 'Tales of the Captives', *NCH*, 19/5/23, pp.451-452.

³⁸ Powell, *op. cit.*, pp.101-102.

³⁹ An American, Rev. Carroll Yerkes, who ran a Presbyterian mission school.

⁴⁰ Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105; see also Tours to Macleay, PRO, FO 228/3253/29.

⁴¹ Freddy Elias to Ellis Hayim, 16/5/23, copy in PRO, FO671/507/XC184885; and enclosure in Barton to Macleay, 16/5/23, FO 671/507 2718/23/43; see Illustration, p.214; The Bandits threatened to shoot one British and one American captive if the troops did not withdraw, *NCH*, 26/5/23, p.500. Father Lenfers, an elderly German Catholic missionary and Dr. Mertens brought them letters from Shanghai and took their mail, Tours (Tsaochuang) to Macleay, 14/5/23, PRO, FO228/3252/205.

⁴² Reuben Elias to Barton, 7/5/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/A16; Hayim to Macleay, 12/5/23, PRO, FO617/507; Barton to Macleay, 19/5/23, FO671/507/XC186466/A/16.

⁴³ Tours to Barton, 20/5/23, PRO, FO228/3257, 10/529/23/123, 537/23/124, No. 134(6202/23).

⁴⁴ Tours to Macleay, 14/5/23, PRO, FO228/3252/205.

to get the Shanghai Consulate to prevent this.⁴⁵ Ellis Ezra proceeded to Lincheng.⁴⁶ The American Consul, John K. Davis, complained that an increasing numbers of foreign friends and relatives were hindering their efforts to secure the release of the captives and asked Sir Ronald Macleay, Consul General at Beijing, to discourage more from going there.⁴⁷ The diplomatic body at Shanghai tried to exercise a moderating influence, and laid emphasis on action being taken in close co-operation with the other Powers concerned, primarily with the USA and Japan.⁴⁸ It commented that the flood of resolutions urging the Ministers to action was becoming almost a disease.⁴⁹ Many were emotional outbursts from Sephardim in a conspicuous display of solidarity with their co-religionists:

...not always judiciously or even sensibly worded but the public indignation they ventilate is justifiable and they strengthen our hands in trying to get something practical done.⁵⁰

The members of the Shanghai Stock Exchange, on behalf of their colleague Frederick Elias, urged the Consul to take forceful action.⁵¹ The foreign community blamed the inordinate delay in releasing the captives on the apathy of the Diplomatic Body, whose threats, the very feeble waggling of the big stick, frightened nobody. Negotiations were deadlocked because of the bandits' insistence that over three thousand of them be taken into the army.⁵² They considered their demand for about

⁴⁵ Arnhold, Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce to Barton, 20/5/23, PRO, FO671/507, 2739/23/47.

⁴⁶ Pratt, to Macleay, 10/5/23, PRO, FO228/3252/106.

⁴⁷ Macleay to Barton, tel., 12/5/23, PRO, FO671/507; 'These resolutions urging the Ministers to action are becoming almost a disease', G.S. Hubbard to Macleay, 26/5/23, PRO, FO228/3252; *NCH*, 19/5/23, p.451.

⁴⁸ Macleay to Barton, 18/7/23, PRO, FO228/3257/395, (4168/23), and 23/7/2, FO228/3257/41680/23/56; *NCH*, 2/6/23, p.606; there was a general acceptance in official circles that military force would not be used to preserve the Open Door in China, Christopher Thorne, *Limits of Foreign Policy, The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933*, (London, 1972), p.53.

⁴⁹ Barton to Macleay, 19/5/23 encl. copies of 5 telegrams to the China Association and the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce to London, 24/5/23, PRO, FO228/3252/242; 'The Lincheng Mass Meeting', *NCH*, 9/6/23, p.674.

⁵⁰ Tel., from Hankou Foreign Residents' Association, 20/5/23 advocating foreign armed intervention, Macleay comments, 'This is all very well but who is going to foot the bill for it?' 30/5/23, PRO, FO228/3253/167/170.

⁵¹ Copies of telegrams from Public Bodies including the British Chamber of Commerce, enclosure in Macleay to Barton, 12/6/23, PRO, FO822/3253/6419/23/140/274 No.93 (5046/23); 'Who is Responsible', *NCH*, 16/5/23, p.499, 26/5/23, pp.501, 520, 2/6/23, p.645, and 9/6/23, p.828.

⁵² The bandits 'impossible demands' were 'totally unacceptable', Macleay to Tours, 23/5/23, PRO, FO228/3253/3012/23/22/156; the bandits' threat to kill the captives if attacked rendered powerless the 8000 troops sent by the Chinese government. Soldiers, unpaid for 18 months, were selling their ammunition to the bandits, *NCH*, 26/5/23, p.522 and 11/5/23, p.523.

a million dollars, not as a ransom, but rather back pay for their men.⁵³ Most foreigners approved when the Governor of Shandong reneged on the agreement and had some six hundred bandits shot. It led, however, to tragic consequences, as in subsequent bandit attacks many foreigners lost their lives when ransoms were not paid immediately.

After more than five weeks, on 13 June, 'the old guard', as the last captives to be detained had come to be known, were released. They were given a reception by 'the largest crowd that has ever met a train in Shanghai', who blocked the streets leading to the railway station:

...Cheer upon cheer rose in salvos... see the conquering hero comes... then pandemonium broke loose...The captives were raised on the shoulders of their friends and as dozens of magnesium sticks were lighted the motion picture camera registered every move...⁵⁴

The captives were fêted. The French Consul-General M. Wilden hosted a dinner at the Consulate for them and their close relatives.⁵⁵ It is open to speculation though why Gensburger was accompanied by four guests and the other Jews were unaccompanied by their relatives. Perhaps it was because *kasher* food was not provided.

In what was referred to as the Lincheng Note of 13 August, the Diplomatic Corps Committee insisted on the dismissal of the *Tuchun* of Shandong and the organisation of railway guards under foreign officers. For each foreign captive, in addition to personal losses, it demanded 8,500 silver dollars.⁵⁶ The essential claims were paid by Beijing - a unique occurrence, considering the formidable list of the demands. These included compensation for loss of property 'for loss of life and liberty and for personal sufferings and indignities undergone by all the foreign travellers while in the hands of the brigands'.⁵⁷ The claims of the Elias brothers and Saphiere recorded by the Foreign Office provide a rare glimpse of the wardrobes of

⁵³ NCH, 19/5/23, p.451.

⁵⁴ Saphiere and Edward Elias were among the five captives released on 3/6/23, Tours to Macleay, Tel., 3194/23/93. The last of the captives arrived at Shanghai on 16/6/23, 20/6/23, PRO, FO228/3253/156/5853/23/91; NCH, 22/6/23, p.746.

⁵⁵ NCH, 7/7/23, p.37.

⁵⁶ NCH, 21/7/23, p.156, 18/8/23, p.1.

⁵⁷ NCH, 28/2/25, p.337; Brigandage Claims 1. Draft Circular to Consuls, 12/1/24, No.9 (302/24), PRO, FO671/508; Encl., in Circular to Consul No.9, 12/1/24, F 3003/289/10, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/512/23/83; see also draft by G.M. Moss, 25/8/23, No.134, FO671/507/XC197231/6202/23/110, (6202/23).

Sephardi millionaires in the 1920s and, perhaps as importantly, an opportunity to assess the cost of some of the items.⁵⁸ They furnish a remarkable contrast with the apparel worn by their forebears and by some of their relatives still living in Baghdad. Their claims were authenticated by the British Consulate at Shanghai: 'All three men affect smart clothes and jewellery at all times and their claims are as far as can be ascertained not unduly exaggerated'.⁵⁹ Noteworthy in Frederick Elias' and Sapiere's claims are a Burberry raincoat \$80, one blue suit \$65, one silk shirt and collar \$17, three hats \$60, platinum signet ring \$250, gold penknife \$25 and two dozen gramophone records \$35.⁶⁰

Saphiere's claim included a sworn statement that his loss of earnings, based on previous years was Tls 1,000. The Elias brothers left it to the Legation to determine the amount due to them for loss of earnings.⁶¹ Doctor Mertens predicted that they would suffer grave disabilities for an indefinite period.⁶² Edward Elias suffered from malaria and a severe attack of influenza and amoebic dysentery. His recovery was retarded by the mental and physical strain of his experience. Captivity had exacerbated Frederick Elias' rheumatism, and he suffered a serious nervous breakdown and had a weak heart. On their doctor's advice they planned to holiday in Europe, for eight months to a year, in order to recuperate.⁶³ This would entail considerable travelling expenses for which they expected to be reimbursed.⁶⁴ The Shanghai Consulate was confident that 'any amount of cross examination would merely disclose...that such advice would necessarily be followed by men of their

⁵⁸ Encl. 2. in Barton's despatch No.134, 25/8/23, PRO, FO 671/507/6016/23/106; Settlement Claims in FO671/507/6247/23/112, No.135 (4774/23), 14/8/23; F. Elias to Consul General, Shanghai, 16/6/23, FO671/507/XC197231; see 'E.L. Elias and F.S. Elias' claims, FO671/507/XC186466.

⁵⁹ Moss to Eric Teichman, 25/8/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/A16; According to George Hayim, his uncle Eddie 'was a handsome playboy....wore dazzling shoes and flashy clothes...he won at the races and communicated perfectly with Chinese who helped him win', Hayim, *op. cit.*, p.13.

⁶⁰ For a list of claims see 16/6/23, PRO, FO671/507/ XC197231 and 25/10/23, FO671/507/XC197231/6202/23/110, No.134, (6202/23); [undated]FO671/507/XC186466; see Illustration, p.214.

⁶¹ G.S. Moss to E. Teichman, 1/11/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231, No.7526/23; see Illustration, p.214.

⁶² G.S. Moss to E. Teichman, 1/11/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231, No.7526/23. The Beijing Legation regarded the claims for bodily injury and medical attention extravagant and, supported by vague medical certificates, Teichman to Moss, 22/10/23, PRO, FO228/3257/10/529/23/123/441; Moss to Teichman, 1/11/23, FO228/3258/7526/23/12809/23/41.

⁶³ Pratt & Co. to Barton, 24/8/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/6363/23/115.

⁶⁴ 'Lincheng Supplementary Claim', G.S. Moss to E. Teichman, 1/11/23, PRO, 671/507/XC197231, No. 7526/23; Pratt and Co., solicitors, to Barton, 24/8/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231/6363/23/115; 'Claims on Behalf of British Victims of the Lincheng Incident', FO671/507/XC197231; 'Lincheng Supplementary Claim; Comparative Table, Enclosure No.3 in No.669 to Foreign Office of 4/12/23, FO671/507/XC197231.

social and financial status in Shanghai'.⁶⁵ It recorded that there was not the slightest doubt that Saphiere and the Elias brothers' health and earning capacity had suffered severely during their captivity and agreed Saphiere's claim for \$30,577, Edward's claim for \$16, 861 and Fred's for \$37, 404.⁶⁶

Eric Teichman, of the British Legation at Beijing considered their claims unjustifiably excessive and asked for Foreign Office approval because of the precedent involved in presenting claims for indirect losses.⁶⁷ Moss, Acting British Consul General at Shanghai, annoyed at the Foreign Office involvement, explained that the claims had been drawn up carefully by Sidney Barton and the Judge of the Supreme Court. Both considered the figures fair and maintained that any British jury in China would award the captives much heavier damages. Moss, was critical of Teichman's intention to cut down their claims to nearly one-half.⁶⁸ Teichman estimated that Edward Elias would be incapacitated no more than six months, and calculated his monthly earning at Tls 500. He reckoned that Fred Elias required nine months' rest and compensation for the loss of his earning capacity, Tls 2000 a month.⁶⁹ Finally, the Chinese Government, in settlement of their claims, paid Saphiere \$10,557.50, Edward \$6,861.00 and Frederick \$12,404.00.⁷⁰ In addition, Saphiere received \$10,000, Elias and Frederick \$7,000 each as a supplementary compensation for bodily injury.

It is open to conjecture whether the Sephardi captives considered they had been adequately reimbursed for the hardships they had endured. They made a complete enough recovery to concoct a fairy tale ending to their adventure, 'to show gratitude to their captors, Eddie and Freddie then invited them to a banquet in Shanghai. Toasts were offered, wine was drunk and all the bandits dropped dead,

⁶⁵ G.S. Moss to E. Teichman, 1/11/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231, No.7526/23, p.2.

⁶⁶ Their claims are listed in PRO, FO671/508, 170/24/176, and FO 671/507/XC186466; see Illustration, p.214.

⁶⁷ Moss to Teichman, 1/11/23, PRO, FO228/3258/161/12809/23/41, No. 7526/23.

⁶⁸ 'Lincheng Supplementary Claim', Moss to Teichman, 1/11/23, PRO, FO671/507/XC197231 No.7526/23; 'Amounts are assessed on a rather liberal scale, and we should have difficulty in justifying them... should they be disputed by the Chinese', Teichman to Moss, Explanatory Memorandum to British Legation, 11/11/23, PRO, FO671/507.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 11/11/23, Edward's father made him an allowance of £1500 to cover travel expenses, Moss to Teichman, 18/6/23, PRO, FO671/507.

⁷⁰ Dean's Circular, Nos.44 and 54, 18/3/25 and Beijing Legation, to Pratt, 5/3/25, PRO, FO671/508/1595/25/214, No.80, (1936/25).

they had been poisoned'.⁷¹ Nor did their captivity impair their entrepreneurial skills. They developed thirty-five luxury flats, equipped with air conditioning and heating systems, on Avenue Haig. Haig Court was hailed as an innovation which provided much needed residences for affluent families who entertained on a lavish scale.

Interesting conclusions can be drawn from this study of the Lincheng Incident. As Jews employed their co-religionists in their business, it is arguable that employers in a position to do so, gave preferential treatment to those bound together in a common faith. This could have been prompted by paternalism, by trust or as a means by which employers could exercise a greater measure of social control over their employees. Their solidarity was forcefully vocalised in their persistent lobbying of the British Consulate to take strong action to have the hostages released. This episode demonstrated how seriously Shanghai Sephardim undertook their religious duties and responsibilities towards each other. It also highlights the benefits they enjoyed because of the SMC's administration. The high sanitary standards the SMC insisted upon made the Settlement comparatively free from the filth, vermin and diseases which afflicted other parts of China. Particularly illuminating are the unguarded comments of some of the consular officials which reveal their attitude to these 'Baghdad Scotchmen'.

Of singular interest to historians are the detailed insurance claims made by the Jewish captives. It shows how acculturated to the British this wealthy third generation of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai had become. It highlights the striking contrast between their dapper European clothes and the Baghdadi garb: *jooba* (long flowing inner garments), *dagla* (long coat), *kamsan* (long shift), *sadaria* (outer vest).⁷² Robert Bickers points out that their clothes would probably have been considered flashy, and rather 'chi chi' by their British peers.⁷³ Frequent holidays in Europe had become *de rigueur* among the wealthy Sephardim. Many, like their British peers, even referred to their holidays in Britain as 'going home'.⁷⁴ Above

⁷¹ Hayim, *op. cit.*, p.14.

⁷² Musleah, *op. cit.*, p.300.

⁷³ Bickers, *op. cit.*, interview by author, London, 1/9/93.

⁷⁴ For example, 'Edward Shellim 'came to Shanghai for a year or two and then settled down at *Home*', [author's emphasis] *IM*, 5/1/23, p.17.

all, the Lincheng Incident illustrates how the British Consul worked to ensure the safety of British subjects and British protected persons. It shows why Sephardi Jews were keen to obtain this status which afforded them more protection and privileges than Iraqi citizenship.

The Struggle of Baghdadi Jews to be Classified as ‘European’

Dr. David Kazzar emphasises the importance of ethnic and cultural heritage, nationality and social standing as the most significant components of a positive concept of ‘self’, which allows an individual to define himself and relate to the outside world with confidence. In Baghdad, Jews had maintained a distinct cultural identity because of their strong connections with their ancestral and historical roots.⁷⁵ The some thirty thousand Jews of Baghdad, comprising perhaps one-third of the city’s population, were an important segment of the business community and maintained a high profile, holding positions of economic and political prestige and privilege until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁷⁶ This did not, however, make for their political security, and their vulnerability is clear in the treatment meted out to them by those rulers who failed to appreciate the ‘value’ of the Jews to the economy. Wherever Jews or other minority groups settled under the British Raj they were assured of political security. Arguably, it was a tool by which the British played off groups against the majority in order to achieve their own ‘balance of power’. The British policy of divide and rule favoured minorities who were numerically too small to pose a political threat to their supremacy.⁷⁷ At the same time, British prosperity was enhanced by its affluent Baghdadi Jewish merchants.⁷⁸

It is likely that Jews from Baghdad would not have settled in Bombay in such large numbers, were it not a British possession with vast trading opportunities. The

⁷⁵ Dr. David Kazzar, ‘Self-Identity of the Iraqi Jews in Iraq and Israel’, *Nehardea*, No.4, April, 1990. pp.17-18.

⁷⁶ Roland, *op. cit.*, p.115.

⁷⁷ Margaret Abraham, ‘Ethnic Identity and Marginality: A Study of the Jews of India’, Ph.D. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1989, p.165.

⁷⁸ Though the East India Company controlled trade, Baghdadi Jews filled important intermediary mercantile roles which facilitated the amassing of vast fortunes. ‘There is no doubt that the Baghdadi Jews helped Bombay and Calcutta, Shanghai and Hong Kong, to develop into some of the greatest import and export and financial centres of the world and yet their role as intermediaries, almost ancillaries of the British, needs to be stressed’, Roland, ‘Baghdadi Jews in India and China: A Comparison of Economic Roles,’ p.20.

Baghdadi Jews never considered themselves to be part of the indigenous population wherever they settled in the East. For them, India, Burma, Malaya, Hong Kong, China and Australia were host countries in which they could practice their religion freely. Naturally, because their political safety depended on Britain's political power, they were deferential to the British. At the top of the social, political and economic ladders, the British were the most desirable reference group and their customs and traditions were considered to be most worthy of emulation.⁷⁹ By the turn of the century they discarded their Baghdadi garb, used English rather than Judeo-Arabic, adopted Anglicised names and sent their children to British schools whenever possible.⁸⁰ Some voluntarily gave up Jewish traditions in favour of acculturation to the British, prime examples being the majority of the Sassoon family. With their increasing prosperity, Shanghai Sephardim became increasingly Anglicised, taking their cue from those branches of the Sassoon and Gubbay families who, between 1865 and 1870, emigrated to Britain where they were accepted in British society.

During the earlier years of foreign settlement in the trading ports, it was the norm for strangers to be absorbed into any community that would assume effective control over them. Thus, until the turn of the century, Sephardi Jews who were then Ottoman subjects employed in British firms in Shanghai, were registered as British subjects at HM Consulate-General.⁸¹ Their principal qualification for registration, apart from their employment, was long residence in India where they had prospered under British rule and acquired a knowledge of the English language.⁸² On arrival in Shanghai, they applied for registration which was renewed annually until 1906, when the British authorities investigated all claims to nationality or protection. Subsequently, their registration as British subjects was changed to British Protected Persons [hereafter BPP]. The registration as BPPs of the whole class of Ottoman subjects in British employment at Shanghai continued until 1918.⁸³

⁷⁹ Abraham, *op. cit.*, pp.7, 133-135.

⁸⁰ Roland, *Jews in British India*, p.62.

⁸¹ Nine points describing the requirements necessary for a company to be listed as British in 'Memorandum S.J. David & Company Ltd.', by Deacon Looker Deacon & Harston, 11/5/16, PRO, FO656/263/XC/18571, pp.658-661.

⁸² *IM*, 1/4/34, p.20.

⁸³ Unsigned Memo, 4/3/37, PRO, FO676/291 Dossier 13, S.

With the outbreak of World War I, Britain's general policy was to refuse naturalisation to subjects of hostile powers.⁸⁴ The Foreign Office insisted that no Ottoman subject engaged by a British firm in China be accorded British protection unless he or she had a claim on some other ground. Most Ottoman subjects had renounced their Imperial Turkish nationality during the war, some in order to keep their jobs with British employers, others upon learning of the Balfour Declaration. The British capture of Iraq from the Ottoman Empire reinforced the loyalty of Iraqi Jews who welcomed their liberator, Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude. A week after the armistice, the Jewish community of Baghdad presented a petition to the civil commissioner to accept them as British subjects 'holding themselves prepared to accept all obligations and rights of true citizens':⁸⁵

...Baghdad has furnished to the British Empire important colonies of Jewish Traders, established mostly in India and England, who enjoy without exception the rights of British citizens.⁸⁶

In 1919 and 1920 they approached Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner, to grant British citizenship to the Jewish community,⁸⁷ maintaining that 'the British had no right to force them', as former Ottoman subjects to take on a new Iraqi citizenship against their will.⁸⁸ As Richard Coke observed, it is indeed significant that 'the Jewish opposition to the local application of 'self-determination', had to be met by a process of personal and moral persuasion, and that there was in

⁸⁴ Roland, *op. cit.*, pp.61-63; Nationality is based on either birth or naturalisation. Any Shanghai Sephardim who had the funds and the means of legal entry, could have settled for five years in a British colony in order to obtain British naturalisation. It is notable that on the declaration of war between Britain and Turkey Ottoman subjects residing in Britain became alien enemies, subject to limitations imposed under the Aliens Restrictions Act, 1914, '1917 Petition of Baghdad Merchants at Manchester', Lydia Collins, *The Scribe*, No. 56, January 1993, p.7.

⁸⁵ 'Our Community trusts that an agglomeration of 80,000 Jews in a country like Mesopotamia may prove as good subjects to His Majesty as their brethren in England', the President of the Jewish Lay Council to the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, (Philadelphia, 1991), pp.256-258.

⁸⁶ Stillman, *op. cit.*, p.38; During the 1880s the overwhelming majority of India's 18,000 Jews were immigrants from Iraq, or their descendants, Abraham Ben-Jacob, *Babylonian Jewry in Diaspora*, (Jerusalem, 1985), [Hebrew], pp.27, 430.

⁸⁷ During the British mandate, the citizens of Iraq were BPPs.

⁸⁸ The 1924 constitution guaranteed the equality of all Iraqis before the law, Richard Coke, *The Heart of the Middle East*, (London, 1988), pp.20-21; Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies*, (New York, 1970), pp.300-301.

fact no logical argument against the position which they had taken'.⁸⁹ Clearly then Jews in Baghdad aspired to become British subjects.

For pragmatic reasons it made sense for Shanghai Sephardim to identify with the Empire. This was emphasised by the continual political upheavals which beset China and which led to a breakdown of law and order bordering on anarchy. The Sephardim experienced the instability and insecurity of living in a war zone during the Taiping Rebellion of 1871, the war of 1924 - the Jiangsu-Zhejiang battle between two opposing warlords for Shanghai, the most important city in Jiangsu province. More serious were the Sino-Japanese hostilities which erupted in Shanghai in 1932 and again in 1937. Their belief in the British Empire was so strong they supposed that if the Japanese took over they would have more hesitation in harming British nationals than they would Iraqis and stateless Jews.⁹⁰

The Changing Status of Iraqi Jews

It is important to examine the status and benefits that British nationality conferred wherever the British Raj was established, in order to fully appreciate why Baghdadi Jews went to great lengths to be registered as British subjects. Upon taking the Oath of Allegiance, under the terms of the 1914 British Nationality and Status of Alien Act, a British subject was:⁹¹

...entitled to all political and other wights [sic], powers and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, duties and liabilities to which a natural-born British subject is entitled, and have to all intents and purposes the status of a natural born British subject...⁹²

British subjects registered themselves at HBM consulates in Shanghai and were recognised as such. They had the assurance that their family would be evacuated and cared for should the need arise. British subjects and BPPs held passports which permitted them to travel anywhere in the world, and to reside in any British

⁸⁹ Coke, *op. cit.*, p.221; Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East-The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921*, (London, 1956), pp.175-213.

⁹⁰ Yosef Ya'acov, interview by author, tape recording, Jerusalem, 2/6/93.

⁹¹ A British subject is defined in Section 1 of the British Nationality Act 1948 as a citizen of the UK, or colonies or of the Dominions.

⁹² Copy in PRO, FO671/464/XC1592.

region.⁹³ BPPs had a status similar to citizens of British colonies.⁹⁴ Often the Foreign Office, when repudiating British protection, suggested that the applicant be included in the special provisional register, which offered somewhat nebulous protection to Shanghai born children of Iraqi parents.⁹⁵ As this concession did not entitle the applicant to any form of British passport, he was permitted to travel within British territory or to Iraq on an affidavit.⁹⁶

It is difficult to overstate the importance of British nationality from the viewpoint of the political security it afforded Jewish merchants who wanted to leave China. Although it gave them little protection against bandits, it was useful for redress, for those who travelled in bandit ridden areas in China. This has already been illustrated in the Lincheng Incident. The minority of Shanghai Sephardim who had passports could travel freely as consular protection afforded by the British was effective and universal.⁹⁷ The few Jews who remained Turkish subjects had no extraterritorial protection outside the International Settlement. Their lawsuits were heard in the Mixed Court, where they were subject to the Chinese Criminal and Civil Code of Laws, instead of HM Supreme Court.⁹⁸ Many just claims against Chinese were abandoned by foreign merchants rather than have to undergo the weariness of obtaining judgement which, experience had shown, might never be put into force.⁹⁹

⁹³ For example Raphael requested to be reinstated as a British subject, on the grounds that a passport as a British subject was one of 'vital importance and urgency' to him, as he intended to travel, 12/7/28, PRO, FO671/464/5029/30/532 (P 104 in C.10) No.86.

⁹⁴ S.A. de Smith, *Constitutional and Administrative Law*, pp. 419 and 138, 576, 606. BPP's-inhabitants of protected states- were allowed to retain that status instead of opting for local citizenship. A BPP is defined in Section 32 of the British Nationality Act 1948.

⁹⁵ Foreign Office to Shanghai Consulate, tel., No 7, 21/1/27, PRO, FO 671/464/c/3/1457/30/508; Ya'acov, interview by author, 10/4/92. He refers to it as the 'fictional fig leaf'.

⁹⁶ Subject to the conditions laid down in Paragraph 2 of Foreign Office Despatch No.26, 2/5/30, PRO, FO671/464/5725/30/539.

⁹⁷ Ya'acov, interview by author, 7/5/93.

⁹⁸ 'The Chinese Theory of Justice', *NCH*, 4/2/1910, p.231; 'The Mixed Court Problem', *NCH*, 16/5/25, p.267 and 7/1/30, p.32. Chinese magistrates and foreign assessors sat together by agreements with the powers in 1926. By 1930, the Chinese judges sat alone. Broadly it may be defined as: a Police Court for the trial of Chinese charged criminally by foreigners; a Civil Court for the adjudication of claims brought by foreigners against Chinese; a Court of Appeal in criminal and civil matters, Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West Society and Culture 1815-1937*, (London, 1979), pp.318-319; Nicholas Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s*, (Hanover, New England, 1991), p.153.

⁹⁹ *NCH*, 30/9/1880, p.282. Some instances in which foreigners have suffered from the failure of the Mixed Court to enforce its judgements are recorded in the Commercial Report for 1877 by Davenport, *NCH*, 30/9/1880, p.282 and 22/12/1905, p.667. 'If you got a judgement in your favour it was because your bribe exceeded the other litigant's', Horowitz, correspondence with author, 20/8/92.

Of great importance to British merchants was the fact that their real estate and business came under British protection. British-owned firms were registered in the British company register and their documents authenticated. They were recognised as foreign investors; national residents with legal status. Non-British subjects had no claim to British protection for their real-estate holdings. To overcome this difficulty, many Sephardi Turkish subjects transferred the title deeds of their properties to relatives who were British subjects.¹⁰⁰ Not least, as British nationals, the acculturation process was facilitated. To be actually recognised as British subjects in the colonial context was of inestimable value in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The alternative, Iraqi nationality, was unattractive when the Oriental Ottoman Empire was in decline, and European colonisation was on the rise.

In the context of China there were important pragmatic considerations which motivated Britain to take a protective interest in the welfare of Ottoman Jews as a group.¹⁰¹ Britain was a late-comer to the 'religious protection game', and most of the other religious minorities already had protectors.¹⁰² It was lucrative to have wealthy Jewish merchants operating under the British flag. The importance of this factor was highlighted in the years prior to World War I, when Britain faced severe competition from her commercial rivals in China, notably from Germany. The major part of the trade was carried by British ships. As early as 1900, the British merchants naturally expressed concern over the transfer of large shipping businesses to German purchasers.¹⁰³ British merchants complained that their piece-goods trade with Manchester had been seriously prejudiced by the easy terms and long credits of subsidised German operators, who were suspected of 'not being bound by purely mercantile considerations'.¹⁰⁴ In 1915 Archibald Rose, HBM Consul General Shanghai, urged, 'we should lose no opportunity to oust our German rivals from their

¹⁰⁰ Ya'acov, interview by author, Jerusalem, 2/10/93.

¹⁰¹ Palmerston, Foreign Secretary to William Young stated 'it will be part of your duty as British Vice Consul at Jerusalem to afford protection to the Jews generally', 31/1/1839, No.2 PRO, FO78/368, cited by Albert Hyamson, *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in Relation to the Jews of Palestine 1838-1914*, Vol. 1, (London, 1939), p.2.

¹⁰² Stillman, *op. cit.*, p.7.

¹⁰³ *NCH*, 7/2/1900, p.236.

¹⁰⁴ British merchants were urged to concern themselves with Imperial interests, 'Report of the British Chamber of Commerce in China and Hong Kong', 22/11/19, No. 525, PRO, FO671/457.

present position'.¹⁰⁵ During World War I, in order to circumvent the prohibition against shipping goods direct to enemy countries, goods were shipped through neutral firms to neutral countries, mainly in British ships by British subjects. David Sassoon and Co. were suspected, it transpired groundlessly, of infringing regulation II of the Trading with the Enemy (Amendment) Regulation 1915.¹⁰⁶

It must be remembered that the protectorate over Ottoman subjects in China had shifted from France to Germany and then Britain; Turkey having no extraterritoriality treaty. French protectorate over them dated to the 'Capitulations under François Premier' in February, 1536.¹⁰⁷ In 1908 Turkish subjects in China were suddenly informed that, at the request of the Turkish Government, they would come under German protection.¹⁰⁸ A treaty in 1922 between Britain and Iraq placed Iraqi nationals in China under British protection, (Article 5), where they remained until 6 August 1924, when the Iraq Nationality Law came into force.¹⁰⁹ Seen in this context the importance to Britain of having successful Shanghai Sephardi merchants conduct their trade under the British flag becomes apparent.¹¹⁰ Clearly, granting British nationality to them assisted in boosting British commercial pre-

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum on German Trade in Shanghai, 12/11/15, PRO, FO 671/385; For a good account of the German Navy's acquisition and administration of Kiaochow see Albert Harding, 'The Role of the Imperial German Navy in Colonial Affairs', Ohio State, 1972 Ph.D., Thesis, Woodruff D. Smith, 'The Ideology of German Colonialism 1840-1918', Ph.D., Thesis, University of Chicago, 1972.

¹⁰⁶ Blunt to Shanghai Consulate, 3/9/1861, PRO, FO 678/187; The Registrar HBM Supreme Court to J. E. Bingham, December, 1915, PRO, FO656/263/XC185741/646; 'Rex v. David Sassoon & Co.', *NCH*, 24/12/15, pp.956, 31/12/15, pp.1021-1023, and 22/1/16, pp.209-211; J. David was suspected of letting Germans run his business, contrary to the China Companies Order-in-Council 1915, No. 266, which stipulated that registered British companies were 'in substance British and...amenable to British jurisdiction', Memorandum by Deacon Looker Deacon & Harston, 11/5/16, PRO, FO656/263/XC18541/658; Legation Circular from Fox, No. 9, 22/1/1920, PRO, FO656/263; J. Somekh, manager of The British Asiatic Co., was under suspicion because his firm was taken over by an Austrian, 21/8/1915, SMP D No. 411.

¹⁰⁷ 'Les Ottomans pourront voyager sous le bannière de France', *NCH*, 22/8/1908, pp.502-503. The existence of the Treaty has been recently called into question as the original text has not been found, R.J. Knecht, *Francis I*, (Cambridge, 1982), p.274.

¹⁰⁸ 'Turkish Subjects in China', *NCH*, 22/8/1908, p.502.

¹⁰⁹ The British occupied Baghdad in February, 1917 and the newly created state of Iraq came under the mandate of Great Britain in 1917 as a result of the provisions of Part I Section 22 of the Treaty of Versailles. In 1929 Britain granted independence to Iraq, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Volume 8, p.89. The effect of the Iraq Nationality Law was that Ottoman subjects habitually resident in Iraq ceased to be Ottomans and acquired Iraqi nationality (Article 3), unless being adults they opted for Turkish or other nationality (Articles 4 and 5), and submitted to expatriation (Article 6), PRO, FO 676/291. Even after the British gave up their mandate of Iraq all Iraqis in China were registered at HBM consulate.

¹¹⁰ Endicott emphasises the difficulty of determining to what extent the government was using the entrepreneur to advance a public interest, or whether merchants were using the government to forward their private interests, Stephen Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy, 1933-1937*, (Manchester, 1975) p. xii.

eminence in China, and secured her useful allies in the fierce economic and political competition in the East.¹¹¹

‘The Iraqis are a Most Tenacious People’¹¹²in Their Quest to Become British Subjects

In the context of the International Settlement, where the emphasis was placed on the pomp and ceremonial trimming of Imperial Britain, the significance of being identified with the ruling power, was magnified. Also, under the Raj, or any other Imperial power, there was political stability which produced a climate conducive to trade. For those Shanghai Sephardim fortunate to acquire it, British nationality heightened their status in the eyes of their peers and also of the Chinese.¹¹³

The anomalous position of Iraqi Jews in Shanghai gave rise to many irregularities.¹¹⁴ For example, the question as to whether persons on the provisional register could be sued in the British court was brought sharply into focus in the case brought by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank against Benjamin David Benjamin in 1884.¹¹⁵ On being asked his nationality by the assistant Judge, R. A. Mowrat, R. E. Toeg, a witness, replied: ‘I was born in Bagdad (sic) but I have been twenty years in Bombay, Calcutta, Hong Kong and China and I consider myself a British subject’.¹¹⁶ In fact, his application for re-registration as a British Subject had been refused and he was therefore not under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.¹¹⁷ As a correspondent to *The North China Herald* observed, the essential fact was that Toeg was born in Baghdad which made him a subject of the Sultan of Turkey. Thus, if he had been convicted, an application to the Turkish Minister in London would very likely have produced an order for an enquiry from the Foreign Office and his

¹¹¹ Germany lost her extraterritorial rights in China during the Great War and in 1919 Germans were expelled from China.

¹¹² An annotation with an illegible signature, 8/4/38, PRO, FO671/462.

¹¹³ However, the owner of car registration number ‘One’ justified not conceding it to Haroon who was ‘only British by naturalisation’, Wei, *op. cit.*, pp.95-96. Comparatively few Chinese would have made this distinction.

¹¹⁴ The certificate of naturalisation, granted under the Indian Naturalisation Act 1852 to the father, definitely limited conferring British nationality on those in territories then under the government of the East India Company. There was no provision in British law touching the status of children of naturalised persons born out of HM Dominions before 1/1/15.

¹¹⁵ ‘The Question of Nationality’, *NCDN*, 23/5/1884, p.592.

¹¹⁶ *NCH*, 13/6/1884, p.678.

¹¹⁷ Letter to the Editor signed ‘Gang Warily’, Shanghai, 22/5/1884, *NCH*, 23/5/1884, p.594 and 13/6/1884, pp.678-688.

immediate release, rendering the court proceedings a farce.¹¹⁸ It is possible that anomalies such as these prompted the British authorities to adopt a more stringent policy in the registration of British subjects.

The renewal of registration for British subjects took place under a new system introduced by the Order in Council of 13 December 1921, and became operative in Shanghai from July 1922. It called for strict scrutiny and revision of registration of British subjects and BPPs.¹¹⁹ Each case was to be treated strictly on its own merit irrespective of previous registrations. Under the old system registration was renewed automatically upon production of the previous year's certificate of registration, and therefore errors were repeated.¹²⁰ The claims to British nationality of many Sephardi residents were open to review and many registrations on insufficient grounds were discovered. It was argued that British nationality could no longer be confirmed.¹²¹ Although it was constantly reiterated that mere length of registration did not by itself confer British nationality, many Sephardim were accepted on the grounds that the revocation of their registration would cause them 'great discomfort'.¹²² In fact the whole question of the status of Iraqis, which had changed more than once since the 1914 War, had not been conclusively settled even in the 1930s. Their anomalous position was frequently referred to in the consular correspondence to the Foreign Office requesting directives and clarification on points of law.¹²³ E. G. Jamieson, Acting Consul at Shanghai, promised the confused consular officials as late as 1927 that 'we shall shortly be able to regularise the position of all Iraqis in China'.¹²⁴ There is no evidence, however, that this came about till after World War II, when HBM consulate became rigid in defining those who would be issued with new passports.

¹¹⁸ 'Nationality and Jurisdiction', *NCH*, 30/5/1884, p.625.

¹¹⁹ 'As we are going to have a hard enough time with those who are [British subjects]', Minute by Sir John Brenan, 17/4/24, PRO, FO671/464 2260/31/564. The Lincheng Incident in 1923 emphasised the vast amount of work involved by the Consulate in the protection of British subjects.

¹²⁰ Moss to Macleay, 20/4/24, PRO, FO 671/459/C/3/7392/23/71.

¹²¹ Barton to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24/4/24, PRO, FO 671/465/2246/24.

¹²² 'British Nationality cannot be acquired by the mistake of any British official high or low', S. Barton to Foreign Office, 21/5/24, FO671/465/1846/24/24.

¹²³ Jamieson to Foreign Office, 25/1/18, PRO, FO671/456/13026/18, No.11; it was not possible to trace the circumstances in which passports were issued and there are several cases of two persons of different families included in one passport, Memoranda, by Claud Servern, Colonial Secretary, regarding Jacob Elias Isaac, 1/12/22, FO 671/458/7555/281.

¹²⁴ Jamieson to Gregson, 2/2/27, PRO, FO671/464/7684/28/557.

Although British policy regarding the granting of British naturalisation to Jews of Baghdadi origin was inconsistent, a certain pattern emerges when the applications are examined. It highlights the factors that influenced the British to confer, withhold and sometimes revoke this privilege. Consular officials appear to have dealt leniently with the wealthy Sephardim, perhaps because they were more acculturated to the British, travelled more frequently to Britain and were influential. The death duties from the estates of Sephardi British subjects afforded a lucrative source of income to the British Treasury. Silas Hardoon's status as a British subject 'as an act of grace and favour' was a crucial factor in the decision of his estate being administered according to British Law.¹²⁵

Although the Aliens Act of 1914 stipulated that children born abroad of British subjects naturalised in India were not British subjects,¹²⁶ British policy was to deal sympathetically with applications for nationality status from those Sephardim who had rendered service to Britain. Eleazer Silas Kadoorie, [later Sir Elly Kadoorie], amply repaid the British for his British nationality.¹²⁷ In a remarkable display of fidelity, Kadoorie spontaneously allowed his palatial home, Marble Hall, to be used as a canteen and recreation centre for the British troops in 1927.¹²⁸ His award of a knighthood in 1926 bears testimony to the value Britain placed on this loyal subject whose worldwide philanthropy, notably the founding of schools in China and in Baghdad, did much to enhance British prestige.¹²⁹ Likewise, David and Maurice Benjamin, who had not been born in India, were registered as British subjects.¹³⁰ Maurice demonstrated his loyalty when he willingly acceded to the Foreign Office's

¹²⁵ Memorandum by Gustin, 18/6/28, PRO, FO671/462/c/3/4073/28/422, and 'Estate Hardoon:Nationality Dispute', 4/3/37, Dossier 13 S, FO676/291.

¹²⁶ The Rule derived from Section 1 (1) b of the British Nationality & Status of Aliens Act 1914 as given in Dicey's conflict of laws 4th ed. p. 165. This section was pivotal in most of the cases affecting the Sephardi community. Section 1 (1) v provided that it was necessary to register the birth within one year and made it obligatory for British Nationality to be asserted by declaration within a year of attaining maturity, 25/10/23, PRO, FO671/462 and FO671/464 1457/30/508.

¹²⁷ Kadoorie to Barton, 20/3/24, PRO, FO671/465 1239/24/17 C/7; Shanghai Consulate to R.E. Kadoorie, 25/3/24, PRO, FO671/465/XC185176/1300/24/20 and 20/3/24, FO671/465/1212/24/18 C/7. Born in June, 1867 in Baghdad, Kadoorie married Laura Mocatta in London, in 1897 and had two sons Lawrence and Horace, George F. Nellist, (ed), *Men of Shanghai and North China: A Standard Biographical Reference Work*, (Shanghai, 1933), p.192.

¹²⁸ 'Soldier's wants such as pork pies, ham sandwiches, sausages and mashed potatoes...can be had at very low rates', *The China Press*, 20/2/27, p.3.

¹²⁹ Nigel Cameron, *Power: The Story of China Light*, (Hong Kong and New York, 1982), pp.87-98.

¹³⁰ Their Indian born father, Benjamin David Benjamin, [see Chapter Two] was registered as a British subject, Moss to Macleay, 6/11/33 and 24/2/34, PRO, FO671/462/7029/33/679.

request to lease his newly constructed property in Kiuking Road, Shanghai's Wall Street, for use as a hospital for the British troops in 1927.¹³¹ He was commended for his patriotism by General Sir John Duncan, Chief of the Shanghai Defence Force in China.¹³²

Shanghai-born Edward Ezra was registered as a British subject from 1907 on the grounds that his public services entitled him to British protection.¹³³ During the war Edward, a distinguished member of the SMC, had made very large contributions to British War Loans and charities.¹³⁴ Edward was totally convinced that he was a British subject. On his death in December 1921, HBM Supreme Court for China had jurisdiction over his vast estate and received the astronomical sum of £400,000 in probate fees.¹³⁵ The Consulate feared that if the government did not recognise Edward as a British subject, there would almost certainly be a demand for its immediate refund.¹³⁶ Moreover, if doubts were cast on the jurisdiction of the British Court over the estate, grave questions were likely to arise as to the legal position of the HSB which was owed over three million taels security on property from Edward Ezra's estate.¹³⁷ The repayments were conditional on an order being obtained from the British Court sanctioning the loan.¹³⁸

Yet the Consulate, wary of setting a precedent, stopped the registration of Edward's two sons Cecil and Denzil. Sir John. F. Brenan, Consul General, strongly urged that, if necessary, the King himself should use his prerogative to ensure that the Ezra brothers be granted British nationality. He underlined that they were born

¹³¹ *IM*, 4/1/29, p.4.

¹³² 'Jews, Great Britain and China', *IM*, 4/2/27, p.4.

¹³³ Hill to Blunt, 14/2/30, PRO, FO671/464 1450/30/509; Edward claimed British nationality on the grounds that his paternal grandfather had been naturalised at Poona, India in 1872. Given that his father had been born in the Ottoman Empire, prior to the 1914 war, Edward could claim only Ottoman nationality, which would have placed him under French or German Consular protection, PRO, FO671/464/1457/30/508.

¹³⁴ Hill to Blunt, 14/2/30, PRO, FO671/464 1457/30/508.

¹³⁵ Copy of Ezra's Will in PRO, FO917/569/XC185289; Details of his 'Personal Property', in FO907/2215/186098; see Illustration, p.172.

¹³⁶ The Foreign Office was referred to for a ruling, 'I think the words Estate Duty should be avoided; the proper expression under our rules of court is Probate Fees', Hill to Brenan, Consul General, 25/2/30; PRO, FO671/464 14050/30/509.

¹³⁷ Hanson Manager, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, to Brenan, 12/2/30, PRO, FO671/464 1450/30/509, p.504; Memorandum from Hanson, 6/2/30, and copy of HSB to Brenan, 12/2/30, in Enclosure No.2, 27/2/30, p.502, FO671/464/1450/30/509.

¹³⁸ Hill to Blunt, Memo, 28/2/30, PRO, FO 671/464 1457/30/508.

in Shanghai 'where by treaty, the King exercised jurisdiction over British Subjects'.¹³⁹ Although the Secretary of State, Arthur Henderson, could find no grounds on which to do so, he authorised the consulate to register the widow and children as BPPs.¹⁴⁰ The intricacies of the case were noted by Hill, of the consulate staff, 'I hope that it is now clear, although I admit its resemblance to the Hampton Court Maze'.¹⁴¹

Great store was put on the applicants being respected members of the community, yet consular officials sometimes denied British naturalisation to respectable and influential Sephardim Anglophiles who travelled frequently to Britain. It was only after resorting to the time-honoured method of 'pulling strings'¹⁴² that Ellis Hayim, a wealthy stockbroker, and his family were accepted as BPPs.¹⁴³ His brother, A. J. Hayim, was refused registration in 1919 and later registered with the French as an Ottoman.¹⁴⁴ Significantly, A. Pratt commented that since Ellis had been registered for so long as a BPP: 'the consulate had better continue to do so, *unless there are grounds for wanting to get rid of him*'. [author's emphasis].¹⁴⁵ Clearly the authorities were able to bend the rules when it suited them. With hindsight, they might well have more generously accepted Hayim as a British subject. He played an important role in the SVC and on the SMC. Major General Duncan paid tribute to him for his generosity in housing the Coldstream Guards in the extensive grounds of the Hayim estate in 1927.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Brenan to Foreign Office, London, 27/2/30, PRO, FO 671/464/c/3/1450/30/509, despatch No.13; Warner to Brenan, 31/6/30, PRO, FO671/464/4345/30/526/26, (T3968/119/378); Dicey, *op.cit.*, p. 165;.

¹⁴⁰ Mossop to Blackburn, Minutes, 18/4/31, refers to a ruling in PRO, FO despatch No. 31 of 17/5/30, p.526 in C/3. Barton annotated: 'Yes, but this decision is going to land us in difficulties with other persons in similar circumstances', PRO, FO671/464/1520/20/510.

¹⁴¹ Hill to Blunt, 21/2/1930, PRO, FO671/464/1450/30/506.

¹⁴² Hayim case was 'pushed' by Moss a Consul in the Foreign Office and also by Sir Ronald Macleay, Minister at Beijing, 31/7/20, tel., No. 17, File 11, sub-file 11, PRO, FO671/465.

¹⁴³ Solicitors Platt and Co, to the Consulate, 18/2/25, PRO, FO671/465 1023/25/32; Born in January, 1894 in Baghdad, Hayim married Flora Elias in Shanghai, in December, 1918, and had two sons, Nellist, *op. cit.*, p.164.

¹⁴⁴ According to the FO Circular 21/4/22 cited in Hutchinson to Pratt, 31/10/24, No.17, PRO, FO671/465 10117/17/111.

¹⁴⁵ Hutchinson's annotated comment, 19/2/25, PRO, FO671/465.

¹⁴⁶ *IM*, 4/3/27, p.11, 1/4/27, p.9, and 3/6/27, p.32. Interned by the Japanese in the infamous Bridge House Prison for his involvement in the British War effort, and for spying, his son George alleges that Hayim stoutly declared 'I am English, I am at war with Germany, I do all I can for my country, just like you are doing at this moment', Hayim, *op. cit.*, p.88.

In some cases, notably that of Aubrey Hillaly, certificates of naturalisation were revoked.¹⁴⁷ Sir John Brenan assumed that Hillaly was using his acquired nationality to enable him to do business in the East under British protection.¹⁴⁸ Only the Secretary of State had the power to revoke a certificate of naturalisation in certain cases, [Section 8 (1)] notably if the holder had resided out of His Majesty's Dominions, and had not maintained substantial connections with HM Dominions, and it was not conducive to the public good that he should continue to be a British subject.¹⁴⁹ The Consul found the last two points applicable to Hillaly and recommended that his passport should not be renewed.¹⁵⁰ However, Hillaly was able to prove that he was a partner in Messrs. Samuel David, 'a British born subject's firm' with business connections with British firms in Hong Kong, Singapore and London and intended to settle in Great Britain or in a British possession.¹⁵¹ Persuaded by the evidence Sir John Brenan conceded: 'it would be rather mean of us to have his certificate cancelled'.¹⁵²

The consular files reveal that British policy was dictated by humanitarian considerations in several instances. The traumatic effect of the Order in Council [1921] on the Sephardim is poignantly depicted in letters to the British Consul, which reflect their feeling of shock and disappointment when threatened with the revocation of their British nationality 'of lifelong standing'. Silas Simon Levy, a sixty-five year old pensioned invalid, pleaded that it was inconsistent with British tradition and sense of justice, considering that his family was devoted to British ideals, and had been registered as British subjects, and .¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Minute 1037 by Brenan, 29/4/31, PRO, FO671/464/c/3,

¹⁴⁸ 'It looks as if he is using us', Memorandum by Brenan, 29/4/31, PRO, FO671/464 2260/31/564; For 'Particulars Relating to Applicant', see FO671/464/XC1592.

¹⁴⁹ See British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 7(2) (d), PRO, FO 671/464 4457/31/582 No. F.10/33/31, and 19/8/31, FO671/464/4464/31/583.

¹⁵⁰ Memorandum by Brenan, 29/4/1931, PRO, FO671/464 2260/31/564; see also A. Whittaker, Under Secretary General, India to Brenan, 20/7/31, FO 671/464/4457/31/582 No. F.10/33/31.

¹⁵¹ Hillaly to Brenan, 17/9/31, PRO, FO671/464 5041/31/589; The granting of a certificate of registration was at the discretion of the Home Secretary, generally to applicants intending to reside in HM Dominions, Brenan to Hillaly, 3/3/31, PRO, FO671/464/2260/31/564.

¹⁵² Hillaly and his child Kathleen Marcia were registered as British subjects, Brenan to the Government of India, 19/9/31, PRO, FO671/464/5084/31/590; A.D. Blackburn, Consul, to Hillaly, 2/12/31, FO671/465/6622/31/601; see also copy of Hilally's 'British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914 Certificate of Naturalisation', FO671/464/XC1592, See Illustration, p.237.

¹⁵³ A picture of a dapper Levy - bow-tie, waistcoat, bowler hat *et al*, yet he was an Arabic scholar well versed in the *Quran, Kabalah and Zohar, IM*, 1/9/33, p.6.

...Above all no nation has been so kindly inclined in dealing with our race as Great Britain...to suddenly deprive us of our nationality is to seriously jeopardise the standing of my five daughters... We are British because we can be nothing else and remain honest. Except in Shanghai and recently, we have never known this trouble which amounts to almost requiring us to change our skins....¹⁵⁴

His pathetic appeal appears to have struck a responsive chord with the authorities who registered him as a BPP.

Their treatment of seventeen year old Henry Cohen was less humane. His poignant appeal for a renewal of his British registration was dismissed on the grounds that his father was an Iraqi national at the time of Henry's birth.¹⁵⁵ Although he emphasised that he had been educated in the Western Public School at Shanghai, was studying for a London University degree, and 'could never feel happy as a subject of any other nation', the Registrar General, Somerset House London, was instructed to cancel the birth certificate 'which had been issued in error'. Annotations in the consular files disclose that the staff were not unmoved by the case: 'There is nothing else to be done but it is very unfortunate'.¹⁵⁶

Considering the enormous political, legal and economic benefits that accrued to British subjects, it is not surprising that several fraudulent attempts were made by Sephardim to obtain registration. The deception used by Shalom Hayim Levy provides an insight into some of the devious methods employed. His claim to British nationality rested on a passport issued to him at Calcutta, granted on the strength of a birth certificate certified by the Calcutta Jewish community. The Jewish registrar had accepted a statutory declaration from Levy's brother that Shalom was born in Calcutta some forty-seven years earlier. This contradicted conclusive evidence of his birth in Shanghai and denied him any claim to British protection.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Levy to Barton, 12/1/27, PRO, FO671/462/379/27/392/43.

¹⁵⁵ Beare to Cohen, 2/8/38, PRO, FO671/469/1058/C/3.

¹⁵⁶ This comment is signed 'S.D', in Phillips to the Registrar General, Somerset House, 6/10/38, PRO, FO671/469/1058/C/3 and 1059/C/3; Beare to Cohen, 2/8/38 Entry No. 36, 17/4/24, FO671/469/1058/C/3; copy of cancelled birth certificate in FO 671/469/XC1901; see Illustration, p.237.

¹⁵⁷ Hill to Blunt, 12/3/38, PRO, FO671/629/ G/39/ c/329.

Her Britannic Majesty's Consul-General at Shanghai
This is to request and require in the name of His Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without hindrance and to afford her every assistance and protection of which she may stand in need
Given at Shanghai the twenty-third day of July 1923
Consul-General

KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
ROYAUME UNI DE LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET DE L'IRLANDE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
ROYAUME UNI DE LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET DE L'IRLANDE
PASSPORT
PASSEPORT
No. 586
Date of issue 1 July 1923
Name of holder ASHRAF TACOB
Place of birth Baghdad
Signature of holder
Signature of Consul-General
National Seal

No. 586
Form No. 9

KINGDOM OF IRAQ
CERTIFICATE OF IRAQIAN NATIONALITY

مملكة العراق
شهادة الجنسية العراقية

This is to certify that ASHRAF TACOB (أشرف تاقوب) whose photograph is attached and who is described below having opted for Iraqi Nationality and solemnly declared his allegiance to His Majesty the King of Iraq, is an Iraqi National under article 10 of the Iraqi Nationality Law, 1924
Given at Baghdad this 23rd day of July 1923

هذا هو هذا التصديق على ان أشرف تاقوب (Ashraf Tacob) الذي صورته المصغرة المرفقة به وقد ارتد عن جنسية بلده وادخل ارضه لانه قد اختار الجنسية العراقية وصرح بكل وقار اعلامه خلاته ملك العراق هو محرمي الجنسية العراقية
بمقتضى المادة العاشرة من قانون الجنسية العراقية لسنة ١٩٢٤
صدرت في بغداد في هذا اليوم الخامس والعشرون من شهر ايار سنة ١٩٢٣

Signature of Official in Charge
Designation of Official in Charge
Official Seal

التوقيع
الوظيفة
الختم الرسمي

Photograph of holder
المصغرة التي المرفقة للشهادة

DESCRIPTION OF HOLDER
وصف حامل الشهادة



Age 49 years
Height 5'9"
Eyes Dark brown
Nose Long
Mouth Medium
Hair Black
Ears Short
Moustache Black
Face Round
Complexion Wheat
Distinguishing marks or production
Left thumb impression

Left thumb impression of holder



PASSPORT
Her Britannic Majesty's Consul-General at Shanghai
This is to request and require in the name of His Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without hindrance and to afford her every assistance and protection of which she may stand in need
Given at Shanghai the twenty-third day of July 1923
Consul-General

KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
ROYAUME UNI DE LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET DE L'IRLANDE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
ROYAUME UNI DE LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET DE L'IRLANDE
PASSPORT
PASSEPORT
No. 586
Date of issue 1 July 1923
Name of holder ASHRAF TACOB
Place of birth Baghdad
Signature of holder
Signature of Consul-General
National Seal

DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANT FEATURES
PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER
CANCELLED

PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER
CANCELLED

IRACIAN STRIP
PASSEPORT
No. 586
Date of issue 1 July 1923
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Signature of holder
Signature of Consul-General
National Seal

GENERAL PARTICULARS

(٣) الأوصاف العمومية

- 1 Name or name of holder: Ashraf Tacob (أشرف تاقوب)
- 2 Place of birth: Baghdad (بغداد)
- 3 Date of birth: 15 July 1879 (١٥ تموز ١٨٧٩)
- 4 Name of father: Hassan Tacob (حسن تاقوب)
- 5 Place of birth of father: Baghdad (بغداد)
- 6 Date of birth of father: 1817 (١٨١٧)
- 7 Name of mother: Habiba Yusuf (Habiba) (حبيبة يوسف)
- 8 Place of birth of mother: Baghdad (بغداد)
- 9 Date of birth of mother: 1858 (١٨٥٨)
- 10 Nationality before promulgation of the Iraqi Nationality Law, 1924: Ottoman (عثماني)
- 11 Nationality of father before promulgation of the Iraqi Nationality Law, 1924: Ottoman (عثماني)
- 12 Nationality of mother before promulgation of the Iraqi Nationality Law, 1924: Ottoman (عثماني)
- 13 Religion: Muslim (مسلم)
- 14 Occupation or profession: Merchant (تاجر)
- 15 Usual place of residence: Baghdad (بغداد)
- 16 Married, single or widowed: Married (متزوج)

PARTICULARS OF WIFE AND CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS AGE

(٤) تفاصيل من الزوجة والأطفال الذين اعمارهم دون خمسة عشر سنة

- Name: Merwan (مرعان)
- Place of birth: Baghdad (بغداد)
- Age: 10 (10)
- Name: Nasser (ناصر)
- Place of birth: Baghdad (بغداد)
- Age: 8 (8)
- Name: Khalil (خالد)
- Place of birth: Baghdad (بغداد)
- Age: 5 (5)
- Name: Child (طفل)
- Place of birth: Baghdad (بغداد)
- Age: 3 (3)

These are only a few of the cases in Foreign Office files which demonstrate the profound significance Shanghai Sephardim attached to being registered as British subjects.¹⁵⁸ Arguably the deepest erosion of their Baghdadi identity was their overriding concern to be identified as British.¹⁵⁹ It prompted them to dissociate themselves from their Baghdadi roots and adopt the wider identity of 'Sephardi' with European connotations. There was a conscious and strategic effort to make this change as it would otherwise have been difficult for them to participate fully in the economic dynamics in India and China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet there was great variation in the extent to which individuals adapted to their environment. Some appear to have been immersed in British society but maintained a Jewish orthodox way of life.¹⁶⁰ At the other end of the spectrum, Sephardim eschewed orthodox observance and their social milieu was the arena of the gentile Shanghai Clubs rather than the close-knit circle of Baghdadi Jewish society. British nationality, nevertheless, was an indicator of acculturation to the British rather than integration into British society.

Loyalty to Great Britain

British patriotism in Shanghai, as in most expatriate colonies, was overstated. On national days there were grand displays of national sentiment and military force in the larger foreign communities.¹⁶¹ All royal anniversaries were celebrated, and the Sephardim vied with the members of the various communities in Shanghai in paying homage to the British monarch.¹⁶² The Silver Jubilee of George V was celebrated with a choir service at the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue, which was decorated

¹⁵⁸ For further examples see the cases of Mrs. Hannah Levy, PRO, FO671/459/33; Mrs. Annie Sassoon Sopher Mordecai Saleh, 2/2/28, PRO, FO671/467; Flora, Rachel and Juliet Solomon, 6/9/28, PRO, FO671/462 8199/28/434 (T 9785/4/3788).

¹⁵⁹ 'One was, at the end of it, superior to even the supernatural, simply by being British', Sergeant, *op. cit.*, p.123.

¹⁶⁰ Ya'acov, interview by author, 10/4/92.

¹⁶¹ Bickers, *op. cit.*, pp.103-105.

¹⁶² The Baghdadis believed that their prosperity was a direct result of British rule, Roland, *op. cit.*, p.58, *IM*, 3/5/35, p.5, 8/1/26, and 16/12/21, p.17. 'The local *British* Jewish community' (author's emphasis) tendered their 'homage and congratulations' to King George on his recovery from illness, *IM*, 6/9/29, p.15; In Baghdad Jews annually celebrated the British conquest of Baghdad, 3/2/17 as '*Yom Nes*' [the day of the miracle], 17 *Adar*, 5677, David Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p.213.

with a floodlit illumination *Yehe hamelekh* [to the King] at the entrance.¹⁶³ The service was attended by Sir John Brenan, Consul General, and H. E. Arnold, chairman of the SMC.¹⁶⁴ E. Salmon, an elder of the community, emphasised that to a Jew loyalty to the country of his birth and adoption was a religious duty.¹⁶⁵ Although the majority of the *kehilla* were Iraqi subjects, a prayer for the Royal Family probably became an integral part of the Shanghai Sephardi synagogue service in the 1880s when the Spanish and Portuguese prayer books were imported from London.¹⁶⁶

The loyalty of Shanghai Sephardim towards Britain is conspicuous in their approach to politics in China. The rise of Chinese nationalism and the GMD alliance with the Bolsheviks who seemed determined to propagate revolution was viewed with alarm by Shanghai Sephardim.¹⁶⁷ The *Israel's Messenger* relentlessly denounced Russia for being 'a common foe of civilisation that had to be crushed and internationally ostracised' for 'sowing the seed of feud and strife' between China and Britain.¹⁶⁸ It stressed that it was the duty of Jews to convince China that Britain was her trusted ally.¹⁶⁹

There was also a compelling pragmatic basis to this patriotism. Many Shanghai Sephardim were dependent on the British for their livelihood and for their security.¹⁷⁰ Not least, Britain held the mandatory power for Palestine.¹⁷¹ As the movement for the recovery of sovereign rights gained momentum, the Foreign Concessions in Shanghai became the focus of Chinese resentment against the foreigner and his special treaty rights. From 1925-1927 China and Britain were often

¹⁶³ A special prayer was composed in Hebrew, *IM*, 3/5/35, pp. 4,7 and 1/6/35, p.22; 'The totally strange, rare phenomena of the Sephardim donning top hats at this glittering ceremony', impressed Ya'acov [born 1923], Ya'acov interview by author, Jerusalem, 10/4/92.

¹⁶⁴ *IM*, 1/6/35, p.22.

¹⁶⁵ *IM*, 3/5/35, p.5.

¹⁶⁶ Sidney Jonah, interview by author, telephone, California, 23/12/1993; the *Minha Service* prayer book printed for the consecration of the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue, included the words and musical score of God Save the Queen, By courtesy of Abraham Gubbay.

¹⁶⁷ Sir Eric Teichman, *Affairs of China: A Survey of the Recent History and Present Circumstances of the Republic of China*, (London, 1938), pp. 44-59.

¹⁶⁸ 'The Russian Spectre', *NCH*, 4/7/1898, p.1.

¹⁶⁹ 'Need for an *entente cordiale* between Great Britain and China', *IM*, 1/4/27 p.9, 14/8/25, p.11, 31/7/25, pp.10, 14, and 4/2/27, p.4.

¹⁷⁰ *IM*, 8/1/26, p.5 and 3/5/35, pp.5, 1.

¹⁷¹ *IM*, 7/6/29, p.1; Telegrams' from the Shanghai Zionist Association and the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue expressed their 'abundant affection and devotion' for the monarch, *IM*, 7/6/29, p.1; 15/8/29; 12/5/37, p.6.

on the verge of war. Britain became the target of attack by the young Chinese intelligentsia, who considered her the 'arch-imperialist' among the Western powers. British trade was boycotted and her imports, labelled enemy goods, were looted.¹⁷² In 1927 foreigners in Shanghai were close to a state of panic at the prospect of sharing the fate of Hankou and Nanjing at the hands of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army. Widespread publicity greeted the British troop ships that sailed up the river to Shanghai in February and March 1927, carrying the Shanghai Defence Force.¹⁷³ It 'created a wave of enthusiasm' among Shanghai Sephardim who 'strived their utmost to make the troops comfortable and homely',¹⁷⁴ because they felt: 'indebted [to Britain] for the safety of our lives and preservation of the status quo'.¹⁷⁵ Ellis Hayim noted the very prompt response to his request for Jewish recruits to the SVC and that the Jews were well represented in its ranks.¹⁷⁶ Duncan expressed his gratitude for the co-operation of the Jewish community, 'the way in which the Jewish community have come forward to help us is greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten'.¹⁷⁷ Likewise the Consul General, Sir Sidney Barton, at the dedication of the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue declared that 'British interests in Shanghai owed much to the services rendered by members of the Jewish community'.¹⁷⁸ The Sephardim attached immense importance to British acknowledgement of their patriotism, which must have gone a long way to bolster their self-image, an important influence in reinforcing Jewish identity.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² Sir Eric Teichman, *op. cit.*, pp.45-53.

¹⁷³ In 1927 Chiang Kaishek and the right-wing leaders of the *GMD* turned against the Communists and Russians and in 1928 Britain took the lead in recognising the new Nationalist Government and according to them the tariff autonomy, the first step towards the revision of the 'Unequal Treaties', Clifford, *op. cit.*, pp.196, 225-229.

¹⁷⁴ *IM*, 6/1/28, p.12, and 6/5/27, p.8.

¹⁷⁵ 'Non-Britons' appreciation of British Action'. A telegram with hundreds of signatures including several Sephardi Jewish residents, *IM*, 6/5/27, p.8; 1/4/27, p.23.

¹⁷⁶ 'Jews and the SVC', *IM*, 4/3/27, p.11.

¹⁷⁷ 'British Commander Thanks Shanghai Jews for Aid in Pacification of China', *The Jewish Daily Bulletin*, New York, 20/4/27; *IM*, 4/3/27, p.11, 1/4/27, p.9; 3/6/27, p.32.

¹⁷⁸ *IM*, 8/7/27, p.11.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Nissim, President of the SJCA, in May 1936 underlined that the SJCA was an international body composed mainly of British Jews, and repudiated the announcement in a Nanjing publication, that the Association had applied to the Chinese Government for registration, 'Status of Jews in Shanghai', *NCH*, 20/5/1936, p.333.

Identity Crisis

...My education is English and I am and have always been a French protégé. My mother tongue is Arabic. What is my nationality? I am neither a Turk nor an Arab, I cannot claim to be an Englishman nor a Frenchman and I certainly cannot think of myself as a Chinese. A Jew? There is no Jewish nation, and the best authorities now deny that there is a Jewish race...¹⁸⁰

Protracted arguments in the local press in the early 1920s focused attention on the exact definition of 'Jew', highlighting the confusion in differentiating between race and nationality.¹⁸¹ This was probably a result of the increasingly important role of Zionism in the West.¹⁸² The renewal of registration for British subjects in Shanghai in June 1922, when several Jews from Baghdad learnt that their registration as British subjects was revoked, would have also focused their attention on matters concerning their identity. That these identity problems were not unique to the Shanghai Sephardim is evident in the large number of books that are still being written on the subject. Today, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs observes that Judaism is a *religion* with its distinctive beliefs and practices. But it is the religion of a *people*, tied to a particular *land*, Israel, from which Jews were in *galut* [exile], because of their sins. They constituted a single, if scattered nation, divided by country, language, culture and custom, yet united by a common history, belief and hopes and by the shared discipline of conduct stipulated in *halakha* [Jewish law]. In the pre-modern world, to be a Jew was to be born into a society, history, destiny, and way of life shared by other Jews across space and time.¹⁸³ N. E. B. Ezra in 1923 explained that the Jewish nation had not ceased to exist 2,000 years ago with the disappearance of the

¹⁸⁰ 'Scrambled' to the editor, *NCDN*, 17/4/23, p.112, and 21/4/23, p.174.

¹⁸¹ 'The Jewish Nationality' [note its prominent position on page one], *NCH*, 13/3/20, 'Nationality or Religion', 21/2/20, p.496, 'A Question of Nationality', 14/4/23, p.107; 'Apollyon' to the editor, *NCDN*, 19/2/1923. The Huxley Memorial Lecture of 1911, delivered to the British Anthropological Institute emphasised that there was a complete absence of uniform racial characteristics among both the Jews of Europe and the Sephardim and Ashkenazim of Turkey.

¹⁸² Jewish identity is a peculiar blend of religious and national elements inextricably interwoven, Herman, *Jewish Identity*, p.69.

¹⁸³ Jonathan Sachs, *Argument for the Sake of Heaven*, (London, 1991), 'A Religion or a Nation?', Chap. 2, and pp.22-24.

Jewish State. Instead, the Jewish national home became portable in the form of the *Torah*.¹⁸⁴

Gordius Nielsen suggested that the foreign community in Shanghai heard very little about nationality, 'it was a truly happy cosmopolitan community'. He wondered who had caused the change after 1914: 'Most of us have sunk so low in narrow, stupid and cowardly nationalism'.¹⁸⁵ In the 1920s doubts were expressed that 'Jewish' connoted only creed and had nothing to do with nationality, particularly at a time when the Zionist Movement was popular with the Jewish masses, and a Jewish National home or State was being contemplated.¹⁸⁶ Some Shanghai Jews who did not hold Zionist views expressed the fear that their position would become even more confused if a Jewish state was established, making them automatically belong to the Jewish nation.¹⁸⁷

Given Shanghai Sephardim's openness to British cultural trends, although the bonds of external expression of their tradition were weakening, they were not cast off altogether. As Norman Stillman has observed, Jews might become Westernised in dress, in education, and even in some of their tastes and habits, but with the exception of some highly acculturated individuals, few could pretend that they were truly British, French, etc. 'The best they could do was to become foreign protégés. Most of them were first and foremost Jews both in their own eyes and the eyes of others'.¹⁸⁸

Many fourth generation Shanghai Sephardim who had been interviewed on this subject expressed their grave disappointment not to have been British and sensed an uncertainty about their identity. A thoroughly English education involving the whole gambit of ballet, piano, deportment and elocution classes, resulted in a high degree of acculturation to the British. It may be argued that acculturation was the inevitable result of the political, socio-economic and cultural conditions prevailing in the

¹⁸⁴ *IM*, 8/1/23, p.4.

¹⁸⁵ 'The Cult of Nationality', *NCDN*, 21/3/23, p.174. Comments on Germans earlier in this chapter belie this. Bickers points out that the self-image of cosmopolitanism in Shanghai was not in fact true, Bickers, interview by author, telephone, Oxford, 19/11/93.

¹⁸⁶ 'Religion, Nationality and the Law of Relativity', 'E.L.K.' to the editor, *NCDN*, 28/2/20, p.261, and 13/3/23, pp.707-708.

¹⁸⁷ Accusations that all Jews were international financiers and Bolsheviks, left one Jew who was neither of the two, lost without a label: 'I should like to sign myself a Jewish Englishman', but settled for 'Jew to the nth generation'. *NCDN*, 28/2/20, p.261.

¹⁸⁸ Stillman, *op. cit.*, pp.41, 52.

International Settlement. The surrounding society and culture had an overpowering attraction and provided opportunities to achieve material success and prestige. Acculturation appears to have made some inroads on Baghdadi identity but there is little evidence of erosion of either the Sephardi or Jewish dimensions of identity.

Conclusion

The Lincheng Incident demonstrated that, when put to the test, the solidarity of the Sephardim as a community was firmly based. Links between joint families and friends, in the social and economic and religious spheres, were shown to be solid and firmly bound together. The incident shows too that identification with Jews from other communities was strong in that shared responsibility in performance of religious duties was evident. Jewish identity was obviously strong. The administration of the International Settlement on British lines had resulted in a conspicuously high standard of living and Shanghai Sephardim aspired to be identified with it. Third generation Sephardim had achieved considerable success in becoming acculturated to the British, which meant also an attenuation of their links with Baghdad and the consequent weakening of their Baghdadi identity.

Clearly there were many pragmatic political, legal and economic benefits associated with British nationality. Given the instability, volatility of China's political system and insecurity of living in a generally embattled country, Shanghai Sephardim naturally sought the maximum protection which the British were able to offer their subjects. Perhaps even more importantly, the status and prestige it conferred opened the door to economic, political and legal privileges.

This was double edged and, in the highly competitive trading arena in East Asia, it undoubtedly suited the British to have these wealthy Sephardi entrepreneurs, conducting their business under the British flag. Consequently, even after 1922, when the consular officials were eager to clear the registers of all who were not genuinely entitled to British protection, rules were bent to re-register many applicants. British policy regarding the registration of British subjects appears to have been dictated by financial, social, economic, humanitarian and pragmatic considerations.

Baghdadi Jews who were not British subjects were clearly handicapped in China. They were unable to travel freely and had no extraterritorial protection

outside the International Settlement. Their real estate and business did not come under British protection and they, unlike British subjects, did not have the prestige of being regarded as national residents with legal status. Their lawsuits were heard in the Mixed Court, where they were subject to the Chinese Criminal and Civil Code of Laws. They had no assurance that they would be evacuated if the need arose and perhaps most importantly, as they were to discover, they did not have the facility to emigrate to the countries of their choice when Iraq revoked their citizenship in 1948 and left them stateless.

The erosion of the political identity of Baghdadi Jews with their country of origin found expression in their allegiance towards Great Britain. British acknowledgement of their patriotism and their contributions to building the British Empire was important to Shanghai Sephardim.¹⁸⁹ Given the overall benefits British nationality conferred, and their intense patriotism towards Britain, the devastating impact made by the revision of registration in 1922 can be fully appreciated.

For those Sephardim who were privileged to have British nationality, it is likely that this accelerated the process of acculturation to the British and weakened their Baghdadi identity. Those who had their British nationality revoked felt deprived in political, economic, judicial and social spheres, which left some with an identity problem, particularly the less traditional Sephardim. It would appear logical that this rejection would have strengthened their identity as Jews and drawn them towards the burgeoning Zionist Movement. The question of Jewish identity, however, became even more complicated within the context of the Zionist Movement and became an important issue with the advent of Hitler and increasing anti-Semitism. Attention will now be turned to an examination of whether Zionism was able to resolve the identity dilemma that plagued some of Shanghai's Sephardi Jews.

¹⁸⁹ *IM*, 8/7/27. p.14.

Chapter Seven: Shanghai Zionist Association

‘A Head and a Tail with no Body’¹

Zionism appeared as a political movement in the second half of the nineteenth century when modern nationalism was achieving an ideological ascendancy in Europe.² It proclaimed that the inevitable failure of Jewish emancipation and assimilation would compel the affirmation of Jewish nationality.³ Zionism, with its emphasis on the common origin of Jews, had the potential to draw Shanghai’s Sephardim into the Jewish orbit as bearers of a pervasive Jewish identity not merely as supporters of a political project. In the rich spiritual heritage of Judaism there was no more powerful symbol than Zion, and *Eretz Yisrael* was an integral part of Shanghai Sephardim’s conception of a Jewish identity.⁴ The questions addressed here are: what place Zionism had in the life of the community; whether Zionism was accepted as a substitute for the British nationality Shanghai Sephardim hankered after but many could not achieve: whether Zionism was in tension with being acculturated into British society and its followers being seen as loyal British subjects; whether Zionism was in conflict with religious beliefs of Sephardi traditionalists.⁵

The Shanghai Zionist Association, SZA, was founded in 1903.⁶ Its first president was Edward I. Ezra, and N.E.B. Ezra served as honorary secretary from its inception to his death in 1936.⁷ Significantly the SZA requested Moses Gaster, the president of the English Zionist Federation and Chief Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, to represent them at the Sixth Zionist Conference. This

¹ Hirsch to Israel Cohen, General Secretary, 10/3/22, CZA, Z4/2344.

² The first World Zionist Congress was held in Basel in 1897. A good general account of Zionism in Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (London, 1972).

³ Michael Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, (Seattle, 1990), passim.

⁴ Zvi Yehuda, ‘How the Zionists of Iraq Understood Zionism in the 1920s’, *Nehardea*, No.2, Autumn 1982, pp.19-21.

⁵ An excellent record of the response of Baghdadi Jews in Bombay to Zionism in Roland, *op. cit.*, pp.80-85, 171-170.

⁶ Ezra to Gaster, 39/5/1903, Moses Gaster Papers, Jewish Studies Library, University College, London, *IM*, 13/1/22, p.10.

⁷ Edward Ezra resigned in 1904, *IM*, 18/11/1904, p.183.

No. 3

Shanghai Zionist Association.

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

—OF THE—

SHANGHAI ZIONIST ASSOCIATION.

PRINTED BY "THE SUIZEA & CO."

Donations to the JEWISH NATIONAL FUND will be thankfully accepted and acknowledged by the Hon. Sec.

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SHANGHAI ZIONIST ASSOCIATION.

6, Nanking Road.

Shanghai Zionist Association.

Dr. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT FROM 1st APRIL, 1905 TO 31st MARCH, 1906. Cr.

Table with columns for RECEIPTS, EXPENDITURE, and Cr. It lists various financial transactions such as 'To balance brought forward from old account', 'By printing and stationery', and 'Cash in hand'.

Audited and found correct S. J. SOLOMON J. A. B. EZRA

—E. & O. E.— Seasonal, 23rd March 1906. J. AARON Hon. Treasurer.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The Third Ordinary General Meeting of our Association will be held at No. 9, Seward Road, on Sunday, the 1st April, next, at 11 a.m. for the purpose of passing the Committee's report and the Honorary Treasurer's account, and for electing a new Committee, and for transacting any other business which may be brought forward before the meeting.

By order of the Committee.

N. E. B. EZRA

Hon. Secretary

Shanghai, 23rd March, 1906.

Shanghai Zionist Association.

MINUTES of a Meeting held at the Rooms of the Shanghai Jewish School, on Sunday, 26th April 1906, at 11 a.m.

There were present—

- Messrs. EZRA, EDWARD, I. Messrs. NATHAN, M. J. EZRA, J. A. B. RAYMOND, R. B. EZRA, N. E. B. FODOR, H. JONAS, E. SHIBRETH, M. SHIBRETH, S. SALOMON, S. J. KLATIKER, HERMAN. LEVI, I. A. LEVI, S. S. TUTTLEMAN, I. MOSES, S.

On the motion of Mr. S. Moses seconded by Mr. N. E. B. Ezra, Mr Edward I. Ezra was elected Chairman.

Mr. N. E. B. Ezra was elected Secretary, on the proposition of Mr. I. A. Levi seconded by Mr. S. Moses.

The notice convening the meeting was accepted as read.



would, of course, have emphasised their Sephardi identity, but it is also plausible that they looked to him to protect their religious identity, given that the Zionism of Hertzl, the founder of the movement, had little religious content. Their links with Zionism undoubtedly reinforced feelings of solidarity of Shanghai Sephardim with their co-religionists. The SZA collected funds to aid persecuted Jewish communities, notably the victims of the pogroms in Rumania. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904 brought the crisis of Russian Jewry acutely into their focus when six hundred Jewish soldiers stationed at Port Arthur were killed and some 1,400 taken prisoner.⁸ Apart from these issues, there seems to have been little else to absorb the attention of the SZA. Internal dissension appears to have silenced the World Zionist Movement, [hereafter WZM] until the outbreak of World War I, which radically altered the Middle East situation.

The initial enthusiasm of the SZA was dampened because of the indifference of the English Zionist Federation, to which the SZA was affiliated. Ezra protested, 'It is a pity you don't guide us in any way'.⁹ His telegrams and letters remained unanswered.¹⁰ Rev. Dr. M. Gaster regretted that the SZA, 'which stood very high among true and devoted Zionists', recorded its dissatisfaction with the Federation in its Annual Report.¹¹ In fact the Federation of American Zionists appeared to take more interest in the welfare of the SZA.¹²

The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, favouring the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish national home, and its acceptance by France, Italy and the United States, revived Zionism¹³ and provided the SZA with an opportunity to play a more decisive role in its corner of East Asia, far removed from the important centres of Zionism. It was crucial for Zionists to secure the unanimous approval of all the other powers for a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Shanghai earned

⁸ A group of released POWs were fêted by the Shanghai community, *IM*, 24/3/1905. Again 15 years later, 29/10/1920, pp.40, 42.

⁹ Ezra to Cohen, 17/12/29 and 27/12/29, *CZA*, Z/4/3225/I, and 12/6/30. Z4/3225 II.

¹⁰ Ezra to Cohen, 30/11/22, *CZA*, KH1/52/II; Ezra to Cohen, 'Have you forgotten me?' 11/10/29; 'I had no intention of writing to you again when you have not replied to a dozen letters of mine, which I regard as very strange on your part', 17/12/29 and 27/12/29, *CZA*, Z4/3225/I.

¹¹ *IM*, 26/6/1908, p.8.

¹² Their president, Dr. Harry Friedenwald, supplied Shanghai with many propaganda pamphlets, notably 'A Jewish Statement to the Christian World'.

¹³ For a good background to this period see Mayir Verete, *From Palmerston to Balfour*, (ed.), Norman Rose, (London, 1992), passim.

unique recognition from the WZM for securing declarations in favour from three independent Asian countries, Siam, China and Japan.¹⁴ 'You have created amongst leading non-Jews the understanding and sympathy towards our cause which led to their very valuable co-operation'.¹⁵ Although Siam and China could hardly be regarded as influential powers at this time, unanimous approval of the Balfour Declaration was necessary, and their co-operation was useful to the Zionist authorities.¹⁶

It was mainly through the efforts of Elly Kadoorie, president of the SZA, that on 22 August 1918 the Royal Siamese Government at Bangkok, became the first non-Christian power to issue a pro-Zionist declaration.¹⁷ The *Israel's Messenger* recorded that the Chinese Government replied on 14 December that it had 'adopted the same attitude toward the Zionist aspirations as the British Government'.¹⁸ It gives no indication which Government is referred to. At this time there was no Central Government in China, and high sounding declarations from the Northern Warlord Government were meaningless. Notwithstanding this, the SZA hailed China's 'noble and high minded endorsement' of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, confident that, coming on the eve of the Peace Conference in Europe, January 1919, China would merit the gratitude and goodwill of world Jewry.¹⁹ On 27 December the Imperial Japanese Government accorded its sympathy to the realisation of Zionist aspirations.²⁰ Foreign Minister Viscount Yasuya Uchida was later given the unique distinction of having his name inscribed in the Golden

¹⁴ Prince Devawongse Varopakar, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Siamese Government to Kadoorie, tel., printed in *IM*, 27/10/18, p. 13, and again in 4/6/20, p.18; Tcheng Loh, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chinese Government, to Kadoorie, *IM*, 14/12/18 and also in 4/11/27, p.11; CZA, ZA/1224; Ezra to Uchida, printed in *NCH*, 25/1/19, p.241; further correspondence printed in *IM*, 4/7/19, p.31, and 4/11/27, p.9.

¹⁵ Tribute by Gero Krishevsky, *IM*, 2/3/1928, p.18; 'You have contributed not inconsiderably towards the fulfilment of our hope', 4/7/19, p.11; 'Nothing has done more to hearten us in our efforts', Louis Brandeis, leader of the American Zionist Movement, in *IM*, 4/7/19, p.11.

¹⁶ The importance of a unanimous vote is emphasised retrospectively by Bension in *IM*, 2/3/28, p.18.

¹⁷ *IM*, 27/10/18, p.13; 4/6/20, p.18, and 4/11/27, p.10; FO, Bangkok, to Kadoorie, 22/8/18 and Lobingier to Ezra, 11/9/18, CZA, ZA/3225/176.

¹⁸ *NCH*, 28/12/18, p.792; Ezra to Nahum Sokolow, [President of the WZO 1931-1935], 20/10/18, and Landman to Ezra, 29/11/18, CZA, ZA/176; copy of a letter from Waijiao Bu, Beijing 14/12/18 signed Tcheng Loh, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, in *IM*, 1/10/20, p.10.

¹⁹ ZO London Bureau to Ezra, (copy) 10/1/19, and Kadoorie and Ezra to Sokolow, 16/1/19, CZA, ZA/176. Also 'Jewish National Movement', *NCH*, 25/1/19, p.241, and *The Shanghai Times*, 16/1/19.

²⁰ Ezra to Count Yasuya Uchida, 9/5/22, CZA, ZA/2344. Ezra's efforts to obtain Japan's support are described in Ezra to Sokolow, 4/12/18, ZA/176; 'Japan's Greeting to the Jewish Nation', *IM*, 4/6/20, p.13; see Illustration, p.250; see also Naoki Maruyama, 'The Shanghai Zionist Association and Japan', unpublished paper submitted for the Harvard Symposium.

Book of the *Keren Kayemet*, in acknowledgement of his contribution to Zionism.²¹ The official Japanese pro-Zionist attitude was demonstrated on several occasions by Baron Giichi Tanaka, Prime Minister, [1927-1929] and Baron Shidehara Kijuro, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, [1924-1927, 1929-1931].²² Dr. Yotaro Sugimura, Under Secretary General and Director of the Political Department of the League of Nations, gave his assurance: 'We would never think of abandoning you until you become independent enough to go on without outside help'.²³

Similarly several Chinese political figures, notably Dr. Sun Yatsen the revolutionary leader, openly identified with the Zionist aspirations:

... All lovers of Democracy cannot help but support wholeheartedly...the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation, which has contributed so much to the civilisation of the world and which rightfully deserve [sic] an honourable place in the family of nations...²⁴

This letter was sent to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where it was later treasured as a valuable historical document.²⁵ The SZA sought the recognition of the Nationalist Government for the Zionist movement in China, and appealed for an end to the discrimination towards the Zionist societies in Harbin. It looked forward to the legalisation of all Zionist activities, 'which were most peaceful and based on justice and goodwill'.²⁶

Dr. Wang Zhengting, the Nationalist Minister for Foreign Affairs at Nanjing, gave his assurance that the Nationalist Government was very sympathetic towards the Jews in their desire to establish a home in the country in which they 'first took

²¹ *IM*, 7/7/22; Funatsu, Japan's Consul General in Shanghai, attended the presentation ceremony at the *Ohel Rachel*, *IM*, 4/3/23; see also copy of Uchida's telegram of congratulations to Ezra printed in *IM*, 4/6/20, p.13.

²² Richard Storry, *A History of Modern Japan*, London, 1960, pp.169-170, 175-176; 'Japan's Premier Receives the Zionist Envoy Gero Krishvesky', *IM*, 2/3/28, p.14 and 5/10/28, p.15; See also Naoki Maruyama, 'Japan's Response to the Zionist Movement in the 1920s', *Bulletin of the Graduate School of International Relations, International University of Japan*, No. 2, December, 1984; *IM*, 2/3/28, pp.14-15. Ezra to Cohen, 24/10/29, *CZA*, Z4/3225/I; Tanaka's death deprived Zionists of a 'fearless champion', *IM*, 3/1/30, pp.12-13.

²³ *IM*, 3/1/30, p.12.

²⁴ *IM*, 24/4/20; 4/6/20, p.20 and 3/7/28, p.12; a copy of this letter in *CZA*, Z4/3225 and *IM*, 7/12/28, p.11; see Illustration, p.250. China's solidarity with Zionism is understandable as it was pursuing its own Nationalist aspirations at this time.

²⁵ *IM*, 6/9/29, p.12.

²⁶ Cohen to Ettinger, 18/3/27, *CZA*, Z4/3225/I. It would seem to have been a pointless exercise given that the Manchurian provinces were under the control of the warlord Zhang Xueliang.

root'.²⁷ The Chinese Nationalist Commissioner of the Bureau for Foreign Affairs for Jiangsu, Guo Daiqi proclaimed:

...China would readily join hands and create a Sino-Judean *entente cordiale*...there should be close cooperation with Chinese nationalists who are equally struggling to win independence and recognition for their modern national aspirations....²⁸

The Nationalist Government extended an official invitation to the SZA's president, Mrs. R. E. Toeg, and N.E.B. Ezra, to attend the state funeral service of Dr. Sun Yatsen, in Nanjing on 1 June 1929, four years after his death in 1925.²⁹ At that historic assembly on Purple Mountain, the representatives of the Zionist Movement stood along-side those of the eighteen foreign powers to pay a final tribute to the republican leader.³⁰

The outstanding political achievement of the SZA, which won the acclamation of Zionists throughout the world, should have considerably strengthened its Jewish identity and solidarity with world Jewry. Somewhat surprisingly, however, this was not generally the case. The active and successful political role played by the SZA was a testimony to the vitality of its president and secretary rather than that of its committee. The Palestine Association 'Kadimah' which was established in Shanghai in May 1919, complained that the SZA showed very little interest in the Zionist Movement.³¹ The Russian immigrants who were unable to speak English or Arabic, found it impossible 'to get in touch with the local Arabian Jews'.³² In fact Sephardim distanced themselves from Zionist activities because of Russian over-enthusiasm, and adherence to revisionist Zionism, notably *Betar*. Their militaristic attitude as they strutted around in dark shirts, leather belts, and jack boots, antagonised most Sephardim. 'Because they were Jewish, we weren't going to turn

²⁷ *IM*, 3/8/28, p.12, and 1/11/31, p.9; see illustration, p.250.

²⁸ *IM*, 2/3/28, p.17.

²⁹ A graphic description of what the Zionist delegates did in Nanjing in *IM*, 7/6/29, pp.6-8, Ezra to Cohen, 3/6/29, *CZA*, Z4/3225/I.

³⁰ Ezra to Cohen, 13/6/29, *CZA*, Z/3225; Maurice [Two gun], a 'yehud [Jew] with strong Zionist leanings, employed by Sun since 1922, helped to organise the funeral, *IM*, 7/6/29, pp.7-8.

³¹ *IM*, 4/6/20, p.18.

³² Palestine Association 'Kadimah' to the ZO London, *CZA*, 3/9/19, Z/41224; a detailed account of the Russian Zionist Groups in Shanghai in Pan Guang, *Zionism in Shanghai (1903-1949)*, an unpublished paper submitted for the Harvard Conference. *Betar*, Revisionist Zionist Youth organisation was established in 1931. With possibly the sole exception, of the *hazan* Abraham, of the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue, it was not supported by Sephardim until after World War II, Isaac Abraham, interview by author, London, 4/10/93.

our backs on them, but we preferred not to have any part of it ourselves'.³³ They were, of course, aware that the stateless Russians were unconcerned about offending the British. They may also have been suspicious of the Russian emphasis on secular Zionism.³⁴ Clearly traditionalists among Shanghai Sephardim were suspicious of political Zionism, believing that Jews would return to *Eretz Yisrael* as a result of the ingathering of the exiles at the time of the Messiah, rather than through political means.³⁵

Ezra and Kadoorie worked indefatigably for the movement and by 1919 had dispensed with the formality of consulting the committee: past experience had proved that this resulted in 'nothing but opposition and antagonism'.³⁶ To avoid friction, they decided to use their own judgement, 'especially in a small community like ours whose members are not all enthusiastic over the cause'.³⁷ To all intents and purposes they thought they could run a communal institution like a private business. It would seem that the influential Sephardim did not understand democratic processes in community organisation and behaved as if benevolent despotism was more effective in running such institutions. The system, however, had serious drawbacks, and they succeeded only in alienating the movement's potential following. By March 1922, Rabbi Hirsch expressed his regret that nothing had been done to organise Zionism in Shanghai because of Kadoorie's absence. He suspected that a pact existed between Ezra and Kadoorie to dominate the SZA and condemned this 'secret treaty', which resulted in 'the extraordinary organism of the SZA consisting of a head and tail without a body'.³⁸ He saw it as typical of Shanghai Sephardim, as in his opinion

³³ Most Sephardi parents forbade their children to associate with *Betar* until after World War II: 'They may be Jewish, but they are fascists', Horowitz, correspondence with author, Los Angeles, 12/5/93.

³⁴ Baghdadi Jews were very religious but had 'only a scant nationalistic point of view', Nahum Sokolow, of the Jewish Agency, to Ezra, 20/10/18, CZA, ZA/1224.

³⁵ 'The very orthodox view is the return of *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jews by Zionist means is against the Will of God', E.R. Sassoon, Hon. Secretary of Singapore Zionist Society, to Ezra, 2/2/22, CZA, ZA/2344. This argument is supported by interviewees.

³⁶ Kadoorie's dedication to the cause is clear in Dr. I. Herrmann to Kadoorie, 11/10/23 and Kadoorie to I. Herrmann, 26/11/23, CZA, KH1/52/II. His achievements are reviewed in NCH, 20/4/1929, p.107 and Ezra to Landman, Solicitor and Secretary of the British ZO, 24/1/19, CZA, ZA/1224. Interestingly, there were 28 present at a meeting held at the Palace Hotel, 31/12/17, [four-paged printed Minutes,], ZA/5919. A decade later in 1928, Krishevsky referred to the SZA as a 'trade mark without a firm', Krishevsky to Leo Herrmann, [General Secretary to the KH, 1920-1951], 20/1/28, KH4/B/1974'.

³⁷ Under no circumstances would Sir Elly or Ezra agree to the right of members of the committee to 'express an opinion or contradict a policy', Krishevsky to Herrmann, 31/3/28, p.3, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

³⁸ Hirsch to Cohen, 10/3/22, CZA, ZA/2344.

they could not work together.³⁹ Similarly, eight years later in 1930, Percy Montrose, a prominent Zionist visitor from Australia, who was appointed Headmaster of the Tianjin Jewish school, recorded that he had been able to do nothing for Zionism in Shanghai because those in charge never asked him to attend meetings as they were 'too cliquish and afraid of a stranger's interference'.⁴⁰

Ezra was reminded by the Zionist authorities that the main platform of the Zionist propaganda was to 'educate the community to donate'.⁴¹ Rabbi Hirsch cautioned: 'The call of Zionism is the SOS of our people. We cannot, we dare not, ignore it'.⁴² He reminded Shanghai Jews of their religious obligation to donate a tithe of their income to charity. 'If every Jew in Shanghai would give no more than two or three percent of his income during one month only, they would make a substantial remittance'.⁴³ It was perhaps beyond his brief to state where the tithe should go. Several in his *kahal* argued that the community's own needs were being overlooked, and it should first put its own house in order. Nonetheless, the Sephardi community of Shanghai did make several generous donations to Palestine,⁴⁴ notably a gift to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem of the valuable library of some two thousand Jewish books belonging to S. J. Solomon.⁴⁵

The SZA played an active role in disseminating Zionist propaganda in the Settlement.⁴⁶ Meetings of the SZA Literary Circle took place regularly and many papers were published in the *Israel's Messenger* and in the local daily papers.⁴⁷ It

³⁹ Cohen suggested that the office of President be reserved for Kadoorie, as it would be difficult to revive interest if Shanghai was left so long without an acting chairman, Cohen to Hirsch, 25/4/22, CZA, Z4/2344.

⁴⁰ Montrose to Cohen, 5/5/29, Z4/3225/I; also extract of undated letter, Montrose to Dr. Brodsky, KH4/9861.

⁴¹ Herrmann to Ezra, CZA, 9/3/32, KH4/1978.

⁴² Editorial 'The *Keren Hayesod*', *IM*, 1/12/22, p.1.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.1.

⁴⁴ Ezra to Sokolow, 4/11/18, CZA, Z4/1224. The SJA remitted £1,788 to the Jewish Colonial Trust, 'We have interested several local leading Jewish ladies to collect jewelleries [sic]', Ezra to Dr. Chaim Weitzmann and Sokolow, 17/12/20, Z4/2344; Edward Ezra, David Sassoon and Co. and the Shahmoon Brothers each contributed £1,000 for the Palestine Restoration Fund in 1920, *IM*, 17/12/20, p.47.

⁴⁵ *IM*, 5/12/24, p.14, and 4/6/26, p.10 and *JC*, 24/1/22.

⁴⁶ Notably, Dr. Theodor Herzl, [President of the WZO 1897-1904], 'The Jewish State' was publicised in *NCH*, 16/12/1904, p.304. There were lengthy reports of SZA's meetings and functions, for example *NCH*, 17/11/1905, pp.365-366, 10/7/1909, pp.82-83, 5/10/1918, p.32 and 28/12/1918, p.792. Zionist issues were also popular in the letters to the editors, for example, *NCH*, 3/8/1918, pp.285-286; 29/5/20, p.527 and 28/10/30, p.122; "'The Shanghai Mercury' on Zionism', *IM*, 19/4/1907, p.12.

⁴⁷ For example, *NCH*, 17/11/1905, pp.335-336, 2/10/1906, p.205, 10/7/1909, pp.82-83, 3/8/1918, pp.285-286, 5/10/1918, p.32, 28/12/1918, p.792, 22/4/1920, p.455, 4/6/1928, p.422, 20/4/1929, p.10, and 27/11/35, p.64; *IM*, 1/11/1907, p.9; 10/1/22, CZA, Z4/2344.

pleased the SJA that non-Jews in Shanghai showed an interest in the Movement. Ezra was invited by the Shanghai Missionary Association to lecture on *The Aims and Objects of Zionism* in front of a large audience,⁴⁸ and the Zionist flag took its place among the flags of the fourteen other nations which constituted the Shanghai Rotary Club.⁴⁹ The *Israel's Messenger* emphasised the importance of supporting *Eretz Yisrael* industries and economic developments there were watched with keen interest by Sephardi merchants for opportunities to create markets for their products in China.⁵⁰

The use of products from *Eretz Yisrael* was seen as a most practical means of assisting in the development of the *yishuv* [settlement]. The first large shipment of almonds from *Petach Tikvah* arrived in Shanghai in November 1922 and was placed in the local market with great success. The only drawback was the lack of refrigeration plants in steamers plying between China and Palestine which made the export of Palestine oranges, grapes and figs practically impossible.⁵¹ Profits were not always high because of the fluctuations in the exchange rate and the cost of telegraphic negotiations.⁵² In 1925 the Shanghai branch office of Société Carmel Oriental managed by S. Ezekiel and F. Nissim opened an office in Szechuen Road where 'every attention to the order of Palestine goods' was given. The 'Carmel' brand wines came direct from the cellars of Baron de Rothschild.⁵³ The Holland-East Asia Line provided a direct service between China, Japan and the *Eretz Yisrael*.⁵⁴ W. J. Woo, Secretary of the local China Chamber of Commerce, supported the establishment in 1935 of communications between Jews and Chinese merchants, manufacturers and industrialists who were keen to export goods to Palestine.⁵⁵ China was invited to participate in the Levant Fair in Tel-Aviv in April

⁴⁸ *IM*, 13/12/1907, p.6.

⁴⁹ 'Flag Day at the Rotary Club', *IM*, 3/1/30, p.17-18 and 'Jewish Flag Another View', *NCH*, 27/11/35, p.64. 'The Rotary Club is receiving a Zionist flag', Ezra to Cohen, 19/12/29, *CZA*, ZA/3225/I.

⁵⁰ China Palestine Trading Co., to Pardes Jaffa, 26/2/30, *CZA*, KH4/9861, and *IM*, 1/2/35, pp.12-13. The Shemen Works, Haifa proposed terms for business. There was a demand for lemons, wines and grapefruit in Shanghai, Ezra to Abraham Ulitzur, [Treasurer of the *KH* in London, 1920-1926, and in Jerusalem, 1926-1948], 7/3/30, *CZA*, KH4/9861.

⁵¹ *IM*, 1/12/22, p.16.

⁵² Ezra to the Palestine Commercial Agency, Tel Aviv, 11/5/31, *CZA*, KH4/9861.

⁵³ *IM*, 11/9/25, p.16.

⁵⁴ *IM*, 1/1/35, p.12.

⁵⁵ *IM*, 1/2/35, p.13.

1936.⁵⁶ The *Israel's Messenger* encouraged tourism, emphasising the potential of Palestine to become one of the world's great health resorts.⁵⁷ Several Shanghai Jews visited *Eretz Yisrael* undaunted by the arduous journey.⁵⁸ It would seem that these links did much to strengthen the identification of Shanghai Sephardim with *Eretz Yisrael*.

The Kadoorie-Zionist Rift

It may be argued that the Kadoorie-Zionist rift was largely responsible for the disillusionment of Shanghai's Sephardim with Zionism. Kadoorie had played a dynamic role as president of the SZA since 1915. At his home, Marble Hall, he promoted the Zionist cause, extending his hospitality to its emissaries and also to visiting dignitaries, who proclaimed their sympathy with Zionism.⁵⁹ Kadoorie's Zionist activities extended well beyond the International Settlement and Hong Kong. He promoted a *Keren Hayesod*, [*KH* hereafter] group among the Sephardic communities in London and Manchester.⁶⁰ The *KH* repeatedly appealed to him to take advantage of his status to foster Zionism in Shanghai.⁶¹

It was indeed a blow for the WZM when it lost Kadoorie's support over a controversy which revolved around a scheme by Shanghai Jewry to build a Garden City in Palestine, as a monument to Mrs. Laura Kadoorie, who had lost her life in a fire at her home.⁶² The Garden City was a grandiose scheme including industries, synagogues, a college for Sephardic Rabbis, hospitals, schools, a large home for Eastern immigrants, a golf course, racecourse, hotels, library, town hall, theatres and Bank.⁶³ It was to be governed by a municipal council under the supreme control of a committee of seven, of whom Kadoorie or one of his sons would be the permanent

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.13.

⁵⁷ *IM*, 29/10/20, p.11.

⁵⁸ For example Lily Moses *IM*, 3/3/33, p.17. Unfortunately accurate statistics are not available.

⁵⁹ 'Tagore and Bension Make a Strong Plea for Zionism', *IM*, 11/7/24, p.12. Copy in CZA, KH1/52/II.

⁶⁰ Herrmann, Secretary to the Board of Directors *KH* to Kadoorie, enlisting his support in recruiting Sephardic communities in London, Manchester and Shanghai, 11/10/23, and 14/12/23, CZA, KH1/52/II.

⁶¹ Herrmann to Kadoorie, 31/12/23, CZA, KH4/9865.

⁶² Ezra to Chaim Weizmann, President of WZO, [1920-1931, 1935-1946] tel., 24/2/19, and letter, 20/3/19, CZA, Z4/1224; 'Zionist meeting in memory of Laura Kadoorie', *JC*, 20/6/19, p.23.

⁶³ Ezra to The Board of Directors, 14/7/24, CZA, KH4/9865; 'The Keren Hayesod in Shanghai: Proposed New Garden City for *Eretz Yisrael*', included is a list of the contributors, 19/6/24, KH4/9865.

chairman.⁶⁴ The rents and taxes of this city were to be used for its upkeep,⁶⁵ and the remainder was to be deposited in trust with the Jewish Colonial Trust.⁶⁶

The Garden City appealed to the imagination of the subscribers⁶⁷ who sympathised with Kadoorie in his loss and were determined to make the project outstanding.⁶⁸ The exuberance of Shanghai Sephardim and commitment to the scheme is of crucial significance to an understanding of their identification with world Sephardim and their resolve to demonstrate the considerable Sephardi contribution to *Eretz Yisrael*.⁶⁹ Their decision coincided with the visit of the Sephardi Zionist emissary, Dr Ariel Bension, the *KH* delegate to China in 1924.⁷⁰ Bension had not been authorised by the Executive of the *KH* to initiate the plan, which was contrary to the *KH* principle of never earmarking any contributions for a specific purpose.⁷¹ This is understandable, as allowing money to be collected for a scheme which was not under the auspices of the body appointed by the ZO for administering funds, would set a dangerous precedent.⁷² There is no doubt, however, that Bension would have found it difficult to raise any money in Shanghai other than for the Kadoorie city.⁷³ Shanghai Zionists threatened to withdraw their subscriptions rather than have them diverted to any other project.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ Ezra to Weizmann, 20/3/19; tel., Ezra to Weizmann, 7/4/19 and *Confidential Minutes of the 78th Meeting of the Executives*, 17/11/23, CZA KH4/9865, and 11/6/24, 23/6/24, 14/7/24. CZA, Z4/1224; JC, 17/10/24, pp.14-15; see illustration, p.258.

⁶⁵ The Shanghai Board comprised D.E.J. Abraham, C.Gubbay and F. Reiss. Bension was appointed the Managing Director in *Eretz Yisrael*, 14/7/24, CZA, KH4/9865; architectural plan by C. Gonda, IM, 26/9/24, p.19.

⁶⁶ As agreed upon between the Kadoorie-Bension Group of Eastern Jews and the American Zion Commonwealth, [AZC hereafter], Executive director, Harry Kottier, 23/9/24, CZA, KH4/9865; The AZC denied that it failed to provide the site for the Garden City, AZC to Herrmann, 9/2/26, KH/9866; C. Passman to L. Bawly, 8/12/25, KH4/9865; 'Kadoorie Garden City in Palestine Building Agreement Concluded', JC, 17/10/24, pp.14-15.

⁶⁷ It was only when Bension failed to secure contributions for the *Keren Hayesod*, that he supported the Garden City scheme, D.E.J. Abraham to the Board of Directors, 25/11/24, CZA, KH1/52/II.

⁶⁸ 'Far Eastern Jews should be proud of the distinction earned by them in the estimation of World Jewry', 'A message from Mr. E.S. Kadoorie, 10/3/25, KH4/9865, cited from IM, 6/2/25.

⁶⁹ The SZA contributed £20,000. IM, 3/8/28, p.10.

⁷⁰ Ezra to Herrmann, 27/11/25, CZA, KH/52 II.

⁷¹ Herrmann to Gubbay, 3/10/24, CZA, KH4/9865.

⁷² Herrmann to Ezra, 11/8/26, CZA, KH1/52I.

⁷³ Confidential Minutes of the 78th Meeting of the Executive, 17/11/25, p.3, CZA, KH4/9865; Ezra to Dr. Hans Kohn, 20/11/24, KH 1/52/II. 'Bension raised £7000 a great achievement', Abraham to Herrmann, 25/11/24 and 23/6/24. For a detailed list of donors to the Palestine Garden City Fund see 31/12/26, CZA, KH4/9866, and 11/8/36, KH1/52/I.

⁷⁴ Bension to Herrmann, Vancouver, 9/10/24, CZA, KH1/52 II; Gubbay to The Eretz Israel Foundation Fund, London, 27/11/25', KH4/9865; a list of subscriptions in Gubbay, to Herrmann, 12/3/25, KH4/9865.

Clearly the grandiose Garden City appeared anachronistic to the Zionist authorities at that stage in the development of *Eretz Yisrael*.⁷⁵ Yet the Executive of the *KH* hesitated to voice its disapproval for fear of arousing the anger of the Shanghai Sephardim and ‘increasing embitterment of Sephardim towards Ashkenazi Zionists’.⁷⁶ In November 1924, however, it was felt necessary to correct the mistaken public impression that the scheme had been approved by the WZM. The Board stated its objection to Shanghai Sephardim being relieved of the duty to contribute to Zionist organisations, and being allowed to limit their contribution to a precise project outside the control of Zionist authorities. It emphasised that although the percentage of Sephardic immigrants in Palestine had increased, only an infinitesimal part of the £1,600,000 contributed to the *KH* was from Sephardim.⁷⁷ The Zionist authorities’ criticism of the Garden City project appears to be justified. It was necessary for the Zionist authorities to keep the management of funds and projects under central control. With an overview of the expenditure of the whole of *Eretz Yisrael*, clearly they believed that there were higher priorities at this stage of its development.⁷⁸ It would have set a dangerous precedent to allow changes in policy whereby money could be allocated for a particular project.⁷⁹

The Executive of the *KH* believed that Kadoorie’s support for Zionism would profoundly influence Sephardi Jewry. It therefore proposed ‘exceptional treatment’ on condition that the execution and administration of the work remained in the hands of a board, possibly with Kadoorie as one of the committee.⁸⁰ Importantly, the whole agreement was based on the condition that if a minimum of £100,000 was not raised within the next five years, the *KH* was entitled to dispose of the entire amount

⁷⁵ Ezra to Kohn, 3/10/24, CZA, KH4/9865; financial appeals in aid of the scheme affected the response to the *KH* in general, 17/11/24, KH1/52 II.

⁷⁶ Bension to Herrmann, 9/10/24, CZA, KH1/52/II.

⁷⁷ ‘Our Sephardic Jews have not contributed their fair share’, Herrmann to Kadoorie, 8/12/24, CZA, KH4/9865.

⁷⁸ Dr. Hans Kohn to Ezra, 3/10/24; Herrmann to C. Gubbay, 3/10/24, CZA, KH4/9865. The *KH* regretted that it was ‘compelled to ruthlessly destroy Sir Elly’s dream of a millionaire’s Garden City’, and hoped to convince him that Palestine was not yet ripe for such a scheme, Herrmann to Ezra, 3/1/28, CZA KH4/B/1974.

⁷⁹ Herrmann to Ezra, 11/8/26, CZA, KH1/52/I.

⁸⁰ Managing Director of *KH* to Bension, 20/5/25, CZA, KH1/52/I; ‘In view of your great prestige and influence in the Sephardic community...’, Herrmann to Kadoorie, 31/12/23, CZA KH4/9865. ‘With regard to those communities over which you say I exert a very great influence, let me assure you that I have not, and do not intend to use my influence with them in any way whatsoever, Kadoorie to Herrmann, 17/11/25, KH4/9865. Also see the Minutes of the 78th Meeting of the Executive, for detailed discussion of the Garden scheme, 17/11/25 CZA, KH4/9865.

collected.⁸¹ The proposal to create the Garden City did not materialise. In fact the funds raised were not sufficient to pursue any grandiose plan, and were transferred, by a collective decision, to the erection of a hospital in *Emek* near *Kfar Yeladim*.⁸²

The failure of the Garden City scheme was only one of several issues involved in the rift between Kadoorie and the Zionist Organisation. His disillusionment with Zionism had in fact begun when he was informed that the large sums of money he had subscribed for building a hostel in memory of his wife, near the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, had been utilised for general purposes by *KH*.⁸³ Kadoorie disclosed to Krishevsky that he was discouraged that no work had been accomplished with money he had personally contributed, and he could obtain no satisfactory explanation of what had become of it.⁸⁴ It was only 'after a great struggle' that the *Keren Kayemeth* had sent him an extract from their accounts which did not impress Kadoorie, who professed to have no confidence in balance sheets in general.⁸⁵

Kadoorie spoke openly about his disillusionment with the Zionist leaders. His attempts to extend a measure of control over the generous funds he had donated, appear to have irritated the paid Zionist administrators. He felt rebuffed when, despite his well known philanthropic contributions in *Eretz Yisrael* and elsewhere, and his flare for directing business, his opinions and his preferences were disregarded. His proposal to create three funds, a national bank, land and building development investment fund, and a charitable trust, each with capital of ten million pounds to be subscribed in shares, was accepted only by Sir Herbert Samuel and the lawyer Norman Bentwich. He accused the others of ridiculing him publicly because they were unable to conceive the magnitude of his schemes. This alienated him from the movement which he believed had 'created very little, not to say nothing', with the enormous sums that had been collected for charity in *Eretz Yisrael*. He maintained

⁸¹ Managing Director to Bension, 20/5/25, pp.2-7, CZA, KH1/52/I; American Zion Commonwealth [AZC] to Herrmann 9/2/26, 4/9866; Passman doubted if he could raise the necessary capital, Passman to Bawly, 8/12/25, KH4/9865. Copy of the 'Arrangement as agreed upon, between the Kadoorie-Bension Group of Eastern Jews and the American Zion Commonwealth, Inc. for the erection of a Garden and Industrial City in Palestine', 23/9/24, KH4/9865.

⁸² Herrmann to Kadoorie, 10/11/25, CZA, KH4/9865; Herrmann to Krishevsky, 31/12/26, KH4/1974. Palestine Garden City Fund Shanghai individual donations amounted to £3569.17.4 pledges £8,700, *IM*, 1/2/29, p.9; 5/4/29, p.70 and 72.

⁸³ Ezra to Herrmann, 3/9/26, CZA, KH/9866.

⁸⁴ Ezra to Cohen, 25/1/29, Z4/3225/I.

⁸⁵ Kadoorie to Herrmann, 6/10/28, CZA, KH4/B/1980.

that most of the money was being squandered to defray the cost of conferences, travelling expenses and salaries to 'highly paid, unqualified, unconscientious, unscrupulous officials'.⁸⁶ He was critical of their methods, as he believed in great enterprises and not in a movement 'which as big as it might pretend to be, moves about as if it were a poor charitable institution'.⁸⁷ Kadoorie considered it a deliberate slight 'to minimise his personality' when, in quoting his £10,000 donation in their calendar, the *KKL* had failed to refer to him as Sir Elly Kadoorie KBE and Chevalier of the *Légion d'Honneur*.⁸⁸

Ezra deeply regretted that the 'unpleasantness may take years to heal or may not be healed at all'.⁸⁹ Krishevsky, in 1928 lamented the loss of support from 'the upper cream' of the Sephardim, whose opinions carried weight among the rich Ashkenazim in Shanghai: 'the harm he has created will require providential help to cleanse the poison he has inoculated the people with'.⁹⁰ Even Kadoorie's friend Bension, in 1929 predicted a great future for Zionism in Shanghai, despite the fact that 'a great enemy of our movement lives there and is constantly doing us harm'.⁹¹ Yet, somewhat surprisingly, Bension was convinced that he would be able to induce Kadoorie to take a 'more reasonable view of Zionist activity'.⁹² His optimism, however, was not shared by Herrmann who saw it as a 'very frail hope'.⁹³ Given that Shanghai Sephardim were highly individualistic, it is possible that the envoys exaggerated Kadoorie's influence on the community. Their claim that the quarrel between Kadoorie and the Zionists sowed doubts of Zionism among Shanghai

⁸⁶ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 6/10/28, CZA, KH4/B/1980.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 6/10/28.

⁸⁸ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 23/10/28, p.4, CZA, KH4/B/1980; Ezra to JNF, 6/10/32, KKL 5/5222. Ellis Kadoorie, Elly's brother never forgave Chaim Weitzmann for reneging on his promise to name one of the buildings after him, if Ellis bought land on Mount Scopus for the building of Hebrew University, 'Kadourie', [sic] Bulletin, *Igud Yotzei Sin*, No.332, Nov-Dec, 1993, pp.14-15; Weitzmann offer to return the money was considered insulting by Kadoorie and destroyed the credibility of the Zionist leadership in the eyes of the Kadoorie family, Al Potashnick, secretary to the *KH*, interview by author, Jerusalem, 20/5/94.

⁸⁹ Ezra to Herrmann, 3/9/26, CZA, K4/9866. He is 'sowing suspicion and distrust everywhere', 15/2/29, Z4/3225/I. He 'does not know what to do to extinguish the light in China', Ezra to Cohen, 22/3/29, CZA, KH4/B/1979; Ezra suggested that 'the grievances aired by Sir Elly should be redressed', Ezra to Cohen, 8/4/29 and 2/4/29, Z4/3225/I; Ezra blamed the 'tactlessness' of Zionist leaders in England, Ezra to Charles Gubbay, 27/2/31; Ezra to Cohen, 22/3/29, Z4/3225/I.

⁹⁰ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 23/10/28, CZA, KH4/B/1980. This is confirmed in Ezra to Cohen, 3/8/28, Z4/3225/I.

⁹¹ Bension to Herrmann, 28/5/29, and 3/3/28, CZA, KH 4/B/1973.

⁹² Cohen to Herrmann, 13/12/28, CZA, Z4/3225/I.

⁹³ Herrmann to Cohen, 14/12/28, CZA, Z4/3225/I.

Sephardim and profoundly affected their support of the movement,⁹⁴ draws attention away from the fact that there was reason to be disillusioned with the emissaries and with the Zionist administration as will be shown below.

Kadoorie's decision to retire from the Presidency of the SZA was officially announced in April 1929. He approved of his successor Sophie Toeg, 'a lady of great influence and charming personality'.⁹⁵ The new committee, 'The Palestine Association of Shanghai in support of the *Keren Hayesod* and *Keren Kayemeth*',⁹⁶ comprised D.E.J. Abraham, Chairman, A. E. Moses, Honorary Treasurer, Simon Levy, Charles Gubbay and Ellis Hayim *inter alia*.⁹⁷ Members were invited to join on payment of a fixed monthly contribution to which, Krishevsky suggested, ten per cent be added to defray expenses, 'since voluntary work in Shanghai had always been a failure'.⁹⁸ The proposed monthly membership fee for the first member of each family was £2, and £1.50 for second members.⁹⁹ The new committee does not appear to have been dynamic and by 1937 the SJA existed 'in name only'. No one succeeded Ezra as secretary after his death in 1936 and Mrs. Toeg left for England.¹⁰⁰

Despite his assertion that he had already done too much for the Zionist Movement and would have nothing more to do with it,¹⁰¹ Kadoorie, nonetheless, continued to take an interest in Palestine, notably by building a school in Haifa and one in Jerusalem for the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*.¹⁰² Contrary to the opinion held by some Israelis today, there is evidence to suggest that Kadoorie's sons were liberal contributors to *Eretz Yisrael*, although they did not play an active role in the

⁹⁴ For example Krishevsky to Herrmann, 26/1/29 and 15/2/29, CZA, Z4/3225/I.

⁹⁵ Ezra to Cohen, 17/4/29, CZA, Z4/3225/I; She gave 'her heart and soul to the Cause', Ezra to Cohen, 3/6/29, CZA, Z4/3225/I; Ezra to Herrmann, 17/4/29, CZA, Z4/3225/I. Her good English education enabled her to approach the elite of Jewish and non-Jewish society. The grounds behind her villa were used by many societies for social events, Krishevsky to Herrmann, 23/10/28, p.2, CZA, KH4/B/1980; NCH 20/4/29, p.107.

⁹⁶ For 'Regulations of Palestine Association of Shanghai', see 16/1/29, CZA, KH4/9860. Krishevsky gained the support of a few 'anti-Kadoorie people', notably Sokolsky, the editor of both the FER and the NCDN, Krishevsky to Herrmann, 20/1/28, KH4/B/1974.

⁹⁷ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 20/1/28 and 5/2/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

⁹⁸ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 6/10/28, CZA, KH4/B/1980.

⁹⁹ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 23/10/28, CZA, KH4/B/1980.

¹⁰⁰ Katie Ezra to Herrmann, 30/7/73, CZA, KH4/B/1985.

¹⁰¹ Ezra to Herrmann, 3/3/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974; Krishevsky to Herrmann, 6/10/28, KH4/B/1980; for a record of Kadoorie's contribution to the ZO see Z. Alroy, 'From Shanghai to New York', pp.29-30.

¹⁰² Ezra to Cohen, 23/2/26, CZA Z4/3225/I; Krishevsky to Herrmann, 23/10/28, p.2, KH4/B/1980.

Zionist Organisation.¹⁰³ It is important to emphasise the significant part Kadoorie played in strengthening the Sephardi identity of the SZA by arousing their enthusiasm for the Garden scheme, intended to be a momentous Sephardi contribution to *Eretz Yisrael*. The converse may also be true. Disillusion may have come to the majority in the community when he withdrew his support of the movement.

Zionist Envoys to Shanghai

It all depends on the man you sent out. If he knows how to handle people he can win them.¹⁰⁴

To understand the relations between the Shanghai Sephardim and the WZM it is vital to assess the role of the emissaries to China. Israel Cohen, Director of Publicity and Propaganda of the Organisation,¹⁰⁵ Dr. and Mrs. Ariel Bension, Gero Krishevsky, and Dr. Bension Shein were notable among the delegates, despatched by the Zionist executives to establish networks with the Jewish communities in East Asia and to raise funds. Cohen, the first emissary to Shanghai, [1920] was enthusiastically welcomed.¹⁰⁶

Zionism has a stronghold in Shanghai... The Shanghai community was the only one throughout my tour in which I [Cohen] got four-figure donations... London contributors, please copy! ...¹⁰⁷

It is curious that the fervour of Shanghai Sephardim for Zionism was dissipated.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding Israel Cohen's denial that he was receiving a five percent commission on all contributions, Shanghai Sephardim remained critical of the Zionist bureaucracy and the large payments to its emissaries.¹⁰⁹ By October 1928, Krishevsky concluded that Shanghai would have to be crossed off the *KH* list for

¹⁰³ Jordan to Skorneck, 16/8/48, 885437, JDCCA; similarly several Sephardim believed that they could support *Eretz Yisrael* without supporting the Zionist Movement.

¹⁰⁴ Bension to Herrmann, 28/5/29, KH4/B/1973.

¹⁰⁵ Israel Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage: An Autobiography of Israel Cohen*, (London, 1956), p.173.

¹⁰⁶ The *IM* devoted seven pages to Cohen's visit, 17/12/20. Before Kadoorie/Zionist split, Bension lodged in Marble Hall and Kadoorie paid for Bension to accompany him to the USA and Canada, 9/10/24, KH1/52/II, *IM*, 1/8/24, p.14; in 1929 Kadoorie emphasised that he was welcome only as a private guest, Ezra to Cohen, 2/4/29, *CZA*, Z4/3225/I.

¹⁰⁷ The contributors being Messrs. D. Sassoon, Edward Ezra, T. Toledano and Messrs Shahmoon Bros., Cohen, 'Jews in Far Off Lands', Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle*, *JC*, 3/6/21, p.16.

¹⁰⁸ Notably, Ezra Shahmoon's enthusiasm waned, *IM*, 2/6/33, p.12; Many like Gensburger, founder and president of the Maccabean Club, proclaimed, 'My Palestine is China and Shanghai My Jerusalem', 31/3/28, p.1, *CZA*, KH4/B/1974.

¹⁰⁹ E.R.Sassoon to Ezra, 2/2/22 and Ezra to Sasson, 17/2/22, *CZA*, Z4/2344.

regular collection work, except for trifling donations for trees, *shekalim* and proceeds from an annual ball.¹¹⁰ Krishevsky attributed this to their Anglophile obsessions: races, cinema, dancing and bridge parties.¹¹¹ He found canvassing unproductive and tedious, trying to get ‘the so differing types’ to co-operate as ‘they simply refuse to meet others that are not of their clan’.¹¹²

The attitude of some Zionist emissaries evidently had a negative effect on Shanghai Sephardim; particularly those who came with high expectations, assuming that they could collect large sums without much effort. Krishevsky, mortified that his ten-week campaign in Shanghai yielded a meagre £600, blamed this on the community rather than on his own shortcomings.¹¹³ This may be contrasted with the tremendous success of Bension’s campaign which followed four months later. He raised \$1,900 at a meeting in Haroon’s home attended by four hundred guests.¹¹⁴ In fact, the popularity in Shanghai of Bension and his wife, whose total commitment to Zionism was evident,¹¹⁵ reinforces the theory that a higher calibre of delegates, or perhaps Sephardi delegates, would have gained more support for the movement.

Instead, Jews in China expressed their disappointment that Krishevsky did not possess the real Zionist spirit and did hardly any propaganda work. He was regarded as a very good showman, interested in attracting publicity, notably by public meetings with Chinese politicians.¹¹⁶ This disturbed Shanghai Sephardim, who were at pains

¹¹⁰ Krishevsky to Herrmann, CZA, 23/10/28, KH4/B/1980. Prior to his visit Bension received a confidential letter from S. Ezekiel warning him of the great opposition to his visit in Shanghai, as many former supporters had become antagonistic towards Zionism, and the new committee hardly functioned, Bension to Herrmann, 24/4/29, CZA, KH4B/B/1979. The adverse economic situation in Shanghai in 1928 seriously affected the Sephardim. D.E.J. Abraham who had donated £1,000 in the previous campaign ‘is now working at a loss’ and many Jews had closed their businesses, Krishevsky to Herrmann, 5/2/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

¹¹¹ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 6/11/28, CZA/KH4/9860. He put forward other ‘excuses’, Krishevsky to Herrmann, CZA, 5/2/28, KH4/B/1974.

¹¹² Krishevsky to Herrmann, 6/11/28, CZA, KH4/9860. Similarly, Bension Shein, in April 1934, was cynical about the ‘lack of harmony and unity’ in the Shanghai community, CZA, KKL5/6605.

¹¹³ See for example his scathing criticism of Far Eastern Communities, Krishevsky to Herrmann, 3/1/29, KH4/B/1979; see also his caustic comments about Shanghai youth, Krishevsky to Herrmann, 11/1/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

¹¹⁴ Bension to Herrmann, 28/5/29, CZA, KH4/B/1973; Ezra to Herrmann, 10/5/29 and 20/5/29, KH4/B/1979; the Bensions made a ‘very powerful impression here in spite of the attacks and intrigues prevailing for some time, Ezra to Cohen, 14/5/29, Z4/3225/I; IM, 15/5/29, p.9.

¹¹⁵ Ezra to Herrmann, 10/5/29 and 20/5/29, KH4/B/1979.

¹¹⁶ Krishevsky’s meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, IM, 5/10/28, p.15; and with Dr. C.T.Wang, Nationalist Minister for Foreign Affairs, IM, 7/12/28, p.11; Tianjin ZO to Cohen, 25/7/28, CZA, Z4 3225. Aware of the aversion of Shanghai Sephardim to Communism, the Executive assured the SZA that Krishevsky, whose name though ‘savouring of Bolshevism’, was a high official in the British Government service, 19/1/28, KH4/B/1974. It is likely that the fact that he was Russian would have made him unpopular with Shanghai Sephardim.

to keep a low political profile, believing that: 'politics in China is better left alone. Now steady [sic] Jews get nervous when they see this and think this visit is a waste of time and expenses very high'.¹¹⁷ The Zionist leaders received complaints that Krishevsky was interested in establishing private business connections in the East.¹¹⁸ Given that Zionist envoys to Shanghai followed close on each other's heels,¹¹⁹ it was perhaps over optimistic of the Zionist authorities to expect that the ardour and financial contributions of Shanghai Sephardim would not wane. Not surprisingly then, a prevalent idea in the East was that there should be a ten-year gap between the visits of delegates.¹²⁰

An important reason for the disillusionment of Shanghai Sephardim with Zionism was their conviction that the Sephardim were being discriminated against in *Eretz Yisrael*.¹²¹ They were deeply affected by the claim of Rabbi Isaac Nathan Cohen, of Tiberias, and the Confederation of Sephardi Jews, that the Zionist institutions were systematically prejudicing the interests of the Sephardim.¹²² To stem the adverse criticism which was affecting their fund raising campaign, Hans Hogan of the *KH* in Jerusalem, issued statistics showing that the immigration office had dealt with a total of 12,054 immigrants, of which the Sephardim numbered 8,143.¹²³ It pointed out that Sephardim received the largest share of Zionist funds under the administration of immigrant welfare work.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, as Ezra noted, there had been no organised body to voice Sephardi needs and they were not consulted on important matters. He hoped that at the Zionist Congress of 1924 the Sephardim would be invited to form an organised body with a seat on the Council of

¹¹⁷ Ezekiel to Bension, 15/4/29, CZA, KH4/B/1979.

¹¹⁸ Herrmann to Cohen, *Personal*, 6/11/28; the Tianjin Jewish community were critical of his methods, 'We are very much disappointed', G. Gershevich to Cohen, 25/7/28, CZA, ZA/3225/I.

¹¹⁹ *NCH*, 7/6/29, p.14.

¹²⁰ Bension to Herrmann, 28/5/29, CZA, KH 4/B/1973.

¹²¹ '...the oft repeated accusation of indifference or even hostility on the part of the Zionist Executive towards the Sephardim in Palestine', Herrmann to Krishevsky, CZA, 15/2/28, KH4/B/1974.

¹²² Ezra to Sassoon, 17/2/22, CZA, ZA/2344. This feeling of discrimination exists in Israel today, despite Zionism's emphasis on the national ties binding Jews together.

¹²³ In 1923 there were 529 Ashkenazim to 1815 Sephardim', detailed statistics in 'Zionist Organisation and Sephardim [sic] Jews'. *IM*, 3/8/28, p.10.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.10; The *KH* often complained that the contribution from China was not commensurate with the wealth at the SZA's command. It criticised their tendency to look upon the building of Palestine as a concern of European and American Jews.

the Jewish Agency, and proposed Bension as their representative.¹²⁵ Indeed Bension did much to strengthen the Sephardi identity of Shanghai Sephardim who were proud that there was a Sephardi representative amongst the Zionist hierarchy.

The critical economic situation in China in 1928 had a major bearing on the dwindling of support for Zionism among the Sephardim. The fluctuations in incomes and business deprived the SZA of many of its regular contributors notably D.E.J. Abraham and C. Gubbay.¹²⁶ The difficulty they had in raising HK \$150,000 by March 1929 to benefit from the bequest of Isaac Perry for the construction of the SJS, has been noted. In 1934 the Jewish community of New Zealand received an appeal from the Shanghai Jewish community for financial help, pointing out that in the past they themselves were generous contributors to all deserving causes, but were now unable to support their own community. Shein advised the Zionist authorities against launching a campaign in Shanghai in 1939 because several families who had contributed generously in 1935 were 'struggling for their daily bread'.¹²⁷

An analysis of the reports of the Zionist emissaries clarifies the causes for the paradoxical change in Shanghai Sephardim from ardent supporters of the movement to apathy. Most importantly they had serious misgivings that the Sephardim were not well represented in the leadership of the WZM. Arguably, this reinforced their Sephardi identity. The success of Bension's campaigns bring into sharp relief the shortcomings of some other delegates. Clearly, part of the indifference to Zionism in Shanghai was due to the inefficiency of Zionist authorities and to the negative influence of some of their insensitive delegates, who failed to stimulate enthusiasm. The above factors need to be viewed in the light of deteriorating economic conditions in Shanghai from 1928-1935.

¹²⁵ Ezra predicted that leading Sephardim, Ezekiel Joseph Shemtob, Ezra Sassoon, Kadoorie, Manasseh Meyer would make an impression on Zionism, 'Sephardim Jewry and Zionism', *IM*, 1/8/24, p.1.

¹²⁶ Krishevsky to Herrmann, 5/2/28, p.2, CZA, KH4/B/1974.

¹²⁷ Shein, to Hantke, Jerusalem, 2/1/39, CZA, KH4/B/1976.

Shanghai Zionist Association's Attitude Towards Britain

The question that remains to be addressed is whether, and to what extent, the Shanghai Sephardim's loyalty towards Great Britain impeded their whole hearted support of the Zionist Movement.¹²⁸ The issue of 'dual loyalty' has continually confronted Jews in the Diaspora.¹²⁹

The unbounded joy felt by Shanghai Sephardim at the decision of the Supreme Council at San Remo in 1920 to accept the Balfour Declaration of November 1917¹³⁰ found expression in their tributes to Britain, 'the noble champion of the rights of small nations'.¹³¹ At a celebration held at the Palace Hotel, M. Myers proclaimed that Britain had honourably and completely discharged her obligation to Jews. 'The acceptance of the Mandatory power over the Holy Land by the British Raj, our traditional friend, is a wise step... for we could not have wished for a more efficient master to watch and guide our toddlers [sic]... and shape a nation's destiny'.¹³²

The publication of Colonial Secretary Passfield's White Paper on 17 November 1920 came as a thunderbolt to Shanghai Jewry.¹³³ The policy, described by *The Manchester Guardian* as 'the betrayal of a great cause', proclaimed the British Government's conviction that the Balfour Declaration was not intended to imply that Palestine should be a Jewish state against the will of its Arab population.¹³⁴ The *Israel's Messenger* reproached Britain's 'neutral impartial attitude as a betrayal of both the Declaration and the Mandate'.¹³⁵ Shanghai Sephardim censured Ezra's militancy, probably fearing that his misinterpretation of the Declaration would alienate

¹²⁸ Zionist centres in the West were dominated by the Ashkenazim. Sephardim showed little affinity to the movement. Sir Victor Sassoon's scepticism of Zionism is evident in Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.238; Ezra dismissed his 'flimsy excuses', Ezra to Herrmann, 2/7/28, CZA, KH4/B/1973; Ezra to Herrmann, 'We do not expect much [from Sir Victor]...he is wholly indifferent', 1/5/31, CZA, KH4/9861; 'I have not been in favour of transplanting Jews to Palestine', Sassoon to Mrs. Toeg, 25/4/31, CZA, KH4/1978.

¹²⁹ Professor Goldwin Smith, the well-known anti-Semite in 1877 asked 'Can Jews be Patriots?', cited in *IM*, 1/11/1907, p.9.

¹³⁰ 'Shanghai Zionist Association Celebrates Supreme Council's Decision to Establish Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine', tel., to Lloyd George, printed in *IM*, 4/6/20, p.14.

¹³¹ *IM*, 4/6/20, p.14.

¹³² *NCH*, 22/4/20, p.455; 'Great Britain and Zionism', *IM*, 29/10/20, p.11.

¹³³ *IM*, 9/6/39, p.1; an excellent account of Britain's policy towards Zionism in Frank Hardie, *Britain and Zion: the Fateful Entanglement*, (Belfast, 1980) and Philip Jones, *Britain and Palestine 1914-1948*, (Oxford, 1979)

¹³⁴ *IM*, 9/6/39, p.21.

¹³⁵ *IM*, 1/2/31, p.22 and 9/6/39, p.21. 'What are we to think of England today when our treaty rights are trampled upon with impunity and the Balfour Declaration is regarded as a "scrap of paper"?' Ezra to J.C. Wedgwood, M.P., 12/6/30, CZA, Z4/3225/II.

the British.¹³⁶ They warned that his aggressive methods of disseminating extreme Zionist ideals were turning the majority of the Jewish communities against him, and the Zionist cause.¹³⁷ It is indeed possible that this factor discouraged Shanghai Sephardi affiliation with the movement.

Even the Zionist authorities were worried about Ezra's negative influence in Shanghai. C. Arlosoroff, of the Jewish Agency Executive, warned Ezra that he was overstepping his brief when Ezra took issue with Sir John Hope Simpson in 1931 over his claim that the Zionists were wrong to oust the Arab labourers from employment in Jewish colonies:¹³⁸

...your journal is not, of course, an official mouthpiece of the Zionist Organisation but it is a Zionist paper to be regarded as reflecting opinion of Zionists in the diaspora...you would be supplying our enemies with a proof that Zionists in different countries are still swayed by unjustified and dangerous illusions as to the nature and extent of the obligations of Great Britain towards the Jews.¹³⁹

It is, however, feasible that the *Israel's Messenger* reflected Sephardi opinion in Shanghai in its criticism that the British authorities did not appreciate the desire of some Shanghai Jewish youth to enlist for service in Palestine. 'We dislike seeing a single Briton being killed for our country'.¹⁴⁰ Shanghai Sephardim were sensitive to insinuations in the local press that Britain would have to protect the Jews in Palestine until the new nation could look after itself.

¹³⁶ 'It is a sad thought when we begin to distrust England, our faithful ally, and discount the utterances of her statement... We want deeds, not words', *IM*, 1/3/32, p.9; 'Britain Betrays Jews', *IM*, 1/2/31, p.22. To Cohen from Ezra, 12/6/30, *CZA*, Z4/3225/II.

¹³⁷ Letter to the editor, signed 'S', Shanghai, 20/8/22, *IM*, 8/9/22, p.31; also Salmon's criticism, *IM*, 5/5/29, p.20. For examples of Ezra's invective against *The American Israelite* see *IM*, 26/7/1907, p.11 and 10/9/20, pp. 8-9; 'Mr. Schiff Utterly Routed', *IM*, 15/11/1907, p.10; 'Harry Morgenthau Betrays the Jewish Nation', *IM*, 2/10/21, p.29; see also 'an allusion made by Ezra to the 'anti-Zionism' of Rev. Cohen of Darlinghurst, Sydney created a good deal of ill-feeling, Herrmann to Ezra, 22/10/28, *CZA*, KH4/B/1986.

¹³⁸ 'Special Interview with John Hope Simpson', undated, *CZA*, Z4/3225/II. Simpson was authorised by the League of Nations to act as Director-General of the Flood Relief Commission at Shanghai in 1930-1931. Ezra to Simpson, 27/11/31 and 30/11/31, *CZA*, KH4/1978; Simpson to Ezra, 27/11/31 and 30/11/31, [he replied on the same day], KH4/1978.

¹³⁹ 'It supplies our opponents with ready-made weapons against us', Herrmann to Ezra, 9/3/32, *CZA*, KH4/1978; Arlosoroff to Ezra, 4/1/32, KH4/1978; 'Your action in giving unauthorised publicity to an Executive cable is highly improper', 24/2/32, KH4/1978; 'I have worked long enough in the movement to know how to be tactful', Ezra to Herrmann, 7/4/32, *CZA*, KH4/1978. For earlier correspondence on this issue see Ezra to Cohen, 21/10/30, *CZA* Z4/3225/11.

¹⁴⁰ Letter to the Editor from F. Moody, 'The Empire & Palestine', *NCH*, 29/4/20, p.527.

242344

Shanghai Zionist Association

NOTICE

A meeting of our Association will take place on ~~Tuesday~~ ^{Tuesday} next, the ~~31st~~ ^{10th} January, 1922, at 5.30 P.M., at the Jewish Club "Ahduth", when a special report compiled by Mr. ISRAEL COHEN, B.A., who represented our Association at the recent Zionist Congress at Calrsbad, will be read. Rabi W. Hirsch, B.A., will preside.

Reference to the untimely death of Mr. Edward Isaac Ezra, one time President of our Association will be made and resolutions of sympathy with his family submitted.

Members and friends are invited to attend.

N. E. B. EZRA,

Hon. Secretary,

Shanghai, 30th January, 1922.

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It is necessary for you to refer to me for instructions in a particular case.

The foregoing regulations do not introduce a new principle into the relations of His Majesty's Government with the Zionist movement. They are simply necessitated by the fact that in some countries any movement which is not recognized by the Government on behalf of the State would be liable to interference. Government on behalf of the State.

A similar circular has been addressed to His Majesty's Consular officers.

I am, with great trusts and regard,
 Your obedient servant,
 AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

ON various occasions during the past year questions have arisen regarding the general attitude to be adopted by His Majesty's Representatives in the countries where they reside, and in particular regarding the extent to which facilities should be granted by them to representatives of the Zionist Organisation.

In order to ensure consistency, I consider it desirable to define the general attitude to be adopted by His Majesty's Representatives in the countries where they reside, and in particular regarding the extent to which facilities should be granted by them to representatives of the Zionist Organisation.

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The official British attitude towards Zionism in Shanghai was clarified by the fact that the Zionist Association was not registered either as a limited liability company or as a private commercial concern in the British Empire, and was therefore denied British protection.¹⁴¹ Abraham Kaufman, the president of the Harbin Zionist Association was informed in 1922 that because it was a purely political institution, the Chinese Government would have to decide the Zionist Association's status in China.¹⁴² Although several British subjects were members of the SZA, the Shanghai Consulates were directed by the Foreign Office to avoid active participation in Zionist meetings and propaganda. The Foreign Office Circular of 17 January 1929, which defined the general attitude to be adopted by His Majesty's Representatives and consular officers towards the activities of the Zionist Movement, specifically debarred them from being 'actively associated' with it in order to allay suspicions that HMG was pro-Zionist.¹⁴³ There were then several factors which may have discouraged Shanghai Sephardim from fully identifying with Zionism. Perhaps most importantly, stateless Shanghai Jews who assumed that they could take out papers for Palestinian citizenship at the Shanghai British Consulate found this not to be the case. The Consul General, Sidney Barton, made it clear that either the applicant or his father had to have been born in Palestine and would have to opt for Palestinian nationality as soon as the Palestine Nationality Act came into force. They also had to state their intention to reside permanently in Palestine.¹⁴⁴

***The Israel's Messenger* - 'Bulwark of Judaism in the Far East'¹⁴⁵**

Given the widespread failure of Shanghai Sephardim to accept Zionism as an alternative to the British nationality so many desired, the function of the *Israel's*

¹⁴¹ Porter, Consul General Harbin, to Beilby Alston KMCG., 17/3/22, FO671/448.

¹⁴² The Secretary of State for the Colonies found it impossible to refuse registration to two branches of the Zionist Association, The JCT and the Palestine Land Development Co., which were registered as companies in Britain, 11/8/22, and Consul H. Porter to Kaufman, 10/4/22, PRO FO 671/448 6207/22; steps were taken in London to obtain legalisation of Zionist work in China, [unsigned] to Ettinger, 18/3/27, CZA, Z4/3225/I.

¹⁴³ They were forbidden to hold a reception on the 2 November, the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, *Circular*, 17/1/29, [E 5897/651/65], FO228/4113/186982; 'Sir Austen [Chamberlain] thinks it best that Z.A. should "conduct their own propaganda"', Dossier 135A, Vol.1929, p.2, FO 228/4113/186982/314; Although Barton refused to issue a message for publication on the twelfth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Ezra considered him 'a very ardent sympathiser with our cause and [he] takes a great deal of interest in it', Ezra to Cohen, 1/11/29, CZA, Z4/3225 I. See illustration, p.269.

¹⁴⁴ 'Jews and Palestinian Citizenship', *IM*, 8/6/23; Jacob Friend led this approach. Palestinian Jews who settled abroad risked losing their citizenship, 7/9/23. p.14.

¹⁴⁵ *IM*, 1/6/30, p.16.

Messenger and its editor, N.E.B. Ezra, in shaping the attitude of the Sephardi Community of Shanghai towards the movement must be assessed.¹⁴⁶ Among the positive factors which suggest the journal had some influence was the fact that most Sephardim paid a subscription for the publication, even though it was nominal.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, there were businessmen prepared to pay for advertising space, and the revenue derived from advertisements totalled some Ch\$325 a month in the 1930s.¹⁴⁸ Importantly, the journal had the recognition of Jewish communities both abroad and in China; ten to twenty percent of production was sent abroad.¹⁴⁹ The longevity of the paper, from 22 April 1904 to 17 October 1941, and its circulation of 500-1,000 copies, indicates that it was perceived as being of value either to the Shanghai Sephardim and Russian Jews, or to the Zionist leaders, or to all of them.¹⁵⁰ There was general support for the paper.

Close-knit and clannish, even by their own admission, the Shanghai Sephardi community did not need a paper to weld them together. Yet their interest in the 'Social and Personal' columns, and the discussion and publicising of events significant to the whole community, was a means by which they reaffirmed their identification with each other. It was also a useful vehicle through which they could express themselves in letters to the editor on issues about which they felt strongly.¹⁵¹

On the other hand, there were negative factors which explain why the Shanghai Sephardi community's support for the *Israel's Messenger* had been 'exceedingly lukewarm'.¹⁵² Ezra attributed this to his own unpopularity among them; probably provoked by his belligerence and lack of diplomacy.¹⁵³ He

¹⁴⁶ Ezra was born in December, 1880 at Lahore, India, he married Katie Ezra in January, 1914 and had a son and three daughters, Nellist, *op. cit.*, pp.118-119.

¹⁴⁷ The *IM's* format was 34 x 25 centimetres, it cost \$1 and generally had 22 pages.

¹⁴⁸ Katie Ezra to Herrmann, 30/7/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985.

¹⁴⁹ Katie Ezra to ZO, Jerusalem 19/5/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985.

¹⁵⁰ Jewish broadsheets in India were noticeably short-lived. Publication of *Israel's Messenger* was suspended from February 1910 to October 1918, probably because of funding difficulties. Ezra, who took over from the founding editor M. Myers, was concurrently its publisher and editor till his death on 3/12/36.

¹⁵¹ Ya'acov interview by author, Jerusalem, 6/5/92.

¹⁵² KH to Katie Ezra, 2/7/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985. It was 'well liked by readers all over the world with the exception of Shanghai' Katie Ezra to the Executive of ZO Jerusalem, 19/5/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985; tributes to Ezra are printed in *IM*, 20/4/1906, p.9, 5/4/29, p.20, 1/6/30, p.16, 1/4/34, p.7, and 1/6/34, p.17.

¹⁵³ Cecilia Colgan, née Ezra, interview by author, Jerusalem, 22/5/92. Ezra's unpopularity stemmed from the time he was charged at the Police Court for cruelty to his first wife. Ezra admitted that 'the leaders of the Jewish community said he was a disgrace and were very severe on him for not doing his duty as a Jew', *NCH*, 8/7/11, pp.242-244; Ezra 'did not go to the houses of the Jews and did not speak with them', *NCH*, 1/7/11, p.53; the *IM.*, 'was not received favourably, owing to the witness's [sic][Ezra's] connection with it', *NCH*, 23/7/11,

continually goaded his readers to donate to causes he believed to be worthy such as Zionism, Kaifeng, and victims of persecution, seemingly without a full grasp of the issues. His appeals for donations to the Zionist cause, for example, were often ill-timed due to more pressing matters nearer home, such as the demands of their own communal institutions, the influx of refugees into the Settlement, and the adverse economic conditions in Shanghai. Significantly, the Shanghai readers were unwilling to subscribe £20 to have Ezra's name inscribed in the Golden Book of the National Fund in Palestine.¹⁵⁴ Nor was the Zionist organisation itself prepared to bestow this honour on Ezra.¹⁵⁵

Arguably the Zionist subsidy was a highly dubious source of income for an independent paper and it did little to bind the journal to the community, particularly as they had reservations about the movement.¹⁵⁶ In return for a £50 subsidy from the beginning of 1925, Ezra gave his assurance that the *Israel's Messenger* would be 'devoted exclusively' to the Zionist cause.¹⁵⁷ Ironically, the Zionist authorities saw him as ineffectual, and without influence on the rich Jews particularly in their quest for funds for the movement.¹⁵⁸ Ezra's application for an administrative post in Palestine¹⁵⁹ was perceived by the authorities as a desire to 'place himself at the

pp.123-125; Krishevsky emphasised that the new committee were 'not very sympathetic' to him, Krishevsky to Herrmann, 20/1/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974; 'The bulk of the copies are given away free whether in Shanghai or abroad', Katie Ezra to Herrmann, 30/8/37, KH4/B/1985. Most Sephardim subscribed to the journal, the Russian Jews generally received free copies, Horowitz, correspondence with author, 20/8/93; for an example of his trenchant criticism of the deceased Hardeen whom he had formerly praised see *IM*, 1/6/34, p.11; see also his involvement in the 'Canton Opium Case' and his libel action against the *China Press*, Appendix Two, p.367.

¹⁵⁴ In 1930 Mrs. Toeg's name was inscribed by the SZA 'Kadimah', *IM*, 7/2/30, p.34; on *IM*'s 30th anniversary the Shanghai community presented Ezra with a silver rose bowl, *IM*, 1/4/34, p.11; Brown emphasised that Ezra relied entirely on his own efforts, 'without influence and friends', *IM*, 1/6/34, p.11.

¹⁵⁵ David Baroukh, Shanghai, to Chaim Weizmann, 28/9/27, 16/11/27 and Baroukh to Cohen, 15/12/27, CZA, Z4/3225/I. Ironically, 'the paper became his [Ezra's] one and only passion... he entirely neglected his business to the detriment of his family and home', Katie Ezra to Herrmann, 30/7/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985.

¹⁵⁶ 'The Messenger is devoted exclusively for [sic] your cause', 11/1/26, KH1/52/1; Ezra was wrongly "'accused" of being in the service or on the staff' of the WZO'. It was assumed that he was receiving 'a princely salary', Cohen to Ezra, 7/4/31, CZA, Z4/3225/II; Ezra professed that he had 'never looked for monetary reward when working for the Cause which I hold as dear as a religious creed', Ezra to Herrmann, 1/4/31, CZA, KH4/9861; 'We are grateful for this friendship which we are convinced you find to be its own reward, Secretary, H. Cohen to Ezra, Confidential 3/2/31, No. 46/91, 7/4/31 CZA, Z4/3325/II.

¹⁵⁷ Ezra to Herrmann, 14/9/25, KH1/52/1. Initially Ezra asked for a £350 subsidy, Ezra to Sokolow, 4/11/18, CZA, Z4/1224. He was granted a £50 subvention on condition that he advertised that the *KH* was 'The Central Fund for Immigration,' *KH* to Ezra, 10/11/24, KH1/52/II. He was granted a £50 subsidy in 1925, Ezra to A. Ulitzur, 20/10/25, KH/1/52/II; before committing itself to renewing the subsidy the *KH* awaited the delegates report on activities and achievement, Herrmann to Ezra, 1/12/32, Ezra to Herrmann, 29/1/36 and Herrmann to Ezra, 1/3/36, KH4/B/1985.

¹⁵⁸ Krishevsky to Herrman, 11/1/28, CZA, KH4/B/1974, 27/12/28, KH4/B/1986, and 10/8/25, KH4/9865.

¹⁵⁹ Ezra to Sokolow, 14/11/18, CZA, Z4/1224; see also the letter of recommendation, Kadoorie to Sokolow, 22/11/18, Z4/1224.

command of the organisation'.¹⁶⁰ Despite references to Ezra's personal self-sacrifice and loyal devotion to the cause in the correspondence, greetings from Head Office for the Silver Jubilee edition of *Israel's Messenger* were conspicuously absent.¹⁶¹ In the only official message, E. M. Epstein stated that the journal during the past twenty-five years 'did not [sic] much service for Zionism'.¹⁶²

After the death of Ezra in 1936, his wife, Katie, continued to publish the *Israel's Messenger* with a subsidy from the Zionist authorities.¹⁶³ She insisted that the journal would continue to be described on the title page as the 'Official Organ of the Shanghai Zionist Association and the Jewish National Fund Commission for China'. This led to a confrontation with Rev. Mendel Brown who resigned after a short term as editor, when his proposal that it should be changed to 'Organ of the Jewish Communal Association', was rejected by Katie.¹⁶⁴ In this context it is understandable why the community leaders, who were not ardent Zionists, did not respond to her 'call of distress' in 1941 to provide funds to prevent the demise of the paper. The *Israel's Messenger* was unable to complete its thirty-eighth year mainly because of financial difficulties caused by the abnormal war conditions.¹⁶⁵ Ezra's zeal for Zionism had in no way mirrored the opinions of the Sephardi community.¹⁶⁶ There was virtually only one editor over a period of thirty-four years continuously generating polemical views which had the ironic effect of unifying the Sephardim in their negative attitude towards the paper.

¹⁶⁰ Jacoballdad, Executive Secretary, ZO America, to Zionist Commission, London, 24/11/18, CZA, Z4/1224; Ezra to Sokolow, 14/11/18, Z4/1224; Ezra to S. Landsman, Secretary of the UK Zionist Organisation, 24/1/19, CZA, Z4/1224 'I feel convinced that he [Ezra] will devote all his youthful energy and enthusiasm for the welfare of our country, Kadoorie to Sokolow, 22/11/18, Z4/1224; 'Your endorsement will naturally carry great weight in our decision', and Sokolow to Kadoorie, 7/1/19, Z4/1224.

¹⁶¹ Ezra to Herrmann, 15/3/29, CZA, KH4/B/1986; the Zionist authorities wished to see more articles on Palestine rather than Ezra's polemic outbursts in the *IM*, Herrmann to Ezra, 10/4/29, CZA, KH4/B/1986.

¹⁶² Cited in Ezra to Herrmann, 15/3/29, CZA KH4/B/1986; the Zionist authorities also berated him for publishing controversial editorials instead of the literature they sent him, 10/8/25, CZA, KH4/9865; 11/1/28, KH4/B/1974 and 27/12/28, KH4/B/1986; nonetheless, Chinese, Japanese, American, and British readers were effusive in their compliments, Ezra to Herrmann, 15/3/29, CZA, KH4/B/1986; 'Jewry is indebted to you for so loyally and so worthily maintaining Jewish interests', the editor of *The Shanghai Mercury*, cited in *IM*, 1/4/34, p.7, and 5/4/29, p.21.

¹⁶³ 'Our communal leaders are shirking their duties and have failed ...to answer my call of distress, Katie Ezra to Executive of ZO, Jerusalem, 19/5/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985, 'Ezra ploughed his lonely furrow all the time', Cohen to L. Lauterbach, 23/6/37, KH4/B/1985.

¹⁶⁴ Katie Ezra to Herrman, 30/7/37, CZA, KH4/B/1985; *IM*, 19/4/40, p.1, and '38th Anniversary', *IM*, 9/4/41, p.1.

¹⁶⁵ 'Our Last Publication', *IM*, 17/10/41, p.1.

¹⁶⁶ For this reason the focus of the author throughout has been on events recorded in the *Israel's Messenger*, and *not* on Ezra's personal opinions.

Conclusion

Zionism, which gave Jewish ethnicity a clear national focus and direction, seemed to have the potential to solve the identity crisis of those Shanghai Sephardim who had been rejected as British subjects. Yet it failed to do so even at a time when traditional Judaism was weakening generally. Nor did it fill the gap left by the attenuation of their Baghdadi culture. The point to be emphasised is the initial enthusiasm of Shanghai Sephardim for the WZM. The Zionist authorities were extremely satisfied with their generous response and singled out Shanghai as a model to be emulated. The political achievement of the SZA in securing declarations in favour of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine from three independent Asian countries, Siam, China and Japan, won wide acclaim from Zionists, and probably enhanced Shanghai Sephardim's solidarity with their co-religionists and reinforced their Jewish identity. Sephardi merchants encouraged tourism in Palestine, and eagerly created markets for Palestinian products in China. Evidence suggests, notably in the case of Kadoorie, that initially the Movement attracted some wealthy Sephardim who were loyal British subjects.

The failure of the Garden City scheme may have dampened the Zionistic fervour of some Sephardim. Their total commitment to the project in their resolve to exhibit the considerable Sephardi contribution to *Eretz Yisrael*, reflects a pride in their Sephardi identity. The soured relations between Zionism and Kadoorie seemed to be the turning point for the community. It is not clear whether they simply shared his disappointment about the Garden City, or followed Kadoorie because they had confidence in his reports of maladministration and improper use of funds. Zionist envoys emphasised the importance of the Kadoorie-Zionist rift to account for Shanghai Sephardim's growing apathy towards the Movement. It is likely that they were at least equally disillusioned by the poor performance of some of its envoys and reports of Zionist discrimination between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Palestine. The strong support of Shanghai Russian Jews for more extreme revisionist Zionism would also have had a negative impact on the Sephardim, who were careful not to mar their relationship with the British. Shanghai Sephardim also probably disliked this totally secular and nationalistic approach to Zionism. A combination of these factors united them in their indifference to Zionism. It must nonetheless be

emphasised that Shanghai Sephardim were imbued with a strong affection for the Holy Land which several supported through channels other than Zionism.

It is a moot point whether the *Israel's Messenger* achieved its aim of arousing and maintaining in its Jewish readers an ardent attachment to the community, or whether it had much effect in forging a strong Zionist identity among Shanghai's Sephardim. They found Ezra's articles on Zionism, which appeared with monotonous regularity in his columns, 'indigestible and boring' and his strident remarks and polemics against his opponents, abrasive.¹⁶⁷ Clearly the Zionist Movement did not fulfil the role of strengthening the national identity of Shanghai Sephardim. Ironically, it reinforced their Sephardi identity and their solidarity with world Sephardim who claimed that they were being discriminated against by the Ashkenazim and the WZM. As a Zionist organ, the *Israel Messenger* could undoubtedly have played a far greater role in strengthening the Jewish and national identity of its Shanghai Sephardim. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that their dislike of its editor deprived the journal of their financial support.

The *Israel's Messenger*, nonetheless, kept Shanghai Sephardim informed on matters affecting world Jewry, and encouraged solidarity. It also did much to reinforce the social identity of the community, which was interested in the local events listed in its 'Social and Personal' columns. The publication provided a record of matters of importance to the Shanghai Sephardi community, notably its Rabbinate, the growth of its communal institutions, and its attempts to save the Kaifeng Jews from extinction; which historians now find important source material. The journal played a prominent role in combating anti-Semitism in China and its heroic efforts on behalf of those who sought refuge from Nazi persecution in Shanghai cannot be overstated.

¹⁶⁷ Perhaps Jews who lived in the East did not fully realise the advantages of Zionism, not having witnessed violent anti-Semitism, 'Zionism, Why Is It So Lean in India', the *Jewish Advocate*, June 1932, p.417; Zionism only became a functioning, attractive ideology for Shanghai Sephardim after World War II, Ya'acov, interview by author, Jerusalem 10/10/93. This is confirmed in Markus Halpurn and Oscar Richter to The Jewish Agency, 12/11/46, CZA, S5/801.

Chapter Eight: Shanghai ‘City of Refuge’ Sino-Japanese Hostilities in Shanghai

...our lives were compounded and confounded by war...my very first memory was of what we thought was bombing and my last memory as I left was bombing...¹

The repercussions of the political upheavals that beset China, were felt keenly from the beginning of foreign settlement even in the comparatively sheltered International Settlement and French Concession of Shanghai.² Japan’s ambition to become an equal partner with the European imperialists was advanced by the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). It was spurred on by Japan’s rising sense of nationalism in the second Sino-Japanese War of 1931 which was fought over Manchuria. In effect the Japanese seizure of Manchuria signalled the end of Japanese co-operation with the West and Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijuro’s policy of moderation towards China, and a return to the expansionism characterised by the Twenty-One Demands of 1915.³

Alarmed that hostilities would intensify, in October 1931 the *Israel’s Messenger* applauded China’s decision to appeal to the League of Nations, instead of resorting to arms.⁴ Its hope that the Japanese nation would not be drawn into a war by ‘the bellicose attitude of their military’ was unfulfilled.⁵ In January 1932 the Japanese attack on Shanghai, long a stronghold of Chinese nationalism, unexpectedly encountered stiff resistance from the Chinese 19th Route Army.⁶ The foreign

¹ Rose Horowitz, ‘Growing Up Jewish in Shanghai’, Unpublished paper submitted for the Harvard Symposium, p.2; Michael Paul Onorato, Interviewer and (ed.), *Rose Jacob Horowitz ‘An Oral History:Shanghai, 1927-1934*, (California, 1991), passim.

² For an excellent background to this period see Ian Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League*, (London, 1993), and Cheng, K.C., ‘The Presentation of the Manchurian Crisis in the English Press 1931-33’, University of London, MA., 1938.

³ *IM*, 5/10/34. p.8; Nicholas Clifford, *Retreat from China: British Policy in the Far East 1937-1941*, (London, 1967), pp.1-6.

⁴ *IM*, 1/10/31, p.1 and 1/4/32 p.17; George Bronson Rea, ‘Who Killed the League’, *FER*, May 1936, p.207.

⁵ The *Israel’s Messenger* hailed China’s election to membership of the Council of the League, by a unanimous vote on 14/9/31, as a recognition of China’s rapid progress, *IM*, 1/10/31, p.15 and 1/11/31, p.17.

⁶ It owed its allegiance to Wang Jingwei not Chiang Kaishek, Thorne, *Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933*, (London, 1972), pp.206, 269.

community in Shanghai witnessed the bombardment of the industrial suburbs of Woosung and Chapei.⁷

The League ultimately adopted a policy of non-recognition of Japan's actions in March 1932, by which time the Changchun government had appealed to fifty-two nations for diplomatic recognition of Manchukuo.⁸ Clearly the Western Powers were unprepared to block Japan.⁹ It was indeed wishful thinking when the *Israel's Messenger* declared that 'the League has vindicated itself and justified the confidence which men of goodwill and peace have entertained in its potency'.¹⁰ There was no strong objection by the Powers when Japan invaded Rihe in March 1933, and proceeded to consolidate her position in North China.¹¹ The *Israel's Messenger* proclaimed the truce at Tanggu on 31 May 1933 which brought the fighting to a temporary halt, as 'a happy augury for the future'.¹² Evidently, in 1932 many Westerners believed that Japan was fighting civilisation's battle against Chinese nationalism and revolution.¹³ Nonetheless, as the military increased its political control and the spirit of radical nationalism intensified in Japan, it became increasingly aligned to Germany.¹⁴ Finally on 25 November 1936 Japan concluded an Anti-Comintern pact with Germany, taking on the role of champion against the spread of Communism in Asia. It was, however, the GMD, the nationalists, who ousted the Communists from their stronghold in the southeast of China, driving them up to the northwest.¹⁵ There can be little doubt this met with unqualified relief from

⁷ *IM*, 1/3/32, p.9; Rabbi Hirsch, from Pretoria assured his former congregation of world wide sympathy, *IM*, 10/2/32 and 1/4/32, p.11, *NCH*, 2/2/32.

⁸ Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War In Asia and the Pacific*, (London, 1987), pp.12-13 and 20-29. The pro-Japanese attitude of the British is discussed in Thorne, *op. cit.*, pp.229, 234.

⁹ Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.7; Stephen Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise British China Policy, 1933-1937*, (Manchester, 1975), pp.52-69; Herbert H. Gowen, 'The Case for Japan', *FER*, Volume XXXIV May 1938, p.163.

¹⁰ *IM*, 1/4/32, p.17; 1/1/32, p.24.

¹¹ Displaying a block to the Japanese invasion, Ezra seriously considered Manchukuo a future centre for settlement of some 50,000 Jews, *IM*, 1/7/33, p.15; Dr. Yotara Shigemitsu, Assistant Foreign Minister for Japan and General to the League, agreed that the scheme would accelerate the development of Manchukuo, and rival the Jewish autonomous region in Biro-Bidjan promoted by Russia; Cohen pointed out the flaws, *Ezra to Cohen*, 17/9/33, *CZA*, Z/4/3225 II,

¹² *IM*, 5/10/34, p.11.

¹³ 'Civilisation's Debt to Asia', Address Delivered by Ezra at the Japanese YMCA, 15/3/34, *IM*, 1/4/34, p.18.

¹⁴ Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.10; K.S. Inui, 'Psychology of "Asia for the Asians,"' *FER*, XXXIII, No.12, December 1937, pp.417-419.

¹⁵ In 1937 the Chiefs of Staff ranked Japan second only to Germany as a potential enemy, Sir Robert Craigie, *Behind the Japanese Mask*, (London, 1946), pp. 50-51; F. Zau 'China and Judea: Views of a Chinese Nationalist', *IM*, 3/2/28, p.16 and 6/5/27, p.9.

the Sephardi community because of the obvious threat Communism posed to the foreign capitalists in the Settlement.¹⁶

During the 'China Incident' (known also as the Lukouchiao Incident or Sino-Japanese Undeclared War) which began in July 1937, Chapei became the scene of staunch Chinese resistance.¹⁷ Ironically, on Black Saturday, 14 August 1937, Chinese bombers dropped bombs intended for the Japanese gunboats on the Settlement, leaving 2,000 dead and 2,500 wounded. One bomb blasted a crater in the pavement at the foot of the Cathay hotel. The Chinese government explained the disaster as an accident caused by young and inexperienced pilots.¹⁸ Historians regard the sinking of the US *Panay* and the shelling of HMS *Ladybird* and HMS *Bee* on the Yangtze in December 1937 as an attempt by the Japanese army to force a war with Britain and the United States.¹⁹ Clearly Japan was demanding nothing less than a hegemony over East Asia.²⁰ The greatest challenge to the Western position in Asia came when Prime Minister Konoye pledged Japan to the building of a 'New Order' in East Asia.²¹ By 1937 there was no longer even a pretence of belief in Japan's good faith among Shanghai Sephardim.²²

The Sino-Japanese hostilities in 1937 marked the end of the era of Shanghai's economic expansion with four-fifths of its foreign trade cut off and seventy-five percent of its trade and industry paralysed.²³ The war severed the city from her domestic and foreign markets. The Pacific blockade of August 1937 disrupted Chinese coastal navigation and from 1938 the Yangtze was banned to foreign ships.²⁴ The value of foreign trade handled by the port was reduced by 55% between 1937 and

¹⁶ *IM*, 2/3/34, p.16.

¹⁷ During night manoeuvres by Japanese troops near Marco Polo Bridge, twenty miles from Beijing, shots were alleged to have been fired and one Japanese was reported missing.

¹⁸ 'Le 14 Août 1937', *Le Soir Enquêtes - Reportages - Chroniques*, 13/5/87, p.28; Laval, 'The War in Shanghai', *FER*, August 1937, Vol. XXXIII, No.8. p.295.

¹⁹ Richard Storry, *Double Patriots: A Study in Japanese Nationalism*, (Boston, 1957), p.227; 'The "Undeclared War" In Retrospect and Prospect', *IM*, 6/7/38, p.1.

²⁰ Clifford, *op. cit.*, pp.9-11, 53.

²¹ 'The Future of British Enterprise in Asia', *FER*, Vol. XXXIV, No.8, August 1938, p.296; Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a new Order in the Far East, 1921-31*, (Cambridge Mass., 1965), *passim*.

²² Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.52; Hiroshi Saito, 'Is China the Underdog?' *FER*, Vol. XXXIV, No.4, April 1938, p.125.

²³ Bland Calder, 'Finance and Industry: Shanghai Trade', *IM*, 14/1/38, p.23; E. Kann, 'Chinese Finance and Currency During the Second Undeclared War', *IM*, 17/12/37, p.21.

²⁴ 'The Crisis at Shanghai', *FER*, Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 9-10 September-October 1937, pp.328-332; 'Closed [the Open Door] for Alterations and Repairs', *Finance & Commerce*, [hereafter, *F&C*], 13/7/38, p.21 and 'New Barriers to Trade in North China', 27/7/38, p.75.

1938.²⁵ As in 1932, Chapei and the Northern sector of the Settlement, especially Hongku, were the scenes of the heaviest fighting which, combined with the scorched earth policy of the retreating Chinese troops, destroyed much of the heavily populated and industrialised sector of Shanghai.²⁶ The Japanese occupied the Chinese city and districts round Hongku to the north of the Settlement, and entrusted the administration of the Greater Shanghai Municipality to the puppet government of the Taotai.²⁷

This background highlights the continual political upheavals and the consequent economic and social hardship the foreign community encountered, even in the comparative safety of the Foreign Concessions. In November 1937, the Jewish community came into public focus when *The Hochi*, a Kobe newspaper, published a telegram from a correspondent accusing 'British capitalists of Jewish descent' of provoking hostilities between the Chinese Government and the Japanese. Distinguished Jews were singled out as being in control of the Chinese financial world and supporting the Nanjing government in order to safeguard their enormous investments. A meeting between Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, economic envoy of HMG, and Sir Victor Sassoon, in New York to discuss the new Chinese currency system, compounded the assumption that Jews dominated the SMC and the press.²⁸ In a letter to the *Japan Chronicle*, D.E. Levy, a Sephardi Jew, emphasised that the British Jews were law-abiding citizens intent upon the peaceful pursuit of business and these accusations were 'arrogating supreme powers to a handful of businessmen scarcely versed in the intricacies of statecraft and foreign diplomacy'.²⁹

As a consequence of the hostilities some one million Chinese refugees, 100,000 of whom were destitute, sought shelter in the Foreign Concessions, creating enormous food, health, sanitation and social problems.³⁰ Wealthy Sephardim did

²⁵ Import and Export trade during May showed a decline of 71% compared with May 1937, *F&C*, 6/7/38, p.1; the restaurant and hotel trades experienced a prosperity born of the war conditions, 'The Future of British Trade in China', *F&C*, 15/6/38.

²⁶ Lloyd E. Eastman, *Facets of our Ambivalent Relationship, Smuggling, Puppets and Atrocities during the War 1937-1945*, 'The Woes of War', Chap. XIV, *IM*, 19/11/37, p.3; 'Two Years of Undeclared War', *F&C*, 12/7/39, p.25.

²⁷ Anna Ginsbourg, 'The Jewish Refugees in Shanghai', Shanghai: *China Weekly Review*, 1940, pp.5-8; *F&C*, 16/10/40, p.332.

²⁸ *IM*, 19/11/37, p.11, 13-14; *NCH*, 13/10/37.

²⁹ *IM*, 19/11/37, pp.11, 13-14.

³⁰ 'The Refugee Problem', *NCH*, 8/9/37, p.346; *IM*, 14/1/38, pp.8-9; 'Statistics of Population of Shanghai compiled by the 2nd Department of the Bureau of Public Safety of the Shanghai City Government, July 1936', SMP, D 9524, No.I, 4/8/36; 'Refugees pouring into Shanghai', 26/4/39, p.152; 'The Annual Jewish Refugee Committee Report' in 1941 estimated that there were two million destitute Chinese refugees in Shanghai, *IM*,

not stop their servants bringing their relatives and friends into the servants' quarters or basement; in some cases as many as fifty to a hundred refugees were accommodated.³¹ It was an anxious period for the Sephardi community particularly during the High Holy Days in September 1937, and on the eve of *Yom Kippur* services were carried on to the accompaniment of 'terrifying sounds of bombardment, the roar of aeroplanes and the crash of anti-aircraft guns'.³² The *Beth Aharon* Synagogue had to be closed because of its location in Hongku, an area which had taken the brunt of the conflict, and its members were accommodated at the *Ohel Rachel*.³³

Shanghai Jewry demonstrated strong solidarity with their co-religionists whose homes and businesses were wrecked. The Shelter House was packed with refugees living on the equivalent of nine cents a day.³⁴ The Shanghai Emergency Relief Committee was organised and Jewish Protective corps of approximately 250 youths from Zionist organisations guarded the Jewish quarter surrounding the *Ohel Rachel* and helped with housing the homeless.³⁵

The SMC encouraged non-combatants to leave the Settlement. The advantages of British nationality were apparent in the treatment of evacuees. Only British subjects and British Protected Persons were evacuated in the first four vessels to leave Shanghai, with the proviso that they agreed to repay the cost of their housing and maintenance in Hong Kong.³⁶ In contrast, before acquiring visas which did not

21/2/41, p.9.

³¹ *IM*, 12/7/38, p.20; Horowitz records her 'rage and shame' over the destruction of the city 'I considered my home', Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.3.

³² *IM*, 13/5/38, p.13. It is noteworthy that in 1937 Jewish residents in China numbered 15,000; Shanghai, 7,500, Tianjin, 3,500. and substantial settlements in Guangzhou, Hankou, Nanjing and Beijing. The majority hailed from Russia, and some ten percent from Western Europe, Rumania, England, India, Iraq and the United States, Bertram Jonas, 'Jews in the Chinese War Zone', *IM*, 19/11/37, p.6.

³³ For more than three months the Baikal Road cemetery was closed and twelve Jewish corpses were placed in temporary graves in the Mohawk Road cemetery, *IM*, 13/5/38, p.13.

³⁴ 'The Shanghai Jews themselves have already responded to the utmost of their ability', Edward E. Grusd, 'Shanghai Thanks B.B.: Order Aided Jewish Community There in War-Torn City's Crisis', *The National Jewish Monthly*, November, 1938, pp.100, 119; Juedische Rundschau, 'The Conflict in Eastern Asia Jewish Self-Protection in Shanghai', 3/9/37, JDCCA, [American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) collection of documents relating to China.]

³⁵ Grusd, *op. cit.*, p.100.

³⁶ A comprehensive list of British Subjects and BPPs is an important record of the Baghdadi Jews who were included in these categories. Several Baghdadi Jewish names appear on the lists of 'Refugees for Whom no Charge was Made', 'Refugees Who Have Paid Full Accounts Due', 'Outstanding Accounts of Refugees Who Have Returned to Shanghai', 'Account of Those Gone Elsewhere than Shanghai', 'Outstanding Bills for Those Staying in Hong Kong', 24/8/37, PRO, FO671/561.

guarantee permission to land, Iraqi citizens had to furnish guarantees that they would not become charges on the Government of Hong Kong.³⁷ S.E. Levy thanked H.B.M. Consular Authorities for ‘all the kindness’ shown in evacuation of over two hundred British and Iraqi Jews, and to the Hong Kong Government and the Jewish Community for caring for the evacuees.³⁸ The *Israel’s Messenger* appealed ‘in the name of humanity and justice, to all the Great Powers to do their utmost to put an end to wanton destruction of life and property’.³⁹ The United Jewish Welfare Association of New York responded: ‘Sorry we can make no appropriation’, eliciting the caustic comment, ‘Not a word of sympathy’.⁴⁰ In October a large contribution from the American *B’nai B’rith* Emergency Relief Fund saved the Polyclinic Hospital from closure, enabling its clinic to administer to some 15,000 patients a month during September and October 1937.⁴¹

Influential British Jews, notably Neville Laski President of the Board of Deputies, did not regard Shanghai Jewry as being ‘very worthy of assistance’, arguing that Shanghai had some Jews ‘more than overwhelmingly rich enough’ to support their needy co-religionists.⁴² For reasons impossible to fathom, they were informed by David Sassoon, (of Bruton Street), that there were no Jews in Shanghai who were suffering any pecuniary difficulties.⁴³ He maintained that only those wealthy Jews who had abandoned their Iraqi nationality to avoid taxation were stateless and suffered from political rather than financial disabilities. Regarding them responsible for their

³⁷ See Report [unsigned] 16/8/37, PRO, F0671/561.

³⁸ Members of the Sephardi community helped to defray the cost of the evacuation of over \$30,000. Ellis Hayim and Reuben Abraham organised permits and accommodation, *IM*, 13/5/38, p.13 and 12/7/38, p.20.

³⁹ *IM*, 25/10/37, p.17 and 1/4/32, p.19.

⁴⁰ In contrast, Harbin and Manila Jews sent funds, and Russians in America had petitioned the U.S. government to allow local Russians to take refuge in the Philippines, *IM*, 25/10/37, p.2. ‘The eternal cry of our people is now the cry of our Jewish Community of Shanghai, *Meaiin Ya’avo Ezri*, [Whence cometh my help?], *IM*, 25/10/37, p.17.

⁴¹ Executive Committee to Maurice Bisgyer, Secretary of the *B’nai B’rith* Lodge, tel., January 1938, JDCCA; *BBM* October, 1938, p.29.

⁴² Neville Laski to Bernhard Kahn, Paris, 9/9/37, No.456, General & Emergency China, (hereafter, G&EC), JDCCA; the Lord Mayor’ Fund was intended only for Chinese sufferers, not those of Near East or European origin, A.G. Brotman to Kahn, 29/11/3, BDBJ, ACC3121/C/11/12/5; the journalist Robert Berkov, reported that despite the hostilities Shanghai Jewry continued to thrive, *NJM*, October, 1938; M. Birman of Daljewcib, Harbin, maintained that although many middle and wealthy class ‘lost their standing’ they had not reached the limit of being forced to apply to benevolent institutions, 28/1/38, BDBJ, ACC3121 C11/12/3.

⁴³ Laski to Kahn, 16/9/37, G&EC, JDCCA; Horowitz denies that a single Iraqi Jew abandoned his nationality to avoid taxation. One obtained Chinese nationality by paying a bribe. At this time foreigners were debarred from becoming naturalised Chinese unless they passed a 3-day examination in Chinese, held at Nanjing. Horowitz, interview by author, 20/10/93.

own plight, Laski advised against approaching the Joint Foreign Committee to intervene with the British Government on behalf of Shanghai Jewry.⁴⁴ The report of a correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle*, London, in 1939 appears more realistic in its depiction of the Shanghai Sephardi Community as being generally 'poor' with 'a mere handful of rich men and scarcely any middle class'.⁴⁵ Clearly the few multimillionaires projected an erroneous image that it was, generally speaking, a wealthy community.⁴⁶ A publicised statement by L. G. Montefiore which appeared in the *Australian Jewish Herald*, on 13 January 1938 proclaimed 'No Need for Action Regarding Jewish Refugees in Shanghai'.⁴⁷ Infuriated Shanghai Jewry believed that this implied that there was no need for them to appeal for assistance abroad. The local charitable institutions required a yearly budget of Mex \$200,000 which was collected with great difficulty through appeals, by holding various charitable functions, and largely from donations from the wealthy.⁴⁸ Despite, or perhaps because of, the lack of support from world Jewry, the solidarity of Shanghai Jewry was strengthened in the wake of the Sino-Japanese hostilities, by its attempts to assist some two thousand of their co-religionists who were made destitute. Indeed, given the generally uninterested response of Western Jewry to their appeals for assistance, it is perhaps all the more commendable that they displayed a strong sense of solidarity with the refugees from Central Europe. It is only against this backdrop that the impact on the identity of Shanghai's Sephardim by the influx of some eighteen thousand Central European refugees can be examined.

⁴⁴ Joint Foreign Committee to Bernhard Kahn, AJDCCA Paris, *Confidential*, 14/9/37, G&EC, JDCCA.

⁴⁵ David Kranzler, the authority on the history of the refugee community in Shanghai, points out that the majority were of the lower social economic class of the non-Chinese society of Shanghai, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.58-60.

⁴⁶ Laski to Kahn, 9/9/37, BDBJ, ACC 3121/C11/12/5.

⁴⁷ Rev. Mendel Brown suggested that it would have been more courteous if he had directly approached the Shanghai Jewish Emergency Committee. Montefiore's incorrect statement had adversely affected Shanghai's appeal for assistance, Brown to Montefiore, 24/2/38, BDBJ, ACC3121/C11/12/5.

⁴⁸ 'Shanghai Jewry's New Problem: Tackling a Flood of Refugees, A Little Community Faces Colossal Tasks', *JC*, 17/3/39, p.36.

Russian Jewish Refugees and their Impact on Sephardi Identity

It is first necessary to observe the effect on the identity of the host Jewish community made by the first wave of immigrants, the Russian Jewish refugees, seeking refuge in Shanghai from the pogroms and the press gangs.⁴⁹ David Kranzler has delineated four waves of Russian Jewish refugees to China: from 1895-1904, 1905-1917, 1932-1934, 1937-1939.⁵⁰ By the 1930s there were over four thousand Russian Jews in Shanghai.⁵¹

Inevitably social, economic and political considerations dictated the Sephardi reaction to the refugees. They were also influenced by the Talmudic dictum, 'whoever saves one life is considered as if he has saved the entire world'.⁵² The conviction of Shanghai Sephardim that they were linked to the Ashkenazim by their common ancient historical experience is reflected in their feeling of responsibility towards the immigrants.⁵³ Before their own congregation was established in 1905, Russian and other European Jews worshipped in the Sephardi synagogues, albeit in a separate *minyán*, because of differences in liturgy and in pronunciation.⁵⁴ Given their immense social, economic, political and cultural dissimilarity, tensions arose between the two communities. The Russian immigrants forced upon the Sephardim an awareness of the separateness of their Baghdadi identity. Indeed, a crucial factor in their identification as Sephardim was their tendency to keep themselves distinct from the Ashkenazim in Shanghai.⁵⁵

Several dimensions to the problem of absorbing the vast number of destitute Russian Jews underline the tensions in the host Jewish community between their

⁴⁹ In 1881 following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II the régime of Alexander III promulgated anti-Semitic measures known as the May Laws, 'Jewish Victims of the War', *NCH*, 31/3/17, p.714, 'The Refugees in Shanghai: No Help for Future Contingents', 7/2/20, p.368', 'The Destitute Russians of Shanghai', 29/11/19, pp.573-574.

⁵⁰ Kranzler, *op.cit.*, p.57.

⁵¹ There were some 500 Baghdadi Jews and 1,000 Russian Jews in Shanghai in 1921, Israel Cohen, 'Jews in Far Off Lands', Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle*, *JC*, 3/6/21, p.16; the 1937 combined census figures of the French and International municipalities give the total Russian population of 14,845 and an additional 15,000 in the Chinese areas. The figure of 25,000 represents the total number of Russians who had been registered in Shanghai from the time registration started in 1917, Letter to the editor, 'Russian Population', Shanghai, 4/3/37, *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury*, 6/3/37.

⁵² Sanhedrin, 37a. This is the very essence of community; 'Charity, What it Means to a Jew', Jews believe that charity delivers one from death, *The Monitor*, October 1932.

⁵³ See for example the list of donors to the 'Russian Jews Relief Fund' in *IM*, 1/12/1905, p.13.

⁵⁴ Several attended the Sephardi services.

⁵⁵ The Shanghai Ashkenazi Jewish Communal Association [SAJAC] was distinct from the SJCA, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.61-62.

strong feelings of solidarity as Jews and their need to preserve their separate identity.⁵⁶ The proliferation of Jewish poor in the settlement, the ‘fraternity of *schnorrers*’ [professional Ashkenazi beggars], meant not merely a ‘loss of face’ for the Sephardim, but a *hillul hashem* [blasphemy]; a fear that Judaism would come into disrepute.⁵⁷ Moreover, among the newcomers were ex-soldiers, political exiles, and adventurers, some of whom were involved in highly questionable enterprises and even white slavery.⁵⁸ The entire Russian immigration was seen to have profoundly affected Shanghai as a colony of white privilege.⁵⁹ Clearly in a society where the white man was respected only for his wealth and power, the refugees lowered the already weakened status of the Westerners in China.⁶⁰

Kranzler has pointed out that given Shanghai’s viable economy, during the first two waves of Russian Jewish immigration from 1895-1917, the Russians soon became involved in the import-export markets, trading notably in fur, grain, bristles and wool. Many were nevertheless unemployed and dependent on the Shanghai Relief Society and Shelter House established by the Russian Community in 1916. Some sixty percent were middle or lower class shopkeepers. Considering the short period of their residence in Shanghai, the two percent who were wealthy, did not attain the social and political status of their Sephardi counterparts.⁶¹

Negative factors reinforced the Sephardi identity of the host community. The adherence of Russian Jews to the language and customs of their oppressors, even on Chinese soil, annoyed some Sephardim who overlooked their own continued use of

⁵⁶ Victoria’s Premier, James Munro, expressed strenuous objection of Australians to receiving a class of immigrant likely to provoke a burden to the state when it was rumoured that Baron Maurice Hirsch, a French Jewish philanthropist, would assist thousands of Russian Jews to settle in Australia in 1891. Local Jewry, while prepared to raise money for the relief of Russian Jewry, were concerned that the influx would disturb their good relations with other denominations, Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*, (Sydney, 1988), pp.77, 94.

⁵⁷ *IM*, 1/11/35, p.1.

⁵⁸ A report on the White Slave trade in Jerome Ch’en, *China and the West: Society and Culture 1815-1937*, (London, 1979); Henri Champly, *The Road to Shanghai: White Slave Traffic in Asia*, (London, 1934), passim.

⁵⁹ Sergeant, *op. cit.*, p.31.

⁶⁰ Ginsbourg, *op. cit.*, p.21; *NCH*, 25/1/39, p.6. The vast influx of Russians into Britain in 1917 generated anti-Semitism, Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*, (London, 1979), ‘Anti-Semitism and society 1919-39’, Chap. 1.

⁶¹ There were some professionals among them, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.60; The Annual Jewish Refugee Committee Report, in 1941 estimated that there were 30,000 Russian emigres, two-thirds of whom were only temporarily employed, *IM*, 21/2/41, p.9; the Shifrin family was one of the most affluent, Rasha Kaufman, interview by author, Shanghai, 22/4/94.

Judeo-Arabic.⁶² Considering that Rabbi Meier Ashkenazi, the Rabbi of the Russian community, was respected by the Sephardim who sought his advice on religious matters, it is likely that the general irreligious attitude of the Russians was one of the barriers between them and the traditionalists among the Sephardim. The Sephardim were also sensitive to the belief that all Russian Jews in Shanghai were suspected of being Bolsheviks, a fact utilised by anti-Semites.⁶³

Anti-Semitism and the White Russians

The *Israel's Messenger* recorded that Shanghai Jewry were taken completely by surprise in 1926 when 'certain paid agitators tried to 'implant the seed of anti-Semitism in China' by linking the Jews with Bolshevism.⁶⁴ Journalist David Benz observed that anti-Semitism was never the official policy of the Japanese. However, with their establishment of puppet régimes in China there came into existence White Russian, 'Anti-Communist Committees', sponsored by the Japanese in an attempt to win the allegiance of the White Russians in the occupied areas of China. The committees were established under Japanese auspices in Manchukuo after 1932 and in North China after 1937. Efforts were made to organise similar groups in Shanghai, with its strong anti-communism, in line with Japanese anti-soviet policy.⁶⁵ Its White Russian leaders were openly anti-Semitic.⁶⁶

⁶² *IM*, 1/10/32, p.19.

⁶³ Notably H.J. Archibald, editor of the *Central-China Post*; see for example, 'Is Bolshevism A Jewish Cult?', *IM*, 5/3/26, p.9, 2/4/26, pp.19-20, and 7/5/26, p.9; also Captain A.E.N. Howard, *IM*, 1/4/27, p.19; a passionate controversy was sparked off by a reader's objection to the *NCH* journal only mentioning the religion of the accused in court cases if he was Jewish, *NCH*, 27/6/34, p.470. Leading British Jews in 1919 took the *Jewish Chronicle* to task for publishing articles on Bolshevism, reported in *IM*, 4/7/19, p.44; See also 'Deutsche Shanghai Zeitung: Anti-Jewish', Report by C.A. Cook, 9/12/35, SMP D S.3, SB,6964, SST.

⁶⁴ *IM*, 6/8/26, p.8, and 'China in the Grip of the Reds: How False Sentiments are Created for Jews and Judaism', *IM*, 5/8/27, p. 13, 6/1/28, p.20, and 3/2/28, p.15; *NCDN* 8/7/27, p.13 and series of letters published in *NCDN*, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22, 23 and 25 July, 1927. Arguably the ultimate cause of anti-Semitism is Judaism and the Jewish way of life. This was compounded by Jews asserting that they were the Chosen People and that theirs was the one and only God. Thus unlike victims of racial or ethnic prejudice, Jews could in all instances of anti-Semitism, except Nazism, escape persecution by forsaking their religion, Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Anti-Semitism*, (New York, 1983), pp.18-26.

⁶⁵ 'Report on the Bolshevik Movement as seen from Shanghai since January 1, 1921', by Sullivan 17/4/21, SMP, D 3861; 'The Red Menace in Shanghai', *NCH*, 10/12/27, p.451 and 'The Rising Red Tide', 17/12/27, pp.477-478.

⁶⁶ SMP, files leave no doubt that anti-Semitism did exist in Shanghai, Marcia Ristaino', 'New Information on Shanghai Jewish Refugees: The Evidence of the Shanghai Municipal Police Files', Unpublished paper submitted to the Harvard Symposium, August 1992; John Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945*, (London, 1978), passim; *NJM*, April,1941.

Anti-Semitism reinforced the solidarity of Shanghai Jewry with their co-religionists in Harbin, Manchukuo.⁶⁷ In a campaign launched by the *Israel's Messenger* against the anti-Semitic Harbin press, notably the *Harbinskovo Vremya*, edited by a Japanese, Osawa, and *The Nashput*, organ of the Fascists, edited by the notorious anti-Semite K. Rodzaevsky who accused Jews of ritual murder and called for their destruction.⁶⁸ A mass meeting of the SJCA on 18 December 1934, underlined that the Jews had not been ill-treated when Harbin was under the Chinese Government:

If left alone the gentle yellow race would never stoop down to oppress other nations, but the vile nature of the white race hailing from savage countries in Europe is helping to corrupt the East. .. Japan will not tolerate anti-Semitism.⁶⁹

Perhaps partly because of persistent campaigning by Ezra,⁷⁰ the *Gaimusho* expressed concern over the possible effects that reports of anti-Semitism in Harbin might have on Japan's relations with the Western Powers.⁷¹ With the acceleration of Japan's pace of industrialisation in the 1930s, it became increasingly dependent on the West for raw materials. Japan, after all, was convinced that 'Jewish power', financial and political, controlled the West.⁷² Ezra was informed that the *Gaimusho*, as early as June 1933, had instructed the Harbin Chief of Police, Yoshisuki Matsuda, to take immediate steps to put down press agitation against the Jews.⁷³

⁶⁷ Boris Bresler, 'Harbin Jewish Community (1898-1958) Politics, Prosperity, Adversity', and Tzvia Shickman-Bowman, 'The Socio-economic Structure of the Harbin Jewish Community 1898-1931', unpublished papers submitted for the Harvard Symposium, 1992; Arnold Schoenberg, 'A Search for Jewish Identity: Can Anti-Semitism be Measured', pp.193-216 in Lucy Dawidowicz, (ed.), *The Jewish Presence: Essays on Identity and History*, (New York, 1977).

⁶⁸ *IM*, 1/11/35, p.17 and 6/3/35, p.7; letter to *The Shanghai Times* from 'A Gentile'; Report on the Shanghai Branch of 'All Russia Fascist Party', by Prokofiev. The SMP, suspected fascists of publishing anonymous anti-Semitic leaflets in Shanghai, 7/12/36, SMP, D7478 Section 2, Special Branch [SB hereafter]; 'Pronounced anti-Semitic feeling are characteristic of this political group. However, they are expressed in considerably less violent form than it might be expected judging by their activities in Harbin', SMP D, 17/3/37 Section 1, SB.

⁶⁹ *IM*, 2/3/34, p.16 and 1/7/34, p.1.

⁷⁰ Correspondence between N.E.B. Ezra and his wife with The Board of Deputies of British Jews gives an insight into their campaign against anti-Semitism. Salomon sent him 'The Jews of Britain', and leaflets to distribute where anti-Jewish propaganda had 'made itself felt', 23/11/36, BDBJ, ACC3121/C11/12/5.

⁷¹ 'Closure of the Harbin Nash Put The Moor [probably Ezra] has done his job', 12/2/38, SMP, D 7478, SB. The All-Russia Fascist Union's declared policy was one of uncompromising hostility towards communists, Jews and freemasons, 12/9/42, SMP, D 7478.

⁷² 'Anti-Semitism Collapses in Japan', *IM*, 1/7/33, p.7. In December 1938 the secret Five Ministers' Conference formulated Japan's pro-Jewish policy, Pam Shatzkes, 'Kobe A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees 1940-41', M.A. Dissertation, London School of Economics, September 1989, p.2.

⁷³ *IM*, 2/6/33, p.16.

The anti-Semitism of the White Russians in Shanghai upset the Russian Jews who lived in close proximity to them in the French Concession. The Sephardim, who mainly resided in the International Settlement, appear to have been unaffected by it. In time the Shanghai Jewish School dissolved the barriers between the Sephardi and Russian Jewish communities.⁷⁴ Sir Victor Sassoon was confident that the humanitarian efforts of Shanghai Sephardim towards their Russian co-religionists, would equip the Sephardim to cope with the far larger problem presented by the second wave of immigrants comprising German, Austrian, Czech and Polish victims of Nazi persecution.⁷⁵ The scale and nature of this immigration, however, was entirely different.

German Jewish Refugees and their Impact on Sephardi Identity

For the Jews of Central Europe, 1938 was a year of despair. Hitler's violent anti-Semitic policies culminated in the physical violence in Kristallnacht [9-10 November].⁷⁶ At the Munich Conference on the 29 September, the Western democracies surrendered to the ambitions of Germany, whose invasion of Czechoslovakia signalled the end of an illusory peace. While Rumania, Hungary and Poland threatened to expel their Jews, and France, Switzerland and Italy hardened their attitudes to immigrants, America reduced its quotas and the British increasingly limited emigration to Palestine.⁷⁷ The Conference of Evian in July, made it clear that the world would not accept large numbers of refugees.⁷⁸ In this hostile world Shanghai became the obvious destination of the Jewish exodus from Europe because

⁷⁴ *IM*, 4/1/24, p.15.

⁷⁵ *NCH*, 17/5/39, p.271.

⁷⁶ Nazi anti-Semitic measures are excellently depicted in Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*, (New York, 1975); Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, (Chicago, 1961).

⁷⁷ Johnston's Immigration Act of 1924-9 gave preference to refugees from Nordic Countries and imposed restrictions on everyone else. Other countries followed America's example. In mid-1941 Washington stipulated that no entry visa be issued to those with relations still living in Nazi occupied areas, for security reasons. Britain restricted the issue of entry permits for Palestine and British possessions.

⁷⁸ S. Adler-Rundel, 'The Evian Conference on the Refugee Question', *Year-book of the Leo Baeck Institute*, Vol. 13, (London, 1968), pp.235-273; Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945*, Chap, 2; 'The Refugee Problem', 26/7/39, *NCH.*, pp.137-138.

no visa, police certificate or assurance of financial independence was required; only Customs had to be cleared.⁷⁹

How the Shanghai Sephardi Community reacted to the unprecedented challenge presented by the influx of some eighteen thousand victims of Nazi persecution into their war-torn city is a key test of the strength of their Jewish identity. Could they act in a united and praiseworthy way when their own future was under threat? Their response has to be examined within the framework of the Sino-Japanese hostilities of 1937. It throws light on how they were equipped economically, socially and emotionally to relate to, and deal with, the immigrants who streamed into Shanghai, precipitating a refugee problem of unprecedented dimensions in the Foreign Concessions.⁸⁰ The host community had no concept of the exact number of refugees the city would have to lodge. In June 1939, Sir Victor Sassoon estimated they would number some twenty-five thousand by the end of that year.⁸¹ The most recent research by the Chinese historian Pan Guang put the total at about thirty thousand, including those in transit.⁸²

Almost the entire range of skilled trades and professions was represented among these European refugees.⁸³ The majority were white-collar workers, professionals, businessmen, artists and skilled artisans, who would have had little difficulty integrating into an open economy.⁸⁴ Some succeeded in setting up

⁷⁹ Hitler Presents Shanghai with Another Refugee Problem', *China Weekly Review*, (Shanghai) 87, No.4 (December 24, 1938), pp.108-109; Anna Ginsbourg, [Grynberg], 'Le Ghetto au Bout du Monde - les réfugiés juifs de Shanghai (1938-1945)', *Juifs d'Asie*, p.26; *IM*, 20/1/39, p.12 and 17/3/39, p.8; *Report on Jewish Refugee Problem in Shanghai* by M. Speelman, Chairman of the CFA, Shanghai [Speelman Report, hereafter] to the Chairman CFA, Paris, 21/6/39, No. 458, JDCCA; Landing restrictions had become very lax after Japan took control of the harbour in 1937; see also 'The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, (London) 26, No.3/4 (1972/73), pp.28-37.

⁸⁰ *NCH*, 24/5/39, p.327 and 8/3/39, p.413; *JC*, 17/3/39, p.36. The difficult situation is described in correspondence from The Far Eastern Jewish Central Information Office, Harbin to Hicem, Paris, 16/8/38, No. 94/57370, *Strictly Confidential*, JDCCA; Statistics provided to the SMC by the International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees in SMP, D 5422A.

⁸¹ *IM*, 9/6/39, p.2 and 14/7/39, p.14; *NCH*, 24/5/39, p.327; 'A Little Community Faces Colossal Tasks', *JC*, 17/3/39, pp.36,41, 42.

⁸² Pan Guang, interview by author, Shanghai, 11/6/91. Kranzler maintained that the maximum of 17,000 refugees was not reached until the 1,000 East European refugees arrived from Japan during the latter half of 1941, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.146-147, note 34; see also *IM*, 14/7/39, pp.14-15, 20/1/39, p.12 and 5/5/39, p.10; 'The Refugees: Large Influx Denied', *NCH*, 5/6/40; 'It was as though a ton of bricks fell on our collective heads', Horowitz, 'Growing Up in Shanghai', Harvard Symposium, 18/10/92.

⁸³ *IM*, 16/12/38; 'Trades of Emigres Listed', *IM*, 17/2/39, p.6, and 5/5/39, p.10.

⁸⁴ Most refugees were desperate to find employment, *IM*, 17/2/39, p.7; *NCH*, 25/1/39, p.150; The refugees complained that the foreign community was unwilling to employ them in jobs which had become associated with native workers, *NCH*, 3/5/39, p.183; see also Brown to Maurice Bisgyer, Cincinnati, 9/12/38 and 21/2/39, *B'nai B'rith Archives* [no reference number stated].

businesses, and others peddled their possessions, to eke out a living.⁸⁵ In time, they reconstructed entire streets in demolished Hongku. 'Chusan Road, once a typical Chinese lane, in 1941 looked like a street in Vienna', while 'Little Berlin' rapidly grew in the Wayside district, 'creating a minor economic boom'.⁸⁶

The *Israel's Messenger* attempted to convince the foreign community that the German refugees had the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic and civic life of the Settlement. Their different professional skills, notably doctors and engineers, complemented the mercantile skills of the Sephardim.⁸⁷ Initially the refugees were only consumers of resources, drawing on the host community for the provision of housing, food and jobs. But over time, between 1938 to May 1943 they became contributors to Shanghai's economy.⁸⁸

Economic, Social, Political and Cultural Barriers

Here we face ever-growing numbers of Jews landing on the Bund, and they gave old-timers the impression they were superior to us just because they came from Europe.⁸⁹

The most serious impediment confronting the new arrivals after 1937 was the fact that markets abroad were rapidly contracting.⁹⁰ With foreign trade on the decline and foreign capital pulling out, the struggle to earn a living was overwhelming.⁹¹ As many as eighty-five percent relied entirely on financial assistance.⁹² The foreign community perceived the newcomers as an economic threat and expressed concern that pro-Jewish discrimination would force the

⁸⁵ 'List of Professions' compiled by the Disbursement and Housing Committee of the CFA, 31/12/39, cited in Kranzler, *op.cit.*, pp.282-284; see also Kranzler, 'The Jewish Community of Shanghai, 1937-1957', MA., thesis, Brooklyn College, 1958, Chap. IV; Laura L. Margolis, 'Race Against Time in Shanghai', *Survey Graphic* Vol. XXXIII No.3, March 1944, JDCCA.

⁸⁶ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews*, p.117, and their remarkable cultural achievements are reviewed in, pp.363-380; 'A German speaking Jewish community....has arisen in Shanghai', L. Kadoorie to A. Frieder, 2/8/39, JDCCA; Norman B. Hannah, 'Vienna in Shanghai', *Asian Affairs*, March-April 1975, pp.246-263, *NCH*, 24/5/39, p.327, 27/3/40, p.490, and 2/5/40, p.238.

⁸⁷ *IM*, 16/12/38, p.27, and 17/2/39, pp.1, 6.

⁸⁸ *NCH*, 27/3/40, p.490.

⁸⁹ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.4; compare *IM*, 10/11/3, p.2.

⁹⁰ 'Shanghai's Economic Outlook', *F&C*, 26/7/39, p.69; 'Shanghai's Problems - Rice, Rent and Sterling', *F&C*, 16/8/39, p.137, and 'Shanghai's Trade and Prospects', *F&C.*, 20/9/39, p.237; Robert W. Barnett, *Economic Shanghai: Hostage to Politics 1937-1941*, New York, 1941, pp.86-87; Ginsbourg, *op. cit.*, p.27.

⁹¹ Margolis, *op. cit.*, JDCCA; Ginsbourg, *op. cit.*, pp.398-401.

⁹² SMP, D 5422(A) 1, SB, 11/1/39; *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*, 15/4/39, *IM*, 14/7/39, p.14.

indigenous foreign population out of business.⁹³ The modernised Chinese middle class was also intimidated, and some censured the local Jews for encouraging the influx of refugees.⁹⁴ Paul Komor, of the International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees set up in August 1938 by Sir Victor Sassoon tried to prevent refugees from employment which would involve ousting local residents.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, there was a demand for their skills as doctors, engineers and architects.⁹⁶ In 1939 ten to fifteen percent of these refugees had found employment; many as tutors and governesses in Sephardi homes.⁹⁷

The Russian Jewish attitude to this mass influx of German Jewish refugees is reflected in their understandably hostile reaction to Ellis Hayim's insensitive statement to the press, that the refugees were not competing with the lower classes of Russians because they were better educated and had a higher standard of living.⁹⁸ The historic animosity between the Russians and Germans was reinforced by the fear of increased competition in the extremely limited field for foreign employment in Shanghai.⁹⁹ Some Russians suspected that refugees who had money were asking for financial aid.¹⁰⁰ The rise in rents and over-crowding increased resentment.¹⁰¹

⁹³ SMC Report pp.3-6; *NCH*, 4/1/39, p.7. The China General Bus Company denied a rumour that it was replacing its White Russian employees with Jewish refugees, *IM*, 17/2/39, p.6; 14/7/39, p.14, and 17/2/39, p.6; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.153-154.

⁹⁴ Robert Barnet, 'Shanghai's German Refugees Face Uncertainties', *Far Eastern Survey* Vol. 8, 25/10/39, p.252; Speelman to Troper, 6/4/40, 13315, No.217, G&EC, JDCCA.

⁹⁵ SMC Report, p.6; see also Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.151-154.

⁹⁶ *IM*, 17/3/39, p.8. The China Light & Power Co were willing to offer Lipka, Vienna, 'an excellent post', L. Kadoorie to Birman, Manager Daljewcib Harbin, 5/1/1939, No. 2527, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, [hereafter CAHJP], Dal/76.2; See also CAHJP, No. 58264 for a list of highly qualified specialists in Vienna; Birman to Hicem Association pour l'Emigration, Paris, 23/1/39, CAHJP; Birman to Kadoorie, 3/2/39, CAHJP includes a list of 11 engineers seeking employment.

⁹⁷ Henry Cohen appealed to every branch of the commercial community to employ Jewish refugee youth, 'Jewish Refugees Appeal for Employment', *NCH*, 14/6/39, p.469; Many Sephardim even invented jobs to enable the refugees to obtain work passes to leave the Ghetto in the Hongku area, where they were confined after 18/5/1943 because of German attempts to enforce its Jewish policy on Japan, Albert Nissim, interview by author, New Jersey, 2/1/94.

⁹⁸ *IM*, 20/3/40, p.16, and 17/2/39, p.6; Speelman to Trooper, 4/3/40, No.20, G&EC, JDCCA; Office workers, small traders, musicians and doctors felt the competition most keenly, *NCH*, 8/3/39, p.417; Hayim's interview cited in *IM*, 18/3/40, p.2.

⁹⁹ *NCH*, 4/1/39, p.39, and 8/3/39, p.417. In January 1931, the SMP believed that the employment of refugees had no effect at all on the employment of other local foreigners, but suspected there would be trouble in the future, Report by Pitts, 31/1/39, SMP, D 5422 (A).

¹⁰⁰ Ristaino, *op. cit.*, note 71 quotes *Russian Voice*, 7/1/39.

¹⁰¹ The refugees were often overcharged and had to pay a high price in key money in addition to rent for leasing an apartment payable three months in advance, *NCH*, 12/8/39, p.86.

Relatively few of Shanghai's Russian Jews played a prominent role in refugee relief work.¹⁰²

Even when they were vastly outnumbered by the Ashkenazi immigrants, Sephardim continued to dominate Jewish life in Shanghai. They had little in common with the Central European refugees¹⁰³ who insisted that, 'being European, they knew and did everything best and found fault with the local Jewish community in every thing about us with methodical Teutonic thoroughness'.¹⁰⁴ Yet they found common ground with the small number of refugees who were orthodox. Traditional Sephardi youth were impressed with what they considered to be the more sophisticated logical and questioning approach of the orthodox Ashkenazim.¹⁰⁵

The quotas established by the great democracies, America and Britain, to regulate the flow of refugees had been noted in Shanghai.¹⁰⁶ Arguably the absorption of this mass influx of refugees posed a far greater problem for Shanghai than it would have done for London or New York. The German refugees were an adjunct to the communities of the white nations comprising of fifty thousand citizens, and suddenly increased their number by twenty percent. Every fourth Western face encountered in Shanghai, as John Ahlers predicted, would soon be that of a German

¹⁰² The Committee believed that it would not pay to send an appeal to local Russian Jews for funds to support the refugees, Horace Kadoorie to Barbash, 29/6/40, JDCCA; 'Strangely mostly Russian [Jewish] families and of the less prosperous class' offered to take refugee children into their homes, *IM*, 20/1/39 and 19/9/41, p.28; the attitude of the Russians was to 'Leave it to the rich Sephardim' but they were more kindly disposed towards the East European Jews because of their similar culture, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.159; Heppner concedes that the Sephardim should have been excluded from his blanket condemnation: 'most of the members of the Jewish resident community did not consider themselves to be their brothers' keepers', Heppner, interview by author, Harvard, 18/8/93; Heppner summed up the attitude of some Russian Jews: 'We did not call you, we are not responsible for you', Ernest G. Heppner, *On the relations of the West European refugees v the Shanghai Resident Jews*, Harvard Symposium, p.15 note 1; see also Heppner, *Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto*, (Lincoln: 1994).

¹⁰³ Edward Yutkowits, 'Shanghai Fortunes', *The Jewish Monthly* March 1987, p.35; Fritz Kauffmann, 'The Experiences of the Shanghai Jewish Community Under the Japanese in World War 11', *The American Council Committee*, 12/12/63.

¹⁰⁴ Horowitz, correspondence with author, 12/2/93; The recent arrivals looked down on the local Jewish community, comprised for the most part of Russian Jews, 'to whom they consider themselves superior', Report by Crawford, 11/1/39, SMP, D 5422 (A).

¹⁰⁵ Toueg, interview by author, Herzlia, 10/10/93.

¹⁰⁶ Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*, Jerusalem and Detroit, 1981, pp.302-316; David Wyman, *Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-45*, (New York, 1985), US policy is discussed on pp.124-125 and British policy on p.158; Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-41*, (Mass., 1968), p.35.

Jewish refugee.¹⁰⁷ Relief organisations advised refugees not to speak German on the street in order to avoid upsetting the patriotic British, Jews and non-Jews.¹⁰⁸

This problem came into sharp relief in 1940 when the Japanese attempted to gain the vote of the Jewish immigrants to put up five candidates in the SMC, in a bid to change its composition; five British, two Americans, two Japanese, five Chinese.¹⁰⁹ Given the temptation to sell their vote to the Japanese in exchange for permits for their relatives to come to Shanghai, Ellis Hayim warned them that it would create a 'tremendous amount of anti-Semitic feeling in the Settlement'.¹¹⁰ This does not appear to have been an exaggeration; Shanghai radio stations were broadcasting; 'Do you wish this International Settlement to be ruled by the Japanese and German Jews or by the British and Americans?'¹¹¹

The situation was exploited by the Nazis among the sizeable German population in the Settlement. They were enraged at the anti-German propaganda the mere presence of the refugees engendered.¹¹² They warned that 'the Chosen People' have invaded Shanghai. Be prepared to resist an economic invasion and be prepared for an era of crime, sin and intrigue'.¹¹³ They blamed this 'invasion' on the Jews who they claimed were now masters of Shanghai by dominating its financial,

¹⁰⁷ 'Economic Threat Caused by Jewish Refugee Emigrés From Europe Soon To Form Fourth of Foreign Population', *The Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury*, 15/4/39, p.8.

¹⁰⁸ Police tried to prevent the press from exploiting refugees for political propaganda. They were instructed to refrain from political expressions. 'What they left behind them in experiences was no concern of ours and was best left alone... The German Consulate General asks that we give the matter earnest attention', 14/6/39, Paul Komor to the Commissioner of Police, SMP D.5422 (A); See also 'Aufruf an alle Emigranten', [German], 'Appeal to all Emigrants', *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle*, 5/9/39; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.166, note 30; 'The Behaviour of Guests', *NCH*, 6/9/40, p.408. *IM*, 17/2/39, p.13.

¹⁰⁹ Speelman to Troper, 6/4/40, No.13315, G&EC, JDCCA; *NCH*, 10/4/40, p.64.

¹¹⁰ 'Refugees Urged to Remain Neutral', *NCH*, 10/4/40, p.53.

¹¹¹ Speelman to Troper, Paris, 6/4/1940, JDCCA.

¹¹² 'Anti-Semitism Makes Appearance in Shanghai', 1/11/41, *China Weekly Review*, 98, No.9:259; 'Jew-Baiting Propaganda Shows Anti-Semitic Drive Has Begun Here', 7/1/39, *China Weekly Review*, 87, No.6:183; J. B. Powell, *op. cit.*, pp.350-347; Kreissler, *op. cit.*, pp.270-278.

¹¹³ *IM*, 20/1/39, p.13; *NCH* 21/8/40, p.291; 'Alleged political meeting', Report by Pitts, 21/4/39, SMP, D 5422, SB (A) and 'Criminal Elements', 31/3/39 lists ten 'undesirable characters' among the recently arrived Jewish refugees; see also 'Central European Jewish Refugees - Criminal Elements', Report by Pitts, 27/4/39, and 9/5/39, SMP D 5422 (A) the SMP considered it highly exaggerated as there was no instance of Communist propaganda being distributed among Jewish refugees, Report by D.S. Pitts, 3/10/39, SMP D.5422 (A), he cited 30/9/39, SMP, D 5422 S.1, SB. He cited 'Communist Elements Active Among German Jews', printed in *Tairiku Shimpo*; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.164, note, 15.

economic and political structure.¹¹⁴ The Sephardi community was undoubtedly disturbed to find itself the butt of Nazi propaganda.

Anti-Semitism from the German Nazis in Shanghai

It is necessary to focus on reports of the activities of the local German Nazis recorded in the press in order to assess whether they made any impact on the identity of Shanghai Sephardim. In May 1933, the arrival of Rudolf Hess in Shanghai from Japan presaged that China would become yet another field for Nazi propaganda.¹¹⁵ Until 1944 non-Jewish Germans in Shanghai carried on activities and sponsored organisations emulating their Nazi counterparts.¹¹⁶ As early as September 1927 there was an Italian Fascisti group in Shanghai.¹¹⁷ There is evidence that they caused some violence which concerned the older generation Sephardim who were monitoring the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany.¹¹⁸

The *Israel's Messenger* appealed to leading Chinese officials not to be influenced by anti-Semitism.¹¹⁹ At a meeting held at the Jewish Club on 28 May 1933 a Jewish Defence League was formed to counteract Nazi propaganda, but not to take offensive action.¹²⁰ In an address to the League in June 1933, Lily Nobleston, a Zionist envoy, remarked that, ironically, the presence of anti-Semitism in Shanghai had yielded one advantage in that it drew the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities together, in their effort to fight the 'common foe'.¹²¹ Without the necessary documents, however, there is no way of ascertaining the number of Sephardim who participated and to what extent it reinforced solidarity within the

¹¹⁴ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.155 and 163-164 note 14, and Kranzler, *The Jewish Community of Shanghai*, p.102. The Chinese Press printed some anti-Semitic literature, notably 'American English Capitalism of Sassoon' and articles by Zhu-Minyi and Teng Liangli.

¹¹⁵ *IM*, 2/6/33, p.9, 1/7/33, p.20; Oskar Trautmann, German Ambassador to China, addressed the Foreign Relations Committee of the Legislative Yuan on 3/10/35, *IM*, 1/11/35, p.4; for a good account of Sino-German relations in this period see Schrecker, J. E., *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism: Germany in Shantung*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971.

¹¹⁶ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews*, p.154; a Dutch gentile informed Kate Ezra of an extensive Nazi propaganda campaign in Shanghai, 18/9/38, BDBJ, ACC3131/B4/CH1; 'Hitler's Birthday Observed Here', *NCH*, 26/4/39, p.151.

¹¹⁷ *NCH*, 10/9/27, p.449; a ceremony in May 1939 marked the advent of the Shanghai Spanish Falange Society, *NCH*, 10/5/39, p.241; to the Sephardi youth they caused 'no emotion or alarm, but a lot of laughter' by the slapstick manner in which they operated, Ya'acov, interview by author, 10/10/93.

¹¹⁸ *IM*, 1/4/33, p.25.

¹¹⁹ 'Nazi Propaganda in China Growing Desperate', *IM*, 5/7/35, p.20 and 1/7/33, p.19.

¹²⁰ *IM*, 1/7/33, pp.10-11.

¹²¹ Address by Miss Lily Nobleston to the Jewish Defence League in Shanghai, *IM*, 1/7/33, p.10.

ranks of Shanghai Jewry. None of those interviewed for this study seemed to be aware of the existence of the League and the fact that the meeting was held at the Jewish club suggests that its main support came from the Russian Jews.

When a barrage of anti-Semitic propaganda was unleashed in the press,¹²² the *Israel's Messenger* expressed regret that, 'with its huge vested interest', Shanghai Sephardim did not own a daily newspaper.¹²³ *The North China Herald* gave prominence to a picture captioned 'Hitler's Birthday Observed Here', in which the Nazi uniforms, the Imperial Eagle and swastika figured prominently.¹²⁴ In their desire not to offend the sizeable local German colony and turn the local press into a 'verbal battle-ground', the editors closed their columns to discussion of Nazi anti-Semitism in Germany, maintaining that it would aggravate racial, national, and religious prejudices.¹²⁵ Ezra took issue with the editor of the American owned *The Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* for its policy: 'this is none of our business... we are too far away and we have our own problems to solve'. In pointed contrast, the *Israel's Messenger* continued to focus on Hitler's anti-Semitic edicts. Shanghai Jewry was receiving 'frantic appeals' to help their co-religionists in Germany who were being deprived of their livelihood.¹²⁶

In 1935 a story was widely circulated in Germany and in Shanghai accusing Shanghai Jewry of practising ritual murder. A German woman resident in Shanghai, gave a lurid account of the alleged ceremony performed at the Sephardi Baikal Road cemetery during World War I. *The North China Herald*, declared that the absurdity of this 'fantastic slander' hardly required refuting, particularly as the cemetery only came into existence after the war.¹²⁷ Although by this time the blood libel which had spread through Europe over centuries must have been overplayed, it obviously made a strong impact on Shanghai Sephardim who insisted that the SMC carry out

¹²² *IM*, 2/3/34, p.1; SMP, D3 Special Branch files list some anti-Semitic publications, for example, 9/9/35, *Deutsche Shanghai Zeitung* and 15/9/35, *Far Eastern Observer*.

¹²³ *IM*, 2/3/34, p.1 and 'Nazi Sarcasm', 5/4/35, p.14.

¹²⁴ *NCH*, 26/4/39, p.151.

¹²⁵ *IM*, 3/11/33, pp.5-6.

¹²⁶ 'German Jewry is a limb of the entire Jewish body, and we realise that when our limb aches, the whole body feels it', *IM*, 1/4/33, p.25; see also *IM*, 1/7/33, p.19, and 3/11/33, p.5.

¹²⁷ *NCH*, 3/7/35, p.8, and 'A Criminal and Fantastic Slander Ruthlessly Exposed', *IM*, 5/7/35, p.19.

an investigation. Although it considered one unnecessary, the SMC did carry out a search.¹²⁸

China's attempts to combat the Nazis are noteworthy. In June 1933 Madame Sun Yatsen, Song Qingling, Chairman of the China League for Civil Rights,¹²⁹ led a delegation to the Shanghai German Consul in protest against the reign of terror in Germany.¹³⁰ The Jewish community's 'silent boycott' of German goods was also supported by non-Jews.¹³¹ Given that Germany's loss of extraterritorial rights, and its diplomatic and military assistance secured its friendship with China, the failure of Nazi propaganda to attract Chinese sympathy is significant.¹³² It was to China's credit that persecution of foreigners for their religion was unknown.¹³³

Sephardi Contribution to the Refugees

...qui lorsqu'ils sont avertis de leur arrivée, les attendant à la descente des navires en brandissant des pancartes: 'Désormais, vous n'êtes plus ni allemands, ni autrichiens, ni tchèques ni roumains. Vous êtes juifs, uniquement juifs. Et ce sont des juifs du monde entier qui vous souhaitent la bienvenue...'¹³⁴

The cultural divisions between the host Jewish community did not curb their combined humanitarian efforts on behalf of their co-religionists.¹³⁵ It was probably no vain boast in the *Israel's Messenger* that from the time the first immigrant set foot in Shanghai the burden of feeding, housing and maintaining them had been shouldered solely by Jewish Relief Organisations and had not cost the Municipal Authorities a

¹²⁸ *IM*, 5/7/35, p.19.

¹²⁹ Her actions were probably staged by the Soviet consulate as she was an active Communist supporter.

¹³⁰ *IM*, 1/7/33, p.14, 18 and 5/5/33, p.7.

¹³¹ *IM*, 10/4/33, pp.16-17; 2/6/33, p.7; 3/11/33, p.19, and 3/5/35 p.11.

¹³² 'Israelite' to the Editor, Shanghai, 7/4/26, *IM*, 7/5/26, p.17; in the 1940s Owen Lattimore, the American political adviser to Chiang Kaishek, maintained that Chinese intelligentsia, particularly Western educated Chinese, were influenced by anti-Semitism abroad, Memorandum of talk between Landy and Owen Lattimore, 5/5/42, JDCCA; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.155, 162 note 14.

¹³³ *IM*, 18/9/1908, p.11.

¹³⁴ Ginsbourg, 'Le ghetto du bout du monde: les réfugiés juifs de Shanghai (1938-1945)', *Les nouveaux cahiers*, (Paris) 87 (Winter 1986-87): 26-32; *NCH*, 8/3/39, p.413.

¹³⁵ Since 1933 the *IM* monitored the Nazi persecution of Jews, *IM*, 16/12/38, pp.8 and 27.

penny.¹³⁶ Their efforts, however outstanding, appeared futile and merely a drop in the ocean, leaving them feeling impotent to cope with the vast numbers.¹³⁷

Gifts from the host community such as powdered milk, linen, clothes, fruit, furniture, tea, wood, had been numerous.¹³⁸ The *Israel's Messenger* appealed to its readers to teach the emigrés English and to invite them on 'little outings', motor rides, to dinner in private homes, trips to the movies; any diversion to break the monotony of camp life.¹³⁹ Given the Baghdadi tradition of private charity, very valuable help was provided on an individual basis. This discreet relief should not be underrated, even though it can not be computed.¹⁴⁰ The official figures of the Shanghai subscription were low because there was no record of private charity - notably that of the Joseph brothers, reputedly the largest financial subscribers to individuals who approached them.¹⁴¹ There were constant demands for contributions for various war funds at a time when personal incomes had diminished in the worsening economic situation.¹⁴²

Several contemporary comments attest to the 'fine spirit' shown by the local community, suggesting that 'the overall success had been far beyond expectation'.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ *IM*, 17/2/39, p.1; Report by D. I. Crawford, 8/12/38, SMP D. 5422, SB (A).

¹³⁷ In December, 1939 'mainly through the kindness of long established members of the local Jewish community' these refugees were provided with the frugal needs of existence at a ratio of \$60 per single person and proportionately less for married couples. In January it was reduced to \$55 'as diminishing financial resources were being strained to breaking point by the needs of the never ending stream of newcomers...The relief committee is in desperate straits, money exhausted', Report by Pitts, 31/1/39, SMP, D5422 (A) SMP, D, 11/1/39. See also Report by D. I. Crawford, 8/12/38, SMP D5422 (A),

¹³⁸ Speelman Report to Chairman CFA Paris, 21/6/39, No. 458. p.2, G&EC, JDCCA; 'Since my first appeal of February 22, we have received \$2,846.58 in donations and numerous gifts in kind', Paul Komor to the editor, *NCH*, 19/4/39, p.115; *IM*, 2/2/39, p.6.

¹³⁹ *IM*, 9/6/39, p.13; 'Basic English: A Chance for Refugees', *NCH*, 22/11/39, p.332; The SJS although overcrowded took in 60 refugees. Adult English classes supervised by voluntary teachers were held in the *Beth Aharon*, SMP, D. 11/1/39 D. 5422(A) 1. SB; see Advertisement, 'Have You Sent a Contribution to the Jewish Refugee Fund?' *IM*, 20/1/39, p.21 and 7/6/39, p.13.

¹⁴⁰ 'They gave without fanfare', Rabbi Leid Baron, a former pupil of the *Mir Yeshiva*, interview by author, Montreal, 25/8/92; interviews with Flegg, Hillaly, Tuogeg, Horowitz and Abraham all indicate that Sephardim invited refugees to share their meals on a regular basis.

¹⁴¹ *IM*, 20/1/39, p.15 and 14/6/40, p.1; a list of contributors to the 'Massoth-Fund in Speelman to Troper, April, 1940 letter No.214, JDCCA, Sir Victor SH\$ 2,500, Speelman SH\$1,000, Joseph Brothers SH\$ 500.

¹⁴² *IM*, 21/2/41. p.9 and 5/8/41, p.16; 'Annual Jewish Refugee Committee Report', 21/2/41, p.9; Sassoon donated £35,000 in gifts through the Royal Air Force to the Voluntary War Contribution Fund, Kadoorie, \$50,000, Hayim, \$50,000, Joseph brothers, \$6,000 each, S.Toeg, \$5,000. The list includes 37 Sephardim whose donations range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, *IM*, 16/8/40, p.11 and 21/2/41, p.9.

¹⁴³ For a general list of contributions see *IM*, 20/1/39, p.5 and 12; Brown applauded their 'unselfish labours', 'Shanghai Lodge and the Refugee Problem A Retrospective Survey', Appendix Item No. 7, *B'nai B'rith* Sixteenth Convention 1941, pp.72-73; Comments of some former Shanghai European Jewish refugees in, Henrietta Reifler, compiler, 'Seattle Jews from China: Oral Histories', (Seattle, 1989).

Heppner noted that 'every effort was made to alleviate the refugees' suffering and restore their dignity'.¹⁴⁴ Kranzler, who observed that the 'Sephardi and the Russian Jewish communities responded instantly and generously', nevertheless censures the 'old time Shanghai residents' for their 'mixed reaction'.¹⁴⁵ While helping the refugees, they seemed to try to keep them at a distance. Thus they were given rooms in the desolate Hongku section where the sanitation was primitive.¹⁴⁶ It is important to emphasise that rooms and lodging were at first found within the Settlement south of the Creek, but as the numbers increased, several houses were rented in Hongku.¹⁴⁷ Figures provided by the IC, indicate that by January 1941, 2,085 Jewish refugees settled in the French Concession, 1,230 in the International Settlement and extra-Settlement area, 12,154 in Hongku and north of Soochow Creek.¹⁴⁸ With every sort of building accommodation fully rented and with increasing demand, prices rose astronomically, particularly in the Western District and the French Concession. It was only in Hongku that land or partially demolished buildings were available at prices the Committee and some of the refugees could afford.¹⁴⁹ The friendly welcome which was extended to the first batch of refugees, however, faded as the refugees outnumbered the indigenous foreign communities by a ratio of about twenty-five to one. The majority were entirely dependent on financial assistance and as the numbers soared, care on a personal level became impossible.

One outcome of the influx of refugees was that barriers between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim were reduced. Representatives of all Shanghai's Jewish religious and charitable organisations were invited to join the 'Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai', [CFA hereafter] founded on 19 October 1938 to combine all the relief agencies into a single representative

¹⁴⁴ Heppner, *On the relations*, pp.1-2.

¹⁴⁵ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.91.

¹⁴⁶ Kranzler, 'The Jewish Community of Shanghai', p.12.

¹⁴⁷ *JC*, 17/3/39, p.36.

¹⁴⁸ SMP, D 5422A; a list of German nationals resident in Shanghai and of German refugees who arrived after 1937 to October 1941 with details of date of birth, address, profession in SMP, D 8263/1; a list of the trades of emigrés in Troper to JDC, New York, 25/3/39, JDCCA.

¹⁴⁹ Hugo Sandor, 'Shanghai's Real Estate Market', *F&C*, 12/4/39, p.298; 'Shanghai d'hier et d'aujourd'hui (II). Serres comme des Sardines, les Shanghaïens disposent de 4,84 metres carres par habitant', *Enquêtes - Reportages - Chroniques*, 14/5/87, p.20. The Japanese building companies were planning the reconstruction of Hongku, Mrs. Inuzuka, film interview by Diane Perelsztejn, 1991, script by courtesy of Perelsztejn.

committee.¹⁵⁰ The initial meeting was held in the offices of Sir Elly Kadoorie and Sons and the Sephardim were also represented on the board by D. E. J. Abraham, his son Reuben Abraham, and Ellis Hayim, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee.¹⁵¹ They helped set up the machinery necessary for the organisation of funds to house, feed, clothe and rehabilitate the refugees,¹⁵² their united efforts raising some Sh \$500,000, [US \$8,000] by the end of 1938.¹⁵³ Thus by the end of 1939, the relief committees, manned by amateurs and individualists, established a network to attend to the primary needs of approximately sixteen thousand refugees.¹⁵⁴

The *Beth Aharon* Synagogue, which was made available as a reception centre, played a central part in the lives of many refugees.¹⁵⁵ Sephardi women attended to the children and set up a soup kitchen which initially fed about six hundred refugees, three times daily.¹⁵⁶ During the first few years, at the insistence of the patriarchal Abraham family, kitchens catering for the refugees observed the Jewish dietary laws although a minority of the refugees were observant.¹⁵⁷ Laura Margolis, a professional relief worker, who went to Shanghai in May 1941 under the auspices of the American State Department and the JDCCA, found it difficult to justify the higher cost of *kasher* food.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁰ *NCH*, 27/3/40, p.490. At the end of 1939 there were six camps and two hospitals accommodating 2,332 refugees including 39 hospital staff, *IM*, 20/1/39, p.2.

¹⁵¹ Brown, 'Shanghai Lodge and the Refugee Problem', *op. cit.*, Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews*, p.94; Sassoon Memo, 20/12/39, JDCCA.

¹⁵² Komor, 'Report of the International Committee up to 28/2/39, SMP, D 5422A; *IM*, 20/1/39, pp.1, 12.

¹⁵³ At this time the ratio of the Shanghai dollar to the American was approximately 61/2 to 1. As the prices rose, the ratio jumped at a reasonably steady rate to 10 to 1, 15 to 1, 181/2 to 1 by mid-1940, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.106, note 39.

¹⁵⁴ *IM*, 20/1/39, p.5; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.133.

¹⁵⁵ Adult refugees attended English classes supervised by voluntary teachers at the synagogue, SMP, D 5422(A) 1. SB, 11/1/39; some of the refugees slept on its straw strewn floors, *IM*, 17/2/39, p.7; *NCH*, 8/2/39, p.240.

¹⁵⁶ *JC*, 17/3/3, p.36; R. Abraham and I. Toeg were among the trustees, Speelman to the Council, 10/2/39, p.1, JDCCA.

¹⁵⁷ Margolis Report, 11/8/41, Letter No.20, 462, pp. 2, 7, JDCCA; Ginsbourg, 'Le Ghetto Du Bout Du Monde', p.29. At best 10%-20% of the refugees observed Kashrut, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.144, note 16. Probably after Pearl Harbour *Kashrut* was no longer observed in the kitchens.

¹⁵⁸ *IM*, 18/7/41, p.11; 'If we didn't have to run an entirely kosher kitchen here we could save a lot of money. The majority of the refugees are not religious...As long as their [the Abrahams'] religion isn't touched they'll help...They are really the two kindest people I've ever met...[they] will give generously for causes where the leadership is strongly Jewish', Margolis had the impression that 'All Baghdad Jews are very religious', Margolis report, 11/8/41, Letter No.20, 462, pp.4, 7, JDCCA; Margolis to Pilpel, 26/10/41, p.4, JDCCA.

The orthodox members of the Sephardi community paid great attention to religious provision for the refugees, which was an expression of their common Jewish identity. During the winter of 1938-1939 the refugees participated in the services at the *Beth Aharon* and *Ohel Rachel* Synagogues, and the Russian *Ohel Moishe*. As their numbers increased they were allowed to hold their own services in the synagogues, with the important proviso that they would be conducted according to the orthodox tradition. The orthodox Sephardim and Rabbi Ashkenazi were suspicious of what they considered 'assimilationist' tendencies among the refugees.¹⁵⁹ It is not surprising then that the attempts of the liberal Jewish refugees to establish their own religious institutions brought them into collision with the traditionalists among the Sephardim.¹⁶⁰ The use of the *Beth Aharon* by 300 Polish students of the *Mir Yeshiva* from the end of 1941 to mid-1944, the only complete institution of higher Talmudic studies saved from the Nazis, underlines a strong identification between the orthodox element among the European refugees and the traditional Sephardim.¹⁶¹ Some of the latter paid rabbis among the Central European and Polish refugees to supervise the religious education of their children at home. Half a dozen orthodox Sephardi youth became students of the Polish *Mir Yeshiva*, and later went on to Ashkenazi Yeshivoth in America displaying a severance of their Baghdadi and Sephardi identity.¹⁶²

The Sephardi philanthropists were in the forefront in providing for the medical care of the refugees.¹⁶³ Within a year, a complete system of medical care, including outpatients clinics, a central pharmacy, laboratory, dental clinic and three

¹⁵⁹ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.409-410; *IM*, 16/2/40, p.2. During the festivals more than one service was held twice daily in each synagogue, and cinema houses and the Broadway Theatre were rented to accommodate the worshippers, 'Passover-Shanghai 1940', 17/5/40, and 17/10/41, p.8; Report by Mischenko, SMP, D 5422 SB C.S.6 14/8/40.

¹⁶⁰ The refugees wanted to form a Liberal Congregation with an organ and mixed choir, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.411, 414.

¹⁶¹ *IM*, 16/2/40, p.2. J. Epstein, *The 'Yeshiva of Mir'*, Y. Leitner, *Jewish Institutions of Higher Learning in Europe: Their Development and Destruction*, [Hebrew], (New York, 1956) pp.87-132; Yechezkel Leitner, *Operation-Torah Rescue: The Escape of the Mirrer Yeshiva from War-Torn Poland to Shanghai, China*, (Jerusalem, 1987); Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews during World War II*, (New York, 1979), pp.184-189.

¹⁶² For example Rifka Toeg went on to attend a seminary in New York where she learnt Yiddish, Toueg, interview by author, Herzlia, 4/5/93.

¹⁶³ The Report of the Medical Board of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai in July 1940 provides a comprehensive survey covering every aspect of the activities of their departments, *IM*, 12/7/40, p.2.

hospitals with a total capacity of two hundred beds was set up for the refugees.¹⁶⁴ Sir Victor donated an iron-lung and Horace Kadoorie loaned X-Ray apparatus intended for use in the Laura Kadoorie Memorial Hospital.¹⁶⁵ Dr. J. H. Jordan, SMC Commissioner of Public Health, was struck by the 'extremely good work' performed by the clinics attached to the camps.¹⁶⁶ Margolis, nonetheless, emphasised the lack of *esprit de corps* among the doctors and nurses, and the poor sanitation.¹⁶⁷

Some of the negative feeling towards the refugees was engendered by fears that infectious diseases, endemic throughout the Orient, like diphtheria, scarlatina, tuberculosis, measles and typhoid which were sweeping through the refugee camps, would affect the foreign community.¹⁶⁸ The first major epidemic of scarlatina struck Hongku during May 1939.¹⁶⁹ Several Sephardim, notably, Ellis Hayim, Treasurer, Reuben Abraham, R. Joseph, Sir Elly Kadoorie and Sir Victor Sassoon, were prominent on the committee of 'The European Emigrants Associated Hospitals for Shanghai' which provided hospital facilities for about 150 infectious patients and 200 convalescents.¹⁷⁰ The first meeting of the full executive committee was held at the offices of Sir Elly Kadoorie and Sons on 22 June 1939.¹⁷¹ As Nobleston predicted, Ashkenazi and Sephardim pooled their resources to assist victims of anti-Semitism.¹⁷²

Significantly, some assimilated Sephardim, with little interest in traditional Judaism, displayed remarkable solidarity with their co-religionists which indicates that

¹⁶⁴ *IM*, 17/10/41, p.7; *NCH*, 28/6/39, p.558 and 26/6/40, p.343.

¹⁶⁵ CFA Report to Troper, Paris, 14/12/39, No.47, p.5, JDCCA; 'A Healthy Report', *IM*, 12/7/40, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ *IM*, 12/7/40, p.2.

¹⁶⁷ Margolis, 'Race', p.1; *The China Press* 14/4/39, p.1; 'The only bright spot is the maternity ward which is Mrs. Abraham's special pet and which is cheerful because she takes a personal interest', CFA Report to M. Troper, 14/12/39, No.47, p.5, JDCCA; it was established in February 1940 by Mrs. D.E.J. Abraham and Mrs. R. D. Abraham; over \$10,000 was raised to support it, Abraham to Barbash, 12/2/40; *IM*, 16/2/40, p.10, 20/3/40, p.11, and, 12/7/40, p.7; food and arrangements for *brith milah* were available, 20/3/40, p.11.

¹⁶⁸ CFA Report to Troper, 14/12/39, No.47, p.5, JDCCA; *IM*, 12/9/39, p.25 and 9/6/39, p.12; *NCH*, 3/5/39, p.371 and 27/3/40, p.490.

¹⁶⁹ 'Over 200 cases of scarlet fever among emigrés one death', *IM*, 19/6/39, p.12; *NCH*, 31/5/39, p.371, 28/6/39, p.558, and 27/3/40, p.490; Ginsbourg, *Shanghai*, pp.14-15.

¹⁷⁰ *NCH*, 24/5/39, p.328.

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, p.328 and 9/6/39, p.13; *IM*, 20/3/40, p.11; the 'Immigrants' Hospital', for the refugees at Ward Road was opened on 23/6/40, *IM*, 12/7/40, p.7.

¹⁷² *IM*, 1/7/33, p.10.

their essential Jewish identity remained strong.¹⁷³ In contrast to their former focus on his spectacular parties, in 1939 the Shanghai press featured Sir Victor Sassoon showing Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, British Ambassador to China around the Ward Road Camp, and drinking tea at the refugee centre.¹⁷⁴ In early 1939, Sir Victor donated, rent free, the first floor of the Embankment building to accommodate approximately four hundred refugees.¹⁷⁵ Operated by a Chinese caterer, the kitchens fed about 1,000 daily in May 1939.¹⁷⁶ Despite much criticism of the handling of food for the refugees, it is indeed remarkable that over four million meals were served by various kitchens to some eight thousand refugees in Shanghai during 1939.¹⁷⁷

The Sassoon Embankment building for about a year functioned as a central receiving station for the new arrivals.¹⁷⁸ In June 1939 the Sassoons replaced it with a more suitable property, San Sing in Pingliang Road, Hongku, which was able to accommodate two thousand five hundred people. A small training camp was set up where about two hundred young men received vocational training as mechanics, joiners, and carpenters. In the workshop at Kinchow Road one hundred and fifty refugee women produced hand knitted quality goods, and ladies' and children's dresses.¹⁷⁹ The Immigrants Thrift Shop which was the outlet for refugees to sell their belongings and the handmade articles they produced, was one of Sir Victor's projects.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ 'D.E.J. Abraham's wife, Mozelle, a very traditional member of the Sassoon family, said of Sir Victor, 'God will forgive him all his sins because of the charity he gives', Jacob Alkow, *In Many Worlds*, (New York, 1985), p.146; Alkow, interview by author, Herzlia, 2/6/93.

¹⁷⁴ *IM*, 3/4/39, p.11 and 5/5/39, p.10.

¹⁷⁵ 'The Sassoon seal was a token of goodwill and absolute protection. Again it is applied to protect and assist - this time, the Jewish refugees in China', Dr. A. Gestalt, *TJT*, November 1939, p.3; *IM*, 17/3/39, p.1; *NCH*, 25/1/39, p.150.

¹⁷⁶ *NCH*, 5/1/39, pp.150, and 17/5/39, p.282; menus printed in *IM*, 20/3/40, p.11; see also *The Jewish Life*, No. 16-17, 21/4/40, pp.8-9 and No.12, 22/3/40, p.10; CFA Report to Troper, 14/12/39, No.47, p.5, JDCCA; Report on Jewish Refugee Problem in Shanghai by M. Speelman, 21/6/39, No.458, G&EC, JDCCA; Sassoon to Landau, 5/8/39, and L. Kadoorie to S.Frieder, 2/8/39, p.2, No.458, G&EC, JDCCA; Sassoon found it incredible that 33 cents could provide three square meals a day: 'I eat there myself very often, paying 20 cents per meal and don't mind being 'stung' because it is for a good cause', *NCH*, 17/5/39, p.282.

¹⁷⁷ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.136.

¹⁷⁸ Sir Victor appealed to the Japanese authorities to put buildings occupied for military purposes at the disposal of the refugees, *NCH*, 8/3/39, p.413 and 17/5/39, p.282.

¹⁷⁹ CFA Report to Troper, 14/12/39, p.5, 7, 47, JDCCA; Sir Victor's donation of twenty-five bales of cotton and artificial silk goods was put to good use, *IM*, 20/1/39, p.12 and 17/2/39, p.6.

¹⁸⁰ He provided the premises, *IM*, 14/7/39, p.15.

Throughout, Sir Victor's money was specifically earmarked *not* for relief work and 'maintenance' but for 'constructive purposes'.¹⁸¹ His endowment of Sh \$150,000 (roughly £5150) from January 1939 and a further Sh \$25,000 from June to December for the establishment of a Rehabilitation Fund displays great forethought.¹⁸² The Fund which loaned money to the refugees to set up a business, was generously supported by a large number of Sephardim, notably Hayim, Kadoorie, Abraham, and the Joseph brothers.¹⁸³ Given Shanghai's languishing economy, it was no mean feat that some 1,384 persons (with families 3,380) were enabled to become self-supporting.¹⁸⁴ As Sir Victor pointed out, 'besides giving a man a chance to do some business he is able at the same time to employ two or three other refugees'.¹⁸⁵

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Shanghai Jewry was the Kadoorie School established for the refugees.¹⁸⁶ Initially some one hundred and twenty refugee children who arrived at the end of 1938 and at the beginning of 1939 attended the SJS, which provided a special bus service for transport. Their tuition, for the most part, was paid by the SJYA founded in February 1937 and of which Elly Kadoorie was President, and Charles Gubbay, Honorary Treasurer.¹⁸⁷ Mainly through the generosity of the Kadoorie family the school was founded for three hundred children in June 1939 at Kinchow Road.¹⁸⁸ Reuben Abraham and his wife organised the

¹⁸¹ 'The only constructive thing in this whole picture', Margolis to Pilpel, 5/11/41, Letter No. 29, G&EC JDCCA; Troper to AJDCCA New York, Gen. No. 3528/12032, 12/7/39. For some indication of the extent Sassoon's funds were depended upon see tel., from Jointdisco to Speelman, 2/11/40, JDCCA, 8830; Speelman to AJDCCA, 12/11/40, No. 38, JDCCA; 'We expect to raise US \$5,000 locally of which Sir Victor has promised to contribute two thirds', Speelman to Paul Baerwald, Chairman AJDC, 19/4/41'; 'The Fourth list of Contributions to the Council for German Jewry', London, recorded that Victor Sassoon and Mrs. Meyer Sassoon donated £25,000.

¹⁸² *NCH*, 5/1/39, p.150; 'New hope has entered the lives of many of these emigrés', *IM*, 20/1/39, p.13, 17/2/39, p.6, 27/9/40, p.28; Report of the CFA to Troper, Paris, 14/12/39, No. 47, p.6; The rate of exchange at that time was between \$ 6.50 to \$ 6.80, thus CH \$150,000 was equivalent to US\$ 22,000; 'Heppner's Response to Ristaino, New Information on Shanghai Jewish Refugees: The evidence of the Shanghai Municipal Police Files, National Archives, Washington, D. C.', p.4, Submitted for the Harvard Symposium August 1992. p.3.

¹⁸³ CFA Report to Troper, 14/12/39, p.7; JDCCA, 47; CFA to the Joint Secretary, The Council for German Jewry London, 28/3/39, Weinberger Report, pp.10-11.

¹⁸⁴ *NCH*, 17/5/39, p.282.

¹⁸⁵ *IM*, 5/5/39, p.10, *NCH*, 17/5/39, p.282; Ginsbourg, *op. cit.*, p.17, focuses on the number of failures.

¹⁸⁶ *IM*, 16/8/40, p.2.

¹⁸⁷ 'They were paid for by subscription from members of our community, rich and poor alike', Chairman's Speech, 1939, *SULA*, AJ 37/3/39; AJ 37/6/4/13.

¹⁸⁸ Several stayed on at the SJS even after the SJYA Jewish Refugee School was founded, CFA Report to Troper, 14/12/39, 47, p.5, JDCCA; Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, film interview by Anna Frenkel, [née Ginsbourg], 7/4/89 in 'Escape to the Rising Sun', producer, Diane Perelsztejn.

fund raising to subsidise the monthly fee of \$5 per child. Yet some \$8,620.30 collected by February 1939, was insufficient to meet the heating costs, forcing the school to close in winter.¹⁸⁹ Anna Ginsbourg, [Frenkel] a journalist working for the *China Weekly Review* in Shanghai in 1939, nevertheless assessed the education standard of the Kadoorie school as that of an average high school, while its teaching methods and recreation facilities made it 'a model institution of its kind'.¹⁹⁰

Originally a Chinese primary school, which had been evacuated in 1937, the building had been leased from the SMC. In 1941 it was reclaimed and plans were made for the construction of a new school building.¹⁹¹ The Kadoorie School opened on 2 January 1942 and was equipped to accommodate six hundred pupils with seventeen teachers.¹⁹² Kadoorie, an Anglophile, objected to German being taught.¹⁹³ Extension courses were available to those over fourteen. Some students received a thorough business education and attempts were made to find them employment.¹⁹⁴ Additional educational facilities were provided for children under six and English classes for 1,200 adults.¹⁹⁵ A Club adjacent to the school was more than a social centre; crafts were taught and sporting activities were encouraged. The gift of a basket of fruit to each sick refugee child accompanied by a letter signed by Horace Kadoorie, is revealing. Ginsbourg observed: 'one cannot speak too highly of the atmosphere both in the School and the Club. It is hard to believe that they exist exclusively for refugee children'.¹⁹⁶ The SJYA eighteen-day Summer Camp which provided a large variety of activities notably swimming, tennis, badminton, and

¹⁸⁹ *IM*, 16/2/40, p.13.

¹⁹⁰ Ginsbourg, *Refugees*, p.21; 'Candid Photographs' taken at the school in *IM*, 10/3/40, p.10.

¹⁹¹ Margolis to Pilpel, 11/8/41, p.4 and 2/7/41, p.1, No.8, 40137, JDCCA; Zeitin, 'The Shanghai Jewish Communal Association', *Almanac*, pp.50-51; CFA Minutes, 23/4/39, p.3.

¹⁹² Margolis' criticism which seems to imply that the Kadoorie name was appended to money collected from various sources, does not detract from his achievement, Margolis Report, 11/8/41, Letter No.20, No.462, p.4, JDCCA; Laura Margolis, interview by author, New Jersey, 10/8/92; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.390-392.

¹⁹³ 'Jewish Children at Work and Play', *NCH*, 8/5/40, p.213.

¹⁹⁴ H. Kadoorie to Barbash, 7/7/38, JDCCA; the letter-head lists the school's activities; 16 on 29/6/40 and 17 on 13/5/41; At the 'Bamboo Reunion' Chicago September 1992, former pupils of the Kadoorie School signed a scroll in appreciation of Horace Kadoorie. Hirsch, a City Planning Consultant and Professor at an Engineering school, attests to the high standard of the school which produced many professionals, Ralf Hirsch, interview by author, Shanghai, 20/4/94.

¹⁹⁵ CFA to Troper, 14/12/39, p.6. JDCCA, and *IM*, 19/3/40, p.10.

¹⁹⁶ *IM*, 24/3/40, p.2; Ginsbourg, *Shanghae*, p.21; in contrast see Ginsbourg, 'Thousands of Shanghai's German-Jewish Refugees Lead Lives of Disillusionment, Despair', *China Weekly Review*, (Shanghai) 96, No.8 (April 26, 1941) pp.252-253.

cinema shows, attests to the humanitarian efforts of Horace Kadoorie.¹⁹⁷ Jewish children from the host communities were encouraged to participate and to mingle with the European refugees.¹⁹⁸

Fortuitously, being within the perimeter of the Ghetto to which the refugees were assigned in May 1943, the school continued to function during the war. The Kadoories, who were British subjects and therefore enemy aliens, were no longer able to take part in its organisation. They had to pay substantial land taxes even when the school ceased functioning after the defeat of the Japanese when most of the refugees emigrated. The building was rented to a Shanghai Government Organisation until March 1954 when the SJYA was requisitioned by the Government.

The 'Sole Remaining Door' is Closed

Our city has long been a blessed haven for political refugees, and that day would indeed be a black one were the sole remaining door to be closed'.¹⁹⁹

As early as December 1938 when the refugees from Central Europe numbered a mere 1,374, Cornell Franklin, Chairman of the SMC, approached A. J. Alvers, Consul General for Portugal, to help stem the flow of refugees.²⁰⁰ During the first six months of the refugee influx into Shanghai, the governments of the United States, Britain and France and their major Jewish organisations, notably the American Joint and *Hicem-Hias*, tried to convince the German government not to permit the use of its ships, and to persuade the Jewish *Hilfsverein* in Germany to discourage Jewish emigration. The Council for German Jewry in London requested all Jewish organisations in Germany to stop further emigration to Shanghai, at a time when the Axis powers were encouraging resettlement in other countries. Germany maintained pressure to make thousands of Jews leave without visas, while Italy allowed the use

¹⁹⁷ *IM*, 9/6/39, p.12; the average weight gained in eighteen days during the first Summer Camp, probably in June 1939, was 3.3 lbs per child; 'Shanghai Jewish Youth Association Founded February 1937 Its Foundation and a Short History of its Eighteen Activities, 1940'; cited in Kadoorie - Frenkel, film interview, 7/4/89; see also Horace Kadoorie to B.S. Barbash, 7/7/38, *B'nai B'rith* archives, 000039, No. 60.

¹⁹⁸ Horowitz went to Millington and Hungjao camps and made friends she is still in touch with, Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.30.

¹⁹⁹ *IM*, 17/2/39, p.1.

²⁰⁰ Director JDC to Bisgyer, Washington, 27/12/38, G&EC, JDCCA, *NCH*, 15/2/39, p.284, 16/8/39, p.281, 23/8/39, p.325 and 20/10/39, p.146.

of its ports and shipping lines.²⁰¹ The Lloyd Triestino advertised that Shanghai was the only place where refugees could go without any formalities.²⁰²

In fact the Japanese did not close the door to immigration until Sir Victor Sassoon assured them that this had the approval of the Jewish organisations in the United States and Britain.²⁰³ In a meeting with the Japanese Investigating Committee, Yasue, Inuzuka and Ishigura, Sir Victor and Ellis Hayim explained that as all their attempts to stem the flood of refugees had failed, they now relied on the Japanese.²⁰⁴ They gave the assurance that the committee would be satisfied if the influx of refugees 'be restrained somehow or other', and would not be opposed by Jews, because it was beneficial for those already in Shanghai.²⁰⁵ The Japanese in conjunction with the SMC, banned the entry of Jewish refugees and all shipping companies were notified of the new ruling on 14 August 1939.²⁰⁶ Ellis Hayim cabled the London Council for German Jewry which informed the JDC that all emigration from Europe must terminate.²⁰⁷ It is significant that vessels en route, or about to leave, were permitted to land and reside in Japanese occupied territory,²⁰⁸ despite the protests of the Japanese civilians in Hongku against soaring rents, lack of accommodation and fierce competition for jobs caused by the influx of refugees.²⁰⁹ Given that democratic countries denied entry to the refugees, Japan's

²⁰¹ Speelman, Chairman, CFA, 'Report on Jewish Refugee Problem in Shanghai', 21/6/39, No.458, G&EC, JDCCA; The German Gestapo was encouraging such departure.

²⁰² Columbia and the Dominican Republic were also open ports; 'Give Us Lebensraum', cartoon by Sapajou, *NCH*, 27/3/40, p.501.

²⁰³ *NCH*, 5/2/39, p.284, 31/5/39, p.372, 16/8/39, p.280, *IM*, 20/12/40, p.14.

²⁰⁴ M. Speelman, CFA Chairman, 'Report on the Jewish Refugees Problem in Shanghai', 21/6/39, No.458, G&EC, JDCCA.

²⁰⁵ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.268-269.

²⁰⁶ *IM*, 12/9/39, p.25 and 10/11/39, p.11; 'Fate of Refugees in Balance', *NCH*, 24/5/39, p.327, 16/8/39, p.281, and 23/8/39, p.325; CFA to JDCCA, New York, 6/2/41, No. 66, G&EC, JDCCA.

²⁰⁷ Paris, Memorandum, 18/8/39, pp.2-3, JDCCA; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.272.

²⁰⁸ *NCH*, 24/1/40, p.130. The Japanese considered propaganda against any 'Asiatic race' undesirable. A picture of Theodore Hertzl decorated the walls of their headquarters, Confidential Memorandum, No.13, G&EC, JDCCA.

²⁰⁹ *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury*, 7/8/39; *China Press*, 13/4/39; 'Jewish kingdoms are being formed near the Astor House Hotel', *NCH*, 31/5/39, p.372 and 16/8/39, p.280; Report by Prokofiev that Japanese authorities expressed deep concern regarding the continuing influx of Jewish refugees from Europe 'among whom they suspect the presence of communistic elements... North China has been closed to these refugees', SMP, D 5422 (A) SB, 13/12/38; R. Storry, *A History of Modern Japan*, pp.194-195.

humanitarian action was indeed commendable considering the Cultural Agreement of November 1938 between Germany and Japan.²¹⁰

The role played by Sassoon and Hayim, acting as spokesmen for World Jewry and the foreign community in Shanghai, in calling a halt to immigration left Shanghai Sephardim open to criticism from the Central European Refugees, in particular those whose families were still in Europe.²¹¹ Margolis too, was critical of the endeavours of the Sephardim.²¹² She found it difficult to cope with the individualism of Hayim, Sassoon and the Kadoories, and noted the proliferation of committees, with each Chairman making decisions entirely by himself. In fact the title 'Chairman' did not mean that there was a committee.²¹³ 'Co-ordinating the work was an unheard of thing'.²¹⁴ These criticisms must be seen in context, for whatever was achieved was done in deteriorating economic circumstances.²¹⁵ These taipans, who were not professionally trained social workers, ran charities as they ran their businesses. It was the only way they knew. Margolis' expectations of charities run on Western

²¹⁰ Jewish refugees were not permitted to disembark even temporarily in Bombay, *Peking Chronicle*, 13/9/39; *NCH*, 31/5/39, p.372. There were compelling pragmatic reasons too. Japanese ultra-nationalists, were determined to use influential Jews to attract American capital for her New Order in Asia, Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.235; Kranzler, 'Japanese policy towards the Jews, 1938-1941', *The Japan Interpreter*, Vol. XI, No.4. Spring 1977, pp.493-527; Kranzler, 'How Japan Saved Jews from Hitler: Tokyo Really Believed They Controlled the World's Banks', *Washington Post*, November 14, 1982, p.C-5; Shatzkes, *op. cit.*, pp.24-29.

²¹¹ Jewish community leaders had recommended that immigration be limited to 'allow only a few desirable from time to time', Press clippings, SMP, Files, Box 43P, and SMP, D5422, report 23/5/40.

²¹² Margolis to Pilpel, 5/11/41, No.29, G&EC, JDCCA. She noted the absence of a real Jewish community in the Western sense, and of a group with no social consciousness or feeling of responsibility towards the community, Margolis, 'Report of Activities in Shanghai, from 8 October 1941 to September 1943', p.1, JDCCA; Margolis, interview by author, New Jersey, 10/8/92; Yehuda Bauer, 'Shanghai', Chapter in *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1939-1945*, (Detroit, 1981), pp.302-316.

²¹³ The exception was Abraham; 'not Chairman of anything', Margolis Report, No.462, p.4, JDCCA; Ellis Hayim 'decides yes or no, on an entirely personal basis', Margolis Report, No. 462, p.5, JDCCA; 'Sir V. does not like Committees', Margolis to Pilpel, 10/9/41, No.21, G&EC, JDCCA.

²¹⁴ Report of the CFA to Troper, 14/12/39, JDCCA. Hayim, [Chairman] D.E.J and R.D Abrahams, H. Kadoorie were prominent in the Public Relations Committee; Margolis, Report, 8 October 1941 to September 1943, p.23; T. Robertson, D.C. (Special Branch) to Commissioner, 6/7/39, 'It was unfortunate that prominent local members of the Jewish community could not work together in relief matters', SMP, D.5422 (A) Secret.

²¹⁵ Margolis to Speelman, 17/10/41, p.2 and Margolis, Report p.6, No. 462, JDCCA. She arrived in Shanghai in May 1941, by which time the Sephardi community had dissipated its resources. Heppner, *op. cit.*, p.12, cites Margolis, 'Report of Activities in Shanghai, China from December 8, 1941 to September 1943', p.4. Heppner agreed that his comment 'on one occasion, the leaders [D.E.J. Abraham] of the Shanghai Sephardic community stated since the Japanese took Shanghai they could also worry about the refugees', taken out of context is misleading, Heppner, interview by author, Harvard, 18/8/92. There were unquestionably very significant reasons for Abraham's apparent *volte face*. Captain Inuzuka, the head of the Japanese Investigating Committee, was 'terribly antagonistic' towards Hayim and Abraham, Margolis, Report p.2, JDCCA. See also Inuzuka, 'Japanese Policy towards the Jews' in the 'Secret History of Japanese Jewish Policy', *Jiyu Magazine*, February 1973.

models was unrealistic in war-torn Shanghai where the Sephardim still played an instrumental role in relief work.²¹⁶

Whether or not the Shanghai Sephardim did enough for the refugees is a moot point. A retrospective assessment of their role is made more difficult by what has become known as the Holocaust. The great democracies of Britain and America, to whom other countries looked to set the moral tone, had quotas to regulate the numbers of refugees.²¹⁷ Their policy had the support of leading Jewish organisations in the West.²¹⁸ Even today, the reluctance of all countries to allow unlimited immigration of refugees from Vietnam and Yugoslavia, for example, highlights some of the complex issues involved. And yet a policy of unlimited immigration was what the refugees seem to have expected of Shanghai the 'City of Refuge', already bursting at the seams with the tidal waves of destitute Chinese, Russian, Austrian, Czech, German, and Polish refugees, all seeking asylum.²¹⁹

What does emerge is the strong solidarity of the Sephardim with other Jews despite the reversals in their financial circumstances. There might have been justifiable criticism in the organisation of relief work, but this has to be seen in the context of both refugees and non-refugees being in a survival situation.²²⁰ Without a tradition of co-ordinating their efforts, without professional qualifications for handling an overwhelming refugee problem into which they were plunged without warning, they nevertheless identified with the victims of Nazi persecution on the basis of their common Jewishness. According to their own estimation, at that time, they believed they had acquitted themselves creditably.²²¹

²¹⁶ Margolis to Pilpel, 11/6/41, No.8, 40137, G&EC, JDCCA. It would have done little for the egos of these taipans of prestigious business firms to play a subservient role to a woman; a rare phenomenon in the East.

²¹⁷ See Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust 1933-1945*, (Sydney, 1986).

²¹⁸ J.C. Hyman, Executive Director AJDC, to Maurice Bisgyer, 27/12/38, *B'nai B'rith* archive, [no reference number given].

²¹⁹ 'In the sight of the 5000 needy refugees, the achievement of providing a living for 1000 may not look a great accomplishment, but hats have to be taken off to the refugee committees', John Ahlers, *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*, 15/4/39.

²²⁰ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.141. Under these circumstances the only fair evaluation of their work was in terms of survival rate, rather than quality of life, Ginsbourg, 'Fall of the World's Last Ghetto', pp.398-401.

²²¹ 'City's excellent response', *IM*, 20/1/39, p.12; 'Fine Spirit Shown', *IM*, 17/2/39, p.6.

Conclusion

Although there were traces of xenophobia in each foreign community, Shanghai was too cosmopolitan and amorphous a society to be imbued with strong feelings of anti-Semitism. The foreign community generally was not hostile towards the Jews despite boundaries of religion and culture. No anti-Semitism appears to have been encountered in the British style schools. The general consensus among the fourth generation is that they were unaware of its presence in Shanghai. It is likely, however, that after 1933 Hitler's anti-Semitic measures made a strong impact on the Jewish consciousness of third generation Shanghai Sephardim, particularly as the victims of Nazi persecution found refuge in Shanghai.²²² In the face of this external threat the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities were finally drawn together in Shanghai.²²³

The general picture of Shanghai Jewry from the turn of the century was one of heightened cultural and socio-economic cleavages brought about by waves of immigrants. There was little in common between the newly Anglicised Sephardim and the unskilled, impoverished Russian immigrants who streamed into the Settlement from 1895, or with the mass influx, from 1933 to early 1940, of the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. Inevitably there were tensions between the different groups. The Ashkenazi immigrants made the Sephardim more conscious of, and determined to preserve, their distinctive Baghdadi identity. This did not, however, prevent them from making their facilities available to the Ashkenazim. They funded the education of many of their children in the Shanghai Jewish School and later in the Kadoorie School. The generosity of many Sephardim contributed to the settlement of the first wave of immigrants from Russia mainly into the poorer districts of the French Concession.²²⁴ The second wave of over eighteen thousand refugees from Nazi Germany posed far greater problems because the flow remained unabated throughout the Japanese occupation when Shanghai was cut off from its hinterland, and its trade was at a virtual standstill. Nevertheless the Sephardim did what they could to provide food, shelter, health care, private financial assistance and religious facilities.

²²² Compare Kokosalakis, p.37.

²²³ Michael A. Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, (New York, 1968), p.33; M. Deutsch, *The Resolution of Conflict*, (New Haven, 1991), pp.62-89.

²²⁴ Jacoby, interview by author, Jerusalem, 6/3/92.

This chapter has focused on the participation of the Shanghai Sephardi community in mitigating the pitiful plight of their Ashkenazi co-religionists. The fascinating outcome was the way in which they were galvanised into action to deal with the situation. The proliferation of committees which were not run democratically, suggests that they still found it hard to work together and each carved out his own preserve. Given the generally dispassionate response of Western Jewry to Shanghai Jewry's *cri de coeur* during the Sino-Japanese hostilities of 1937, their solidarity with the refugees from Central Europe appears even more remarkable. But the Sephardim did fear that the mass influx of Jewish refugees in the Settlement would provoke the censure of the indigenous community, outnumbered by twenty-five to one. The acumen of the prominent families such as the Sassoons, Kadoories, Hayeems and Abrahams, enabled them to make the most of the meagre resources available; notably the Kadoorie school, the Sassoon Rehabilitation Fund, and religious provision. Although succour fell far short of the refugees' needs, this was a circumstance for which the Sephardim could not take full responsibility.²²⁵

²²⁵ George Leonof, 'Jewish Refugees Here Facing Lean Future', *China Press*, April 14, 1939, pp.1, 3.

Epilogue: A Dispersed Community

We who had come from the oldest distinct diaspora saw all our history washed away in the blink of an eye... Was our brief century in China to be relegated to a footnote in history...?¹

Shanghai changed beyond recognition with the outbreak of the Pacific war in December 1941. The Japanese administration superimposed on the Jewish identity of Shanghai Sephardim a political identity, which had a crucial bearing on their lives.² British and American subjects, labelled 'first-class enemy nationals', were confined in internment camps.³ Iraqi subjects, considered second-class enemy nationals, were not interned but faced very difficult conditions. The large number of Sephardim employed in British and American firms lost their jobs or were obliged to work under Japanese management.⁴ Notices posted at the entrances of Sephardi homes stated the property was owned by the Emperor of Japan. Their assets were confiscated, it became impossible to conduct private business, and with their bank accounts virtually frozen, many Sephardim were reduced to living on loans from Russian and Swiss associates.⁵ Others survived by selling their personal possessions. Out of the three hundred and seventy members of the Sephardi Community, two hundred and ten persons received financial aid from the Committee.⁶ Many people suffered from malnutrition. Their movements within the city were restricted and there was a curfew at night. The SJS continued to function and synagogue services were held in small chambers in the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue; the main synagogue was

¹ Horowitz, 'Growing Up in Shanghai', Harvard Symposium, 18/10/92.

² Foreign Minister Arita on 28/2/39 reiterated part of the resolution passed at the Five Ministers' Conference on December 1938, that the Jews will receive no discrimination... they won't be excluded because of race and will be treated as all other foreigners', *Japanese Advertiser*, 28/2/39. Even when there was a shift during the Pacific War to a policy that ranged between neutrality and definite anti-Semitism it never approached the extremism of Nazi Germany, Shatzkes, *op. cit.*, p.26.

³ Kranzler, *op. cit.*, pp.255-256. There were about 450 Sephardim who were either stateless or were Iraqi nationals. Some 340 families were British, French or American nationals. Ya'acov's estimates seem reliable as he served as secretary to the SJCA during World War II. Ya'acov, interview by author, Jerusalem, 12/4/92.

⁴ Fritz Kauffmann, 'The Experiences of the Shanghai Jewish Community under the Japanese in World War 11', manuscript of a speech delivered on 12/2/63 to the Shanghai Tiffin Club, New York.

⁵ Russians in Shanghai were not regarded as enemy aliens because of the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1929. Jordan to Skorneck, AJDC Far Eastern Representative, 16/8/1848, JDCCA.

⁶ M.E. Dangoor, President [April 1942-May 1946], Sephardic Jewish Community, to its members, September 1945, p.2. The letter-head 'Sephardic Jewish Community' is notable, previously it was 'Sephardi'. The Committee comprised M. E. Dangoor, S. I. Jacob, Theodore and Arthur Sopher.

used only for special occasions. Football games, music and bridge circles, and amateur dramatics preserved some sense of normality and cohesion of the Sephardi community.⁷

In several ways the plight of Iraqi nationals appeared to be worse than that of their co-religionists in some internment camps, where international conventions ensured a measure of security and where there were regular rations of food and clothing supervised by the Red Cross. Recreation in the form of drama circles, youth groups, Boy Scouts and other activities mushroomed in some camps.

The International Settlement and French Concessions came to an end in January 1943, when Britain, America and later France abrogated their extraterritorial rights to Chiang Kaishek, who soon after VJ-Day in 1945 took over control of the city.⁸ Shanghai emerged from the Second World War with its population doubled to six million by the influx of refugees. The economy was weakened, due to the gap between sources of supply and markets, and there was severe inflation. The economic crisis intensified even before the onset of the civil war between the GMD and Communists, and conditions worsened as the war turned against the former.⁹

In 1948 and early 1949 fears of a Communist takeover precipitated a mass exodus of Shanghai Jews to the newly founded state of Israel, where about half of the community eventually settled.¹⁰ Others emigrated to Australia, Hongkong, the Philippines, America, Canada and Britain.¹¹ Those who had applications for entry permits 'in abeyance', awaited the takeover of the Communists in 1949 with resignation. Their resources dwindled and many became dependent on Jewish

⁷ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p.4.

⁸ W.R.Fishel, *The End of Extraterritoriality in China*, Berkeley, 1952; M. E.Dangoor, 'War-End Message to the Community: Sephardic Community, Shanghai, September 1945', *The Scribe: Journal of Babylonian Jewry*, (London), October 1986, p.5.

⁹ Excellent descriptions of this period are to be found in Noel Barber, *The Fall of Shanghai; The Communist Takeover in 1949*, (London, 1979), particularly pp.16-17; A. Doak Barnett, *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover*, (New York, 1961); Paolo Alberto Rossi, Italian Consul General at Shanghai [1948-1952], *The Communist Conquest of Shanghai A Warning to the West*, Introduction and Epilogue by Anthony Kubek, (Arlington, 1970); Lucian Taire, *Shanghai Episode: The End of Western Commerce in Shanghai 1949-1951*, (Hong Kong, 1958).

¹⁰ Dalia Ofer, 'The Israeli Government and Jewish Organisations: The Case of the Immigration of Jews from Shanghai', *Studies in Zionism*, (Tel Aviv) 11, No. 1, (Spring 1990), pp.67-80.

¹¹ There were about 200 Sephardim, 1,000 Ashkenazim, 'Shanghai Report', for the attention of Dr. Joseph Schwartz, 7/10/49, JDCCA; A good account of the economic situation in *American Jewish Yearbook for Hebrew Year 5702* [1942]. pp. 481-477, and Ernest Strauss, 'The Far East', pp.455; Josef Silverstein and Lynn Silverstein, 'David Marshall and Jewish Emigration from China', *China Quarterly*, London, 75 (September 1978): 647-654.

charitable institutions.¹² Several who stayed on, in the hope that their businesses would become viable again, soon realised that it was impossible to continue their lives in Shanghai under Mao's Communist régime.

Ezekiel, son of Reuben Abraham, was the leader of the steadily shrinking Sephardi community and the exodus was reflected in every sphere; personal, religious, economic and social.¹³ The Council of the Jewish community, [hereafter CJC] emphasised the need to teach *Ivrit* [modern Hebrew] and continued to pay for the tuition and transport to school of seven pupils. It became increasingly difficult to maintain regular classes for Jewish instruction because of the dwindling numbers; only a handful of pupils were registered at the end of 1950. When the SJS closed its doors on 19 June 1951, the CJC funded the education of Jewish students at the British school. 'Never in the history of the Jews of Shanghai was a Jewish child left without an education due to the negligence of the Jewish community'.¹⁴ For the most part the rents for the SJS and the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue were absorbed in taxes and were of no benefit to the CJC.¹⁵

There was 'very close co-operation' between the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities by this time. The Ashkenazi Association provided chambers at their 'New Synagogue' for a Sephardi place of worship.¹⁶ Services, conducted mainly by Moses Cohen on a voluntary basis, were maintained on Sabbath and Festivals [until at least 1959]. All religious problems were referred to Rabbi Pischik, of the Ashkenazi community. *Matzoth* were baked locally under the supervision of the

¹² *American Jewish Year Book 1947*, pp.481-482.

¹³ 'The Council of the Jewish Community', No. 470, [undated], JDCCA; Kranzler, *op. cit.*, p.580. The community 'sustained an irreparable loss' of its benefactors, D.E.J. Abraham, Sir Elly Kadoorie and R. M. Joseph, A.J. Hayim, Ellis Joseph, I.A. Toeg, Arthur and Theodore Sopher, S. Sudka, G. Raymond and S.J. Moallem, took over the organisation of the community.

¹⁴ Horowitz, correspondence, 20/10/93, CJC Report, June 1953, by R.D. Abraham, Chairman, p.2. In 1953 there were only five Jewish school-children in Shanghai. After the war Sir Victor Sassoon contributed \$5,000 to a scholarship fund and Hayim \$1,000. The Kadoories continued their financial support. Jordan to Skorneck, 16/8/48 and 21/9/48, 85437, G&EC, JDCCA.

¹⁵ Reuben Abraham to Glassgold, 26/11/51, G&EC., JDCCA; 20,000 yen, was anticipated for the sale of the *Beth Aharon*. The CJC considered it inadvisable to sell at prices less than ten percent of their value. Torah scrolls and religious and secular books were shipped to Israel. Communal property was ceded to the government of Israel, but never officially transferred, CJC Report, July 1955, p.10.

¹⁶ Before the end of the war the two Sephardi synagogues were taken over by the Japanese Military Authorities and were used to store ammunition. In the Ashkenazi hospital quarters were housed all the teak benches and chairs of the *Ohel Rachel* Synagogue, M.E. Dangoor, Sephardic Jewish Community, to its members, September 1945.

Ashkenazi Communal Association, and were distributed free to the needy Jews. The Sephardim organised *Shehita* for the combined communities.¹⁷

There were four hundred and four Jews in Shanghai in June 1953;¹⁸ some two hundred and seventy Ashkenazi were members of the Ashkenazi Communal Association, [SAJCA], compared to about six hundred the previous year. There were only sixty-seven members of the SJCA.¹⁹ The SJCA was responsible for the maintenance of the property of the SJS, *Ohel Rachel* and *Beth Aharon* Synagogues and the cemeteries at Mohawk Road and Baikal Road.²⁰ In July 1955 the membership of the SJCA dwindled to thirty-eight persons and, with the departure of S. R. Toeg, the council lost one of its most active members.²¹ By July 1956 both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewish communal associations had transferred the management of their properties and internal affairs to the office of the CJC.²²

In the post-war period all foreigners in China were classified as 'foreign entrepreneurs', with its connotations of 'despised imperialist parasites'. This meant that the position of the Sephardim in Shanghai became untenable and they were forced to leave, as refugees, the City of Refuge.²³

¹⁷ Report of the CJC, July 1955 by R. Abraham, pp.10-11. After the departure of Moshe Reubain Baroukh, the professional *shohet* of poultry, his duties were performed voluntarily by Isaiah Cohen from May to December 1951, and then by Ezekiel Abraham.

¹⁸ Report of the CJC, June 1953, by R. Abraham, pp.10-15.

¹⁹ Ezekiel Abraham, Chairman, S.Toeg, Hon. Secretary, and C. Moses, Hon. Treasurer.

²⁰ The Baikal Road cemetery, founded in 1917, consisted of 1,692 graves. It was moved to a new site some 15 kilometres from the city limit from September to December 1958; CJC Report by P. Yudalevich, Chairman, July 1959, pp.11-12.

²¹ The committee comprised Ezekiel Abraham and S.M. Perry. Report of the CJC Shanghai July 1954 -June 1955 and Statements of Accounts 1952-1953. Probably the last Sephardim to serve on the committee were E. S. Hardoon, Hon. Treasurer and G. Raymond. Report by P. Yudalevich, Chairman of CJC July, 1958 - June, 1959.

²² The numbers were drastically reduced by 1956, 'Blanket visa for Israel', AJDC Report, 4/10/56, JDCCA; the Abrahams reported that they were able to get the Jews out with China's consent, C. Leslie Hale to Barnett Janner, 14/9/56, BDBJ, ACC3121 C11/13/9; Report No. 474, p.3, JDDCA.

²³ Maxwell Brem, 'End of an Era in China', *JC*, April 7, 1967, p.28.

Identity

The question of identity of the Shanghai Sephardim is the mainspring of this thesis and it is possible to assess this on three levels; the Jewish, Baghdadi, and Sephardi. The first two aspects were taken into account by David Solomon Sassoon when he predicted:

...Spiritually and religiously they remained dependent on the teaching and tradition of Baghdad, although politically and economically they became independent. Yet the wealth gathered, and the good fortune experienced in the new countries, did not make them forget the 'Rivers of Babylon.'²⁴

Initially, Jews who emigrated from Baghdad to the East were easily identifiable by external signs - the manner of their dress, their names, and language. The pioneer-employees of David Sassoon not only worked together, they socialised within their own community, and scrupulously preserved their liturgy and *minhagim*, 'spiritually and religiously they remained dependent on the teaching and tradition of Baghdad'.²⁵

By the turn of the century, Baghdadi Jewish settlers in Shanghai no longer wished to be conspicuously Oriental as the majority of the upper and middle classes had become acculturated to the British. With a few exceptions among the poor and the elderly, Baghdadi garb was discarded in favour of fashionable Western attire, their first names were Anglicised, and their mother tongue was English. By the 1920s Hebrew and Chinese took precedence over learning the language of their forebears, even though this impeded communication between the younger and older generations. Personal correspondence in Judeo-Arabic continued into the late 1930s in some instances, but it was no longer used in commercial correspondence. This had previously restricted Sephardi firms to employing Baghdadi Jews. Biblical Hebrew was kept alive by synagogue usage in the SJS, and by private tuition, thus preserving both Jewish and Baghdadi identities. The gradual weakening of the external signs of Baghdadi identity on a personal level is clear from the discussions on traditions and communal associations.

²⁴ David Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p.203.

²⁵ Sassoon, *op. cit.*, p.203.

On a communal level no clear pattern in Baghdadi identity emerged with time. On the one hand, Baghdadi authorities ceased to be consulted on religious questions by the late 1920s because they were superseded by the Chief Rabbinate of Britain, and Haham Gaster, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi.²⁶ Baghdad was no longer regarded as the religious centre of Baghdadi Jews, partly because of an exodus of Baghdadi rabbis to *Eretz Yisrael*. There also remained few Sephardim in Shanghai who could write in correct Hebrew or who had sufficient knowledge of *Talmudic* and *Mishnaic* studies to be able understand and appreciate their *Responsa*.

On the other hand, it is clear from the discussion on traditions that no intrinsic change was made in the Baghdadian form of synagogue services. Baghdadi traditions connected with the festivals and the *rites de passage* remained unchanged. Wedding celebrations marked by Western styles in clothes, dancing and music, were superficial changes. The essentials, the consecration of the marriage vows according to the Law of Moses, the *ketubah*, the *sheva berakoth*, were unaltered. The involvement of almost the entire community in each wedding, the type of food served, the conversation and typical jokes at receptions, lent a specific Baghdadi ambience.²⁷

Throughout the period of its existence, the community as a whole considered themselves to be observant Jews. Yet there is evidence of a weakening of both Jewish and Baghdadi identities among those who were influenced by social ambition and economic competition to break away from Jewish law; particularly dietary laws which could have restrained social activity with non-Jews, and the Sabbath prohibition of business transactions. This is explored in the discussion on tradition. The benefits of British nationality cannot be understated in appreciating the patriotism of the Sephardi Jews of Shanghai. This did not conflict with their fundamental religious belief or a sentimental attachment to their country of origin. Even the most assimilated among the Sephardi millionaires, Sir Victor Sassoon, the Kadoories and Ellis Hayim, expressed their Baghdadi and Jewish identities in their links with the community, their support of Jewish charities and institutions, and the time and money they gave freely to the SJS. Their commitment to alleviating the plight of the

²⁶ Baghdadi Jews who settled in Britain also affiliated with Gaster and regarded themselves as Sephardim. Sir Edward Albert Sassoon was President of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Congregation, London.

²⁷ This was evident even at the last wedding in the *Ohel Rachel* synagogue, of Isaiah Cohen to Florrie Isaacs held on 23 January 1951. See illustration p.94 for their Jewish, Chinese and British marriage certificates.

refugees from Nazi Europe was *inter alia* an expression of the strength of their Jewish identity.

The third dimension of identity with which this study is concerned is 'Sephardi'. This could not have been anticipated by David Sassoon as it was a label of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when it was adopted by Jews of Middle Eastern origin. The establishment of a dual Ashkenazi-Sephardi Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem after World War I gave official sanction to the affiliation of the oriental communities with the Sephardim. The discussion on identity and nationality shows the importance to the community of a pathway to European status and the benefits conferred by being identified as Sephardim.

As Sephardim, the host community in Shanghai saw itself as being socially, culturally and economically distinct from, and superior to, the Russian Jews. They also considered themselves to be more religiously observant. Separate communal associations were maintained and there was little contact between them. The SJS, which by the 1920s became predominantly Ashkenazi, dissolved the barriers between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi youth. Although by the 1930s intramarriage became accepted, in many cases Sephardi identity expressed through ritual, the *rites de passage* and the celebration of festivals, dominated in families.²⁸ This is confirmed in the discussions on intermarriage and on the Jewish refugees in Shanghai.

The appointment of Ashkenazi religious leaders in 1921 and 1932 might suggest the vulnerability of Baghdadi and Sephardi identities in the community. This is belied by the continuing tension between the religious leaders and the congregants. The majority of Sephardim were not prepared to be guided by Rabbi Hirsch and traditionalists remained critical of Rev. Brown despite his flexibility. The evidence in the discussion on the Rabbinate suggests that they were employed primarily because the community required an English speaking religious leader who would act as a competent spokesman in the wider community and so enhance their status. Prayer books with English translation alongside the Hebrew, used in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogues of Bevis Marks and Lauderdale Road in London, were used in the Sephardi synagogues in Shanghai. As the form of service continued to conform

²⁸ For example in Isaac Abraham's family, three of the brothers are now Sephardi Rabbis.

to the Baghdadi and Sephardi traditions it is clear that in this respect their identity remained intact. Adjuncts of a sermon, choir, and a few Ashkenazi melodies were peripheral to mainstream observance and tradition.

The identity of Shanghai Sephardim was put to the test when the legal opium trade came into disrepute, and stigma was attached to the whole community. The crisis, precipitated widely in China and Great Britain, resulted in unified defensive reaction among Shanghai Sephardim, as explained in the discussion on their mercantile endeavours. On a more positive level, the community as a whole was proud to be at the forefront of economic development in Shanghai, not least the building enterprise, which impressed foreigners in the Settlement. Shared pride in 'Sephardi' achievements reinforced their solidarity.

The opium trade was carried out at the same time as trade in a wide variety of commodities as discussed in the chapters on the pioneers and on opium. Even when the Sephardi community was conspicuously involved in investment in real-estate in Shanghai, the majority of its members were still merchants. This was the object of the training provided by the Sassoon firms and was reinforced by the curriculum of the Shanghai Jewish School. The fact that members of extended families tended to go into family businesses maintained the essential mercantile character of the Sephardi community's economic activities.

Zionism heightened Sephardi awareness in a unique way. A belief that the Zionist authorities were discriminating against them strengthened their sense of identity. The community was proud to be identified with the Garden City scheme in *Eretz Yisrael* visualised by Elly Kadoorie. When it was rejected, and the Zionist administration itself was questioned by Kadoorie, the majority in the community seemed prepared to adopt a cynical attitude. This is a rare example of Zionism withering on the vine.

The evidence as a whole points to an erosion of the external signs of Baghdadi identity on a personal level, while a fundamental and sentimental attachment was retained. The majority of respondents interviewed, among them several who had married Ashkenazim and were not strictly observant Jews, rejected any suggestion that they had lost their Baghdadi identity in Shanghai. They maintained, rather, that this was continually reaffirmed through kinship, residence in close proximity to each

other, close social and business contact, involvement in contentious community issues, and in synagogue attendance.²⁹ On a communal level the pattern is chequered. The liturgy and *minhagim* remained unchanged but the Rabbinate of Baghdad were rarely consulted on matters of Jewish Law. Sephardi identity remained firm and was reinforced by shared pride in the economic development of Shanghai. There were external pressures which heightened an awareness of Sephardi identity, such as the Ashkenazi presence in Shanghai, stigma attached to the opium trade when it fell into disrepute, and the negative factors presented by Zionism. The appointment of Ashkenazi religious leaders did nothing to diminish the Sephardi identity of the community.

Above all, and most evident in times of crisis, such as the influx of refugees into the city, their Jewish identity remained generally firm. There were very few who dissociated themselves from the community even though there was some weakening in the observance of particular Jewish laws by the non-traditionalists. Rabbi Hirsch's warnings that Shanghai Sephardim would share the same fate as the Kaifeng Jews proved to be unfounded. As Hirsch himself observed, they had 'bridged with many connections and associations' the vast distance that divided them from other Jewish communities. 'You joyed and sorrowed with the rest... saved yourself from isolation, the greatest danger that can befall a community'.³⁰ Assimilation with the host community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was highly improbable in the Foreign Concessions. Acculturation to the British caused erosion of the external manifestations of Baghdadi identity as the cultural boundaries weakened in interaction with a tolerant wider society, with an absence of political and economic constraints.

The question of Baghdadi and Jewish identity is encapsulated in David Sassoon's belief that 'spiritually and religiously they would remain dependent on the teaching and tradition of Baghdad'. This belief was partially realised, and is as much as could be expected of any community which grows and develops and responds to challenges both from within and from outside. The general conclusion is that the

²⁹ When put to the test, solidarity of the community was firmly based as illustrated in the Lincheng Incident, Chap. 5.

³⁰ *IM*, 29/10/1920, p.41.

weakening of Baghdadi ties in some respects does not signify total withdrawal from them in time. The community did not altogether 'forget the Rivers of Babylon'.³¹ The interesting development for identity after David Sassoon's time was the Sephardi dimension which became increasingly important, given the situation in which the community found itself both locally and abroad. They came to be known as 'Shanghai Sephardim', were proud to be known as such, and did what they could to maintain the integrity of this group.

The history of the Sephardi community in Shanghai is yet another demonstration of the flexibility achieved by so many Jewish communities all over the world and through the ages which, although they adapted to vastly different host societies, remained faithful to their essential beliefs and values.

³¹ 'We were tremendously proud of our ancestry, ancient culture and traditions and justifiably so...Other Judeo-Arabic speakers refer to us as Baghdadi, while we term ourselves 'Babli' [Babylonian], there lies a vast difference', Horowitz correspondence with author, 20/10/93. Even today traditionalists among Shanghai Sephardim now scattered worldwide worship in synagogues that observe the Baghdadi *minhagim*, and in their homes Baghdadian traditions and customs are strictly adhered to.

Glossary

Bar Mitzvah: בר מצוה: Lit. Son of the commandment. The status arrived at by a Jewish boy on his thirteenth birthday.

Be-Kabod: כבוד: Honour.

Ben ba lanu: בן בא לנו: Unto us a son is come. Refrain of a popular circumcision song.

Bene Israel: בני ישראל: Sons of Israel.

Beth Din: בית דין: Jewish religious or civil court of law.

Beth El: בית א-ל: House of God.

Beth Hakeneset: בית הכנסת: Synagogue.

Beth Hamidrash: בית המדרש: House of *Torah* study.

Beth Tefillah: בית תפילה: House of prayer.

Brith Milah:: ברית מילה: The covenant of circumcision performed on a male Jewish infant when he is eight days old. Its full significance as a symbol of dedication to the Jewish way of life is emphasised at the climax of the ceremony when the child is named.

Chazak u-baruch: חזק וברוך: Lit. Be strong and blessed. In common usage, 'Well done' or 'Congratulations'.

Eretz- Yisrael: ארץ ישראל: Land of Israel. Used in the Bible to refer to the Holy Land.

Erusin: אירוסין: Betrothal.

Galut: גלות: Exile.

Geonim: גאונים: Religious leaders of Babylonian Jewry in the seventh to eleventh centuries.

Get: גט: A writ of divorce with the text strictly prescribed by Jewish law. According to Jewish law, a civil divorce alone does not allow a wife to remarry unless she has also received a *get* from her former husband.

Habdala: הברלה: Lit. separation. The closing ceremony of Sabbath and Festivals, marking a separation between holy days and the rest of the week.

Hakham: חכם: Learned man: (pl. Hakhamim, חכמים) Lit. wise. Title used by Sephardi and Oriental Jews for a Rabbi.

Halakha: הלכה: Corpus of written and oral Jewish law; the ethical and ritual norms which have defined Jewish practice since the establishment of the Rabbinic academy at Yavneh following the destruction of the Second Temple.

Hallel: הלל: Hymns of praise recited on the first day of each month and on Festivals.

Halutzim: חלוצים: Lit. pioneers, groups of young Jews who emigrated to Palestine to rebuild the Jewish national homeland.

Haman: המן: Viceroy of Persia, at the time of Queen Esther, who plotted the destruction of the Jews. His name has come to symbolise those who follow his example.

Hameen: חמין: Traditional Sephardi dish left cooking on a low, covered flame from Friday, and eaten on the Sabbath when no cooking is permitted.

Hanukkah: חנוכה: Lit. dedication. The Feast of Dedication; also The 'Feast of Lights'. Traditionally celebrated by the lighting of an eight branched candelabra. It commemorates the defeat of the armies of the Seleucid despot Antiochus IV by a small band of dedicated Jews, under the leadership of the Hasmonean priest Mattathias and his son Judah the Maccabee, and is observed for eight days beginning on the 25th of the Jewish month of *Kislev*.

Hanukkath ha bait: חנוכת הבית: Lit. Dedication of the house. A house warming party with religious connotations.

Haphtarah: הפטרה: Reading from the prophets following the *Torah* on Sabbath and Festivals.

Hatikvah: התקווה: Lit. The Hope; Israel's national anthem.

Hazan: חזן: Reader, official in synagogue who leads worshippers in prayer.

Hazanuth: חזנות: Ceremonial singing by a *hazan*.

Hekhal: היכל: Also known as *Aron ha-Kodesh* ארון הקודש: An ark or small room in which the *Sifrei Torah* are housed. The door is covered with a *paroketh*, [silk or velvet curtain].

Herem: חרם: The ban of excommunication which originated as an ecclesiastical instrument of discipline with Ezra the Scribe during the fifth century B.C.

Hevra Kadisha: חברה קדישה: Lit. Holy group. Organised voluntary body responsible for preparing the dead for funerals. They were considered holy because the recipient of their services could not repay them.

Kaddish: קדיש: Part of the synagogue liturgy and mourner's prayer.

Kahal: קהל: Congregation.

Kasher: כשר: Kosher Lit. 'fit' or 'in proper condition'. Designation for ritually acceptable things especially food permitted to be used in accordance with Jewish dietary laws.

Kashrut: כשרות: The Dietary laws.

Keren Hayesod: קרן היסוד: Palestine Restoration Fund (later Palestine Foundation Fund); organised in 1920 to develop the Jewish national home by funding agricultural settlement, industry and other immigrant projects and institutions.

Keren Keyemet l'Israel: קרן קימת לישראל: Jewish National Fund; instrument of world Jewry founded in 1901 to purchase and develop land in Palestine on behalf of the Jewish people.

Ketuba: כתובה: Marriage certificate outlining the bride's rights in the event of divorce or of her husband's demise.

Kiddush: קידוש: Lit. sanctification. Blessings recited over wine at the start of Sabbath or festival meal. Also wine for religious use.

Kiddushin: קידושין: Marriage ceremony.

Kippah: כיפה: (pl. *Kippoth* כִּיפּוֹת), Skull-cap.

Kisae Eliyahu: כסא אליהו: Eliyahu's chair: Eliyahu, witness of the Covenant is believed to attend every circumcision and therefore a chair is set aside for him.

Kol Israel: כל ישראל: Lit. Everyone of Israel: the Jewish people.

Kol Nidre: כל נדרים: Lit. All vows; the opening words of the Aramaic formula read on the eve of *Yom Kippur* which annuls unfulfilled religious vows of the previous year.

Komah: קומה: The honour given when a congregant is called up to the reading of *Torah*. It is the Judeo-Arabic equivalent of *aliyah*, עליה: (pl. *aliyoth* עֲלִיּוֹת), which is rarely used among Baghdadi Jews.

Lulav and Ethrog: לולב ואתרוג: Date-palm frond and citron; symbolising the spine and the heart, the central ritual objects of *Succoth*, the Feast of Ingathering, to express gratitude for the year's bounty.

Maftir: מפטיר: The last portion of the weekly reading of the *Torah*.

Malkuth Hain: מלכות חן: A kingdom of grace.

Matzah: מצה: (pl. *Matzoth* מַצּוֹת): Unleavened bread.

Mazzal Tob (or *Tov*): מזל טוב: Good luck and congratulations. **Siman Tob:** סימן טוב: the alternative greeting for the birth of a son among Baghdadi Jews.

Megillah: מגילה: Scroll. There are five *megillot* in the Scriptures.

Mezuza: מזוזה: (pl. *Mezuzoth* מְזוּזוֹת): Lit. door-post. Scriptural texts, (traditionally *Deuteronomy*: 6:4-9 and 11:13-21), placed in a small case and affixed to the door post.

Mikveh: מִיקְוֵה: Pool of rain water maintained by a Jewish community, for ritual purification as required by Jewish law.

Minha: מִנְחָה: Afternoon service.

Minhag: מִנְהַג: Custom (pl. *minhagim*: מִנְהָגִים).

Minyan: מִנְיָן: Minimum number of ten Jewish males above the age of thirteen required for congregational prayers.

Mi sheberakh: מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ: Lit. He who blessed; beginning of blessing for anyone giving a voluntary contribution. It has now become a way of indicating that someone has made a contribution.

Mishpat: מִשְׁפָּט: Jewish civil law.

Mitzvah: מִצְוָה: (pl. *mitzvot*: מִצְוֹת): A religious and moral obligation.

Mohel: מוֹהֵל: (pl. *Mohelim*: מוֹהֵלִים): Person (s) trained to perform the circumcision rite.

Neila: נְעִילָה: Lit. The Closing. The last service of *Yom Kippur*.

Paroketh: פְּרוּכֹת: Curtain hung before the Holy Ark in the synagogue and also in the ancient Sanctuary.

Pesach: פֶּסַח: Passover.

Pizmonim: פְּזֻמוֹנִים: Songs, especially those sung at Sabbath and Festival meals. See *Zemiroth*.

Purim: פּוּרִים: Lit. Feast of Lots. It commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people throughout the Persian Empire from a plot hatched by Haman, the chief minister of King *Ahasueros*, and is observed in the middle of the Jewish month of *Adar*.

Rosh Hashanah: רֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה: New Year.

Sedarim: סֵדָרִים: *Matza* strictly supervised and specially prepared for the *Shatakah* night. In non-Baghdadi communities referred to as *Shemura Matza*.

Sefer Torah: סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה: (pl. *Sifrei Torah* סִפְרֵי תּוֹרָה). Lit. 'Book of the *Torah*'; roll of parchment upon which the five books of Moses are written and from which the designated portion of the *Torah* is read in the synagogue.

Selihoth: סְלִיחוֹת: Penitential prayers especially those recited daily in Oriental Communities on weekdays from 2 Elul to the eve of *Yom Kippur*.

Shabuoth: שְׁבוּעוֹת: The Feast of Weeks; Harvest Festival.

Shadchanim: שְׂדַכָּן: Marriage-brokers, often a woman (*shadchanith*).

Shaliach: שליח: (pl. shlichim שליחים). Emissaries from the *Eretz Yisrael* to Jewish communities in the diaspora.

Shaliach Tzibbour: שליח צבור: Leader of public prayers. Another name for *hazan*.

Shatakhah השתא הכא: Mentioned in the opening verses of the Passover liturgy '*Hashata Hacha Abdeh*'. This gives its name to the first two nights of the Festival according to Baghdadi custom.

She'elot: שאילות: Questions.

Shearith Israel: שארית ישראל: Lit. Remnants of Israel.

Sheba Berakoth: שבע ברכות: Lit. Seven benedictions recited at the wedding and on the subsequent meals during the week of the Wedding.

Shehita: שחיטה: Jewish method of slaughter.

Shekel: שקל: Ancient Hebrew coin. Refers also to a membership fee in a Zionist organisation.

Shema: שמע: Lit. hear. One of the most important parts of the liturgy affirming the Jewish faith.

Shiva: שבעה: Seven days of mourning.

Shofar: שופר: Horn of a ram sounded in the synagogue particularly on the New Year as a call to repentance before God and man.

Shohet: שוחט: A person who slaughters animals for food according to Jewish laws to render it *Kasher*.

Shomer: שומר: Supervisor.

Shulhan Arukh: שולחן ערוך: The Code of Law codified by Rabbi Yosef Caro. (1488-1575).

Simhat Torah: שמחת תורה: Festival marking the completion of the annual cycle of the reading of the *Torah*; the Rejoicing of the Law.

Simhu Na Simhu Na Besimhat Hatorah: שמחו נא, שמחו נא, בשמחת התורה: Lit. Rejoice, rejoice, in the joy of the *Torah*. Refrain of a popular song.

Succoth: סוכות: Booths or tabernacles as prescribed in Leviticus 23:42 commemorating the temporary shelters in which the Israelites lived during their forty-year wanderings.

Taharah: טהרה: Ritual preparation of the corpse for internment.

Tallith: טלית: Rectangular prayer shawl with fringes at the corners worn especially for worship.

Tanoor: תנור: Oven.

Targum: תרגום: Lit. Translation. Aramaic paraphrastic rendering of the Pentateuch especially by Onkelos.

Tebah: תיבה: also called *Bimah*: בימה: in Sephardi congregations. A raised platform in synagogue on which the *Torah* is read.

Tephillin: תפילין: Phylacteries.

Teshuvot: תשובות: Responsa. שאלות ותשובות שו"ת: Branch of rabbinic literature comprised of written opinions and rulings on matters of Jewish law in response to queries.

Tik: חיק: Case which contains the *Torah* scroll.

Tisha B'Av: ט' באב: 9th day of the month *Av* (falls approximately in July-August) observed as a commemorative fast day for the destruction of both Temples.

Torah: תורה: First five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch or the Five Books of Moses; in a broader sense, applied to the entire body of Jewish law.

Treifa: טריפה: Non-Kasher.

Yehi Hamelekh: יהי המלך: 'Long live the King'.

Yom Kippur: יום כיפור: Day of Atonement.

Zemiroth: זמירות: Songs and Psalms intoned at the beginning of the morning liturgy.

Arabic Vocabulary

Akd-el-Yas: עקד אל יאס: The binding of the myrtle.

Dos el'Atbah: דוס אל עתבה: The stepping over the threshold.

Hibiz or Hubuz: כבז (the diphthong being impossible to reproduce in English): flat round bread.

Izar; Ebbayi: עיזר, עאבאיי: Men's outer garments.

Jehaz: ג'הז: Dowry.

Jinn: ג'ין: Demon.

Joobas: ג'ובא: Long flowing inner garments.

Ka'ak: כעך: Biscuits made of flour and oil in the shape of large thick rings.

Khahi: כהי: Pastry made with butter and eaten on *Shabuoth*.

Kumkum: קומקום: Rose water sprinkler.

Leilt 'Akd el Yas: לילת עקד אל יאס: The evening before the circumcision.

Leilt el-Hinni: לילת אל חיני: The eve of the Wedding.

Leilt el-Sitti: לילת אל סיטי: Eve of the sixth day after her birth when a girl is named.

Ma'addadat: מעראדאח: Wailing women.

Mileek: מליך: Engagement celebration.

Shasha: שאשא: Gifts, especially of sweets and nuts, distributed to guests at the ceremony of *Leilt el-Sitti* and *Akd-el- yas*.

Siman Tob Wukadum el-Khair: סימן טוב וקרום אל כיר: A good sign and harbinger of prosperity.

Teriya: תרייה: Lamp suspended from the ceiling made of seven brass circles encasing a glass container filled with coconut oil and wicks.

Chronology

- 1839 The Opium War begins.
- 1842 The Opium War ends with the signing of the Nanjing Treaty between Britain and China. This is followed by the Sino-French and Sino-American Treaties.
- 1843 In November Shanghai is opened to Foreign trade. The Treaty of the Bogue sets out 'most-favoured-nation' principle.
- 1850 Outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion.
The North China Herald begins publication in Shanghai.
- 1853 The Small Swords Society occupy Shanghai. Chinese move into the Foreign Settlement for safety. The SVC is formed.
- 1860 Taipings attack the Chinese city and the Foreign Settlement. The Anglo-French Expeditionary troops occupy Beijing and destroy the Summer Palace. The Sino-American, Sino-Russian and Sino-French Peace Treaties are signed in Beijing.
- 1862 January; the second Taiping attack on the Foreign Settlement.
- 1863 The British and Americans combine to form the International Settlement.
- 1864 Establishment of the Mixed Court in the Settlement. Nanjing is retaken by the Imperialists and the Taiping Rebellion is crushed.
- 1865 HBM's Supreme Court for China is established.
- 1870 Control of the SVC is handed to the SMC.
- 1871 Shanghai establishes telegraph communication with Europe.
- 1884 The Sino-French War takes place and ends in the Tianjin Treaty which gives the French domination of Indo-China.
- 1890 The SMP takes over the Eurasian, Thomas Hanbury School, which is the first Municipal school for foreigners.
- 1894 The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.
- 1895 The Shimonoseki Treaty ends the Sino-Japanese War.
- 1896 Modern postal service is organised by Robert Hart. Shanghai sees its first motion picture show.
- 1897 The first modern bank is established in Shanghai.
- 1898 The Hundred Days Reform begins and the Open Door Principle is proposed by Britain and the USA.

- 1900 The Boxer War leads to the exile of the Ch'ing Court.
- 1904-5 The Russo-Japanese War begins.
- 1907 The Ministry of Education forbids students' participation in political activities.
- 1908 The Dowager Empress, Ci Xi, and the Emperor, Xuan Tong, die.
- 1911 October: The Chinese Revolution inspired by Sun-Yatsen results in the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. The English newspaper, *China Weekly Review*, begins publication in Shanghai.
- 1912 The Republic of China is established. The Provisional Government in Nanjing adopts the Provisional Constitution; Yuan Shi-kai is elected the President of the Republic of China.
- 1915 Japan presents the Twenty-One Demands to China.
- 1916 Yuan Shi-kai gives up his attempts to become monarch.
- 1917 China declares war against the Central Powers. The end of the Ten Year Agreement. Opium becomes illegal.
- 1918 The Chicherin Declaration renounces Russia's extraterritorial privileges in China.
- 1919 Chinese students demonstrate in Beijing against the decision of the Paris Peace Conference to award Shandong to Japan.
- 1920 Civil war breaks out between the various warlords and the movement for provincial autonomy begins.
- 1921 The first National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party takes place in Shanghai.
- 1923 The Lincheng Incident.
- 1924 Against the background of a large-scale civil war, in Guangzhou the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist party, with Russian assistance, form a united front. Chiang Kaishek is appointed head of the Whampoa Military Academy. In September the SMC declare a state of Emergency and mobilise the SVC; British, American, Japanese and Italian warships land naval forces to defend the foreign concessions.
- 1925 A general strike by Chinese workers against Britain and Japan begins on 30 May. Sun Yatsen dies.
- 1926 The Northern Expedition with Chiang Kaishek in command sets out from Guangzhou against the warlords of the North.

- 1927 The British Concessions in Hankou and Jiujiang are overrun by Chinese demonstrators and are to be returned to China; the Nanjing Incident in which foreign residents are killed; Chiang Kaishek splits with his Communist allies.
- 1928 Nanjing is made the capital of China after the success of the Northern Expedition and defeat of the warlords. Chinese representatives are elected to the SMCs of the International Settlement and French Concession.
- 1930 China regains her tariff autonomy.
- 1931 The Japanese Kwantung Army occupies Manchuria.
- 1932 Japan invades Shanghai.
- 1933 President Roosevelt raises the price of silver.
- 1934 President Roosevelt introduces his Silver Purchase Act. The Long March of the Chinese communists begins.
- 1935 The Nanjing Government reforms China's currency system.
- 1936 The May 5th Constitution is proclaimed and Chiang Kaishek is kidnapped by the mutineers in Sian.
- 1937 The Sino-Japanese War breaks out. Shanghai is bombed.
- 1938 Nationalists lose the Yangtze Valley, Hankou and Guangzhou.
- 1939 Full scale fighting between the GMD and Chinese Communists in winter. Japanese Foreign Minister Arita's public statement that Japan will not discriminate against Jews. Inuzuka is posted to Shanghai in April. Japan restricts refugees from entering Shanghai in August. In September Britain and France declare war on Germany.
- 1940 Wang Jingwei sets up a Japanese sponsored government in Nanjing.
- 1941 The Japanese take over the International Settlement. Outbreak of the great East Asian War.
- 1943 End of extraterritoriality for foreigners in China. Proclamation of 'designated area' for stateless refugees in Shanghai.
- 1949 Shanghai falls to the Communists. The People's Republic of China is established in October.

Interviewees

Jewish Shanghailanders

Abraham, Ezekiel, New York
 Abraham, Rabbi Isaac, London
 Abraham, Abe, Los Angeles
 Abraham, Rabbi Sassoon, London
 Alkow, Jacob, Herzlia
 Baruch, Ezra, K'far Ata
 Cohen, Florrie, née Isaacs, Givatayim
 Cohen, Isaiah, Givatayim
 Colgan, Cecilia née Ezra, San Francisco
 Diestel, Betty, Hong Kong
 Diestel, Clara, Hong Kong
 Dubnov, Sheila, London
 Ezekiel, Alfred, Miami
 Ezra, Cecil, Hong Kong
 Fishoff, Donald, New York
 Flegg, Cissy, née Abraham, Jerusalem
 Fradkin, Abraham, Tel Aviv
 Frenkel, Dr. Anna, née Ginsbourg, New South Wales
 Grant, Mercia née Hillaly, Tel Aviv
 Halevy, Yehuda, New York
 Hardoon, Cathy, New York
 Hardoon, Salih, New York
 Haynes, Mabel, née Bloomfield, Los Angeles
 Hendeles, Mozelle, née Cohen, New Jersey
 Hillaly, Estelle, Tel Aviv
 Hirsch, Ralf, Philadelphia
 Horowitz, Rose, née Jacob, Los Angeles
 Jacoby, Sassoon, Jerusalem
 Jonah, Irvin, California
 Jonah, Sidney, California
 Kadoorie, Lawrence, Hong Kong
 Kaufman, Theodore, Tel Aviv
 Kaufman, Rasha, née Segerman, Tel Aviv
 Krasno, Rena, California
 Levine, Balfornia, née Friend, Georgia
 Moalem, Aziza, née Abraham, New York
 Moalem, Ruben, Sydney
 Moses, Jenny, née, West Deal
 Nathan, Solomon, New York
 Mirkin, Boris, Tel Aviv

Moses, Cyril, West Deal
 Nissim, Albert, New Jersey
 Nissim, Matty, San Francisco
 Potashnick, Al, Jerusalem
 Reifler, Henrietta, née Brown, Seattle
 Schiff, Joyce, née Hillaly, London
 Sopher, Robert, Milford, Connecticut
 Sopher, Stephan, Toronto
 Toeg, Joe, Tel Aviv
 Toueg, Rifka, née Toeg, Herzlia
 Trombler, Riva, née Plotkin, Jerusalem
 Vardi, David, Jerusalem
 Weisz, Carl, Hong Kong
 Ya'acov, Yosef, Jerusalem
 Zysman, David, New York

Others

Abraham, Wendy, New York
 Bickers, Dr. Robert, London
 Elias, Flower, London
 Edmund Ezra, London
 Gong Fangzhen, Shanghai
 Hyman, Mavis, London
 Kedourie, Elie, London
 Kranzler, Dr. David, New York
 Leslie, Professor Donald, Curtin, Australia
 Margolis, Laura, New Jersey
 Musleah, Rabbi Ezekiel, Philadelphia
 Nish, Professor Ian, London
 Pan, Guang, Shanghai
 Pollak, Michael, Dallas
 Salamon, Professor Herman, New York
 Sassoon, Isaac, New York
 Smith, Professor Carl, Hong Kong
 Wei, Dr. Betty Peh Ti, Hong Kong
 Worenklein, Abraham, Toronto
 Yehuda, Dr. Zvi, Jerusalem
 Xu, Buzeng, Shanghai

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 Campaign/Palestine Foundation Fund - Keren Hayesod, 1933-1940
 KKL1 Jewish National Fund, Head Office, Vienna, 1902-1920

KKL2	Jewish National Fund, Head Office, Cologne, 1907-1922
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Appendix One

Hardoon Will Case

HBM Supreme Court for China became the arena in the sensational legal battle for Hardoon's £150 million estate from June 1932 to February 1933.¹ According to Article 5 of the Mandate between Britain and Iraq, where King Faisal was not represented in foreign countries, Britain was entrusted to extend diplomatic and consular protection to his subjects. Ezra Abdullah Hardoon,² Hardoon's cousin, however, contended that the estate should be administered according to Iraqi law, which would entitle the widow to only one quarter of the estate, the rest being distributed equally among the next of kin.³ The whole case hinged on whether Hardoon was in fact an Iraqi subject.⁴ In the course of his judgement Judge Grant Jones referred in detail to the Iraqi Nationality Law, Article 8⁵ which stipulated that Ottoman subjects who were born in Iraq, but were not naturally resident there from 23 August 1921 to 6 August 1924, could not claim Iraqi nationality unless they opted for it. This ruling was consistently maintained until after Hardoon's death in 1931. Ottoman subjects born in Iraq who failed to opt for Iraqi nationality within the prescribed period were repeatedly informed by the Iraqi Passport Department that they were not Iraqi nationals. Notwithstanding this, the Iraqi authorities maintained that Silas Hardoon at the time of his death had become an Iraqi national under Article 8 b) of the Nationality Law. They claimed that the Iraqi law of succession should apply and the rights of Hardoon's Iraqi relatives be safeguarded.⁶ Judge Grant Jones, however, held that there was ample justification that the nationality of the succession state (Iraq) was not to be forced on persons who were not actually living in the territories at the time the succession took place. He therefore held that Hardoon at the date of his death, was not a subject of His Majesty the King of Iraq.⁷

The knotty question of nationality figured prominently in the court proceedings. The *Israel Messenger* emphasised that it was only in 1925 that Hardoon received the special privilege from the London Foreign Office accepting him as a British subject as a 'special act of grace'.⁸ This had important implications for the case, as the 1844 ordinance formally placed British subjects within the Hong Kong Court's jurisdiction and subjected them in all

¹ His estate consisted chiefly of land and tenements valued at about £4,000,000; detailed coverage of the case in *NCH*, 24/2/1937, pp.1-6, enclosure in Shanghai Despatch to Peking No.63, 1/3/37, PRO, FO676/291/184707.

² He was the main plaintiff, though half a dozen others arrived in Shanghai from Baghdad. He earned his living by selling Baghdadi-style food to the community, Horowitz, interview by author, 10/5/93.

³ *NCH*, 7/6/1932, p.339.

⁴ The counsel for the defence argued that Hardoon had been domiciled and under the protection of His Britannic Majesty in China, and not a subject of the King of Iraq, enclosure in Shanghai Despatch to Peking No.63, 1/3/37, PRO, FO676/291/184707 PRO, FO676/291/184707.

⁵ The Iraqi Nationality Law 1931, prescribed the conditions under which Iraqi nationality may be acquired and lost. Section a) Any person whose father was at the time of that person's birth an Iraqi national was regarded as an Iraqi national, enclosure 3, despatch, No.338 to Peking, 16/11/31, PRO, FO676/87.

⁶ Telegram to the Shanghai British Consul General from the Baghdad High Commissioner, 1/12/1931, cited in *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.6. Section 8 b) of the Iraqi nationality act: any person born in Iraq who had attained his majority and whose father was born in Iraq, and was at the time of that person's birth ordinarily resident in Iraq, was an Iraqi national, enclosure 3, despatch, No.338 to Peking, 16/11/31, PRO, FO676/87. PRO, FO676/87; *NCH*, 7/6/32, p.339 and 24/2/33, p.336-347.

⁷ *IM*, 1/1/1932, p.14.

⁸ Shanghai Consulate [unsigned] to Sir Ronald Macleay, 25/10/1923, PRO, FO671/459/c/3/7392/23/71; 'His registration was just an expression of British sympathy and admiration for his standing in the community', *NCH*, 7/6/1932, p.339; *IM*, 1/1/1932, p.14.

matters to the laws of England.⁹ Many important questions remained unanswered. How could the British government accept Hardoon as a British subject in 1925 when he had not lived in a British territory? Was the Iraqi government consulted? Was this not a violation of International Law?¹⁰ The court's decision was influenced by the fact that Hardoon had been registered as a British Protected Person from 1896 until his death. According to Article 3 of the 1925 Order in Council, a British subject was defined as including a British Protected Person. Thus the case was administered by English law.¹¹ There was also compelling evidence that Hardoon had been treated as a British national. In 1927 the British authorities intervened on Hardoon's behalf in a dispute with Chinese over some property in Hangzhou. He sat as a British member of the SMC and was on the jury list of the Supreme Court.¹² He both sued and was sued in His Majesty's Courts. His will was in English form and probate of was granted to his widow by HBM's Supreme Court. The local duty was roughly £400,000 [\$9,300,000].¹³

In fact, the decision of the Foreign Office regarding the nationality of the Hardoon family was completely irregular. Clear instructions regarding its handling were contained in the Foreign Office treaty No. 1 5449 of March 5 1907, which stated that Elias Aaron and Silas Aaron and Miss Sophie Aaron Hardoon were not British subjects and '*ought not in the first instance to have been registered as such*'.¹⁴ Their father's nationality was Ottoman and his status as a naturalised British Indian subject did not extend beyond the limits of His Majesty's Indian Empire. Nevertheless Sir Pelham Warren, Consul General, was authorised to continue to register him as a British subject 'as an act of grace and favour'.¹⁵ As no index card registration system existed prior to 1923, this Foreign Office ruling was forgotten. Hardoon naturally protested strongly when he was relegated to the category of BPP,¹⁶ and the Foreign Office authorised that the brothers should continue to be registered as British Subjects.¹⁷

The delayed legal marriage of the Hardoons was an equally controversial issue which focused on whether they had been married according to Judaic rites.¹⁸ In August 1928, when they were married at the local British Consulate under the provisions of the Foreign Marriage Act 1892, Hardoon signed a declaration that they had been wedded in 1886, in accordance with Jewish rites.¹⁹ No record existed in the Jewish Community archives of their marriage, which could not have been performed unless Liza had been converted to Judaism. There was no evidence of this either.²⁰ Significantly, N.E.B. Ezra's request to Rabbi Ashkenazi to deny '*in toto*' that Liza was a member of the Jewish faith received 'a

⁹ A further ordinance gave the same powers to the British Consuls in their respective ports. An Order-in-Council 1865 abolished the jurisdiction of the colonial court over British subjects in China establishing instead a new Supreme Court of Civil and Criminal jurisdiction for China and Japan in Shanghai.

¹⁰ *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.18.

¹¹ *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.12.

¹² 'Estate Hardoon:Nationality dispute', Dossier 13 S 4/3/1937, PRO, FO676/291.

¹³ Liza had difficulty in obtaining a loan from banks to pay the duty and owing to a depression in the real estate market she would have had to accept 'sacrificial prices' for the sale of the property, see Liza Hardoon's application for Probate of the Will in 6/1/31, PRO, FO917/3107/186132 and FO917/3107/186098; Judge to Foreign Office, 12/12/32, FO917/3107/186132. See illustration, p.33.

¹⁴ Memorandum by Gustin, 18/6/28, PRO, FO671/462/c/3/4073/28/422.

¹⁵ Memorandum by Gustin, 18/6/28, PRO, FO671/462/c/3/4073/28/422.

¹⁶ Minute dated 23/5/1923, PRO, FO671/462, 4073/28/422 C/4 p.38.

¹⁷ Inexplicably, Sophie Hardoon was registered as a BPP, overruling the FO despatch. PRO, FO671/462, 4073/28/422.

¹⁸ *IM*, 1/1/1932, p.15 and 1/7/1932, p.6.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p.6; one of the witnesses being R. Abraham, *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.6; *NCH*, 7/6/1932, p.339; PRO, FO676/291, 'Estate Hardoon:Nationality Dispute', Dossier 13 S 4/3/1937.

²⁰ *IM*, 4/9/1931, p.6, 1/4/1934, p.34 and 1/7/1932, p.6; the Baghdad *Beth Din* nullified Hardoon's marriage, to Bentwich from Ettinger. 3/12/1931, *CZA*, KH4/1978.

rather vague reply'. He informed the court that marriage between a Jew and non-Jew could not be recognised, but there was no evidence that Mrs. Hardoon was not of the Jewish faith.²¹ The Judge's observation that the widow had passed for several years as a member of the Jewish faith was dismissed by the *Israel's Messenger*, which maintained that she could not claim to be Jewish unless she wished to embrace Judaism, notwithstanding her visits to the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue three times a year since 1927, and the gift of it to the community. Even the civil marriage at the British Consulate in August 1928, under the provisions of the Foreign Marriage Act of 1892, was challenged as being invalid, on the grounds that the legal requirement that one of the couple should be a British subject had not been complied with.

The Judge was influenced by the fact that the couple had lived together happily for twenty-five years and that the deceased had always referred to Liza as his wife and for that matter so had the *Israel's Messenger*.²² Given the numerous occasions on which the journal had done so, it is indeed incredible that Ezra so strenuously denied they were legally married when Hardoon's will was disputed.²³ He would have been hard pressed to explain the insertion: 'Mr and Mrs. Hardoon celebrated the double anniversary of Mrs. Hardoon's Birthday and their wedding in a brilliant affair at the beautiful gardens in Bubbling Well Road on August 29, 1922'.²⁴ At the entrance to the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue a marble stone bore the following inscription. 'Synagogue Beth Aharon Presented by Silas Aaron Hardoon and his wife Liza. *Rosh Hodesh Siwan*, 5687, 1 June 1927. On the right side of the entrance was a similar inscription in Hebrew.²⁵ Paradoxically, the civil marriage took place a year later, in August 1928.²⁶ It is significant that in his address at the dedication of the *Beth Aharon* Synagogue on 30 June 1927, the British Consul General, Sir Sidney Barton, referred to the gift to the Jewish Community by a *British Jew*.²⁷ There is no evidence in the press to indicate that this was disputed at the time.

The judgement in favour of 'marriage by reputation', an unknown phenomenon in the Jewish and Muslim Communities, was fiercely criticised. It was argued that the verdict would 'impel many to forego religious ceremonies, when it was possible, according to English law, to co-habit with a woman as man and wife and receive recognition for it from a British tribunal'.²⁸ These arguments, however, were inconsequential. As Potter, lawyer for the defendant deftly put it, 'If a Rabbi goes into the witness-box and says that a Jew cannot marry a non-Jew, what does it matter in English law?'²⁹

²¹ *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.6; nonetheless the *Israel's Messenger* consistently maintained that she 'was at no time known to be a member of the Jewish faith, or embraced Judaism', *IM*, 1/4/1934, p.3 and 2/9/1932, p.13.

²² An inscription on the left side of the *Beth Aharon* stated clearly that it was presented by Hardoon and his wife Liza, *IM*, 8/7/27, p.14. D.E.J. Abraham, 'a gentleman beyond reproach', told the court that Mrs Hardoon 'had always been treated by deceased [sic] as his wife', *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.11. In his will, Hardoon referred to Liza as 'my partner, comforter and wife'. *The New York Times*, 4/10/1941.

²³ *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.11.

²⁴ *IM*, 6/10/1922, p.7 and 8/9/22, p.26; 'Sincere Congratulation to Mr. and Mrs. S.A. Hardoon for their generosity in Donating the Beth Aharon Synagogue to the whole of Shanghai Jewry.[from] Mr. and Mrs. N.E. B. Ezra', *IM*, 3/6/1927, p. 8. See Illustration, p.38.

²⁵ *IM*, 8/7/1927, p.14.

²⁶ *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.6.

²⁷ *IM*, 8/7/1927, p.11.

²⁸ *IM*, 1/7/1932, p.6.

²⁹ *IM*, 1/7/1932, pp.6 and 11.

Appendix Two

Sephardim and Litigation Concerning the Opium Trade

Sephardi involvement in the opium trade is highlighted by litigation in which Sephardi opium traders were implicated. In the 'Great Swatow Opium Guild Case' at the Mixed Court in 1879, T.W. Duff and D.M. David accused seven prominent Chinese members of the Swatow Opium Guild, of conspiracy against foreign trade by attempting to obtain privileges which were expressly forbidden by the treaties by employing illegal intimidation. The Swatow Guild held the monopoly of the whole opium trade of Chinkiang since December, 1888, effectively closing the treaty port to foreign trade in opium. Davenport, HBM Consul on the Bench, appearing for the defendants, argued that a threat of withdrawal of custom did not constitute illegal intimidation. *The North China Herald* recorded that the final judgement was never made public, leaving no authoritative answer to the important issue of the position of Chinese guilds in relation to foreign trade.³⁰ One of the earliest sensational cases [1885] centred around the entrepreneur Benjamin David Benjamin who had close business relations with the two Sassoon firms and speculated very largely in opium.³¹

There is no clearer proof of the opium merchants' belief in the legality of their trade than the Opium Libel Case which was heard at the Mixed Court in December 1912. Opium merchants including David Sassoon & Co. Ltd., E. D. Sassoon & Co., S. J. David & Co., Edward Ezra & Co., D.E.J. Abraham, and Ellis I. Ezra sought an injunction against the *China Republican* restraining the publication of alleged libels. It related to an article headed 'Gunboat Diplomacy: How long is the country to be exploited by avaricious merchants, without principles, without morals...who do not represent British sentiments'.³² The prosecutor based his case on the argument that 'no sensible person could say that an opium merchant who supplied opium in accordance with treaty regulations was doing something which was morally indefensible'.³³ Congratulating them on their 'comfortable philosophy' that everything that was legal was moral, H.S. Oppe the defendant's lawyer, argued that the opium trade was comparable to the slave trade, immoral even when it was legal. He maintained that the Government of China had never recognised the opium trade as anything but immoral. A minute to the Assistant Secretary of the Board of Trade in Shanghai adeptly identifies the crux of the opium issue: 'Both the strength and weakness of our case seem to lie in the fact that the word "legitimate" has never been defined'.³⁴

The *North China Herald* reported that the extraordinary disclosures made during the case were sufficient proof of illegal intimidation practised towards foreign merchants in violation of the Treaty of Nanjing which stipulated the perfect freedom of trading at all open ports and forbade the Chinese Authorities to compel exclusive dealings. During the complicated proceedings, Davenport retired leaving the handling of the case to the Taotai. The newspapers reported that it was unfortunate that the final judgement was never made public and the matter was left in abeyance giving no authoritative answer to the issues important to the foreign mercantile community in China.

³⁰ *NCH*, 9/9/1879. p.252.

³¹ As seen in Chapter 1.

³² *NCH*, 14/12/12, pp.771-175.

³³ *ibid.*, pp.771-775.

³⁴ *Revenue and Statistics*, Minutes 14/8/2 and 17/9/20, 1630/1921 F 591/25/0 [L/E/7/1197/300].

One of the most sensational lawsuits ever presented at the Mixed Court was the 'Million Dollar Canton Road Opium Case arising out of one of the greatest acts of alleged piracy ever perpetrated on the coast of China'.³⁵ A petition was filed by N.E.B. Ezra, editor of the *Israel's Messenger*, and G. Dadunashvilli, a non-Jewish Georgian citizen, against seven Chinese, the proprietors of an opium shop on Canton Road, for the theft of \$1,300,000 worth of Turkish opium which Dadunashvilli had legally bought in Constantinople and legally consigned to Vladivostok. They claimed that the Japanese steamer carrying the drug had been waylaid and some 6,000 chests of opium were smuggled into Shanghai.³⁶ A police raid on the shop uncovered opium and incriminating documents revealing the existence of a smuggling ring involving Swiss, Japanese, American and Persian nationals.³⁷ It became clear to the court that Ezra's only connection with the case was to try to extend to Dadunashvilli the benefits of extraterritoriality. Ezra, however, maintained that he had renounced his British nationality in 1911 and became a Turkish protégé until November when an invitation from the Spanish Government to Sephardi Jews to return to Spain, prompted him to adopt Spanish nationality, by virtue of 'his ancestors having lived in Spain four centuries earlier'.³⁸ *The China Press*, a popular American daily, whose managing director Arthur Sopher, a Sephardi Jew, owned ninety percent of the shares and probably controlled editorial policy, proclaimed that a foreigner had loaned his name in the criminal and civil action to get the case set before the Spanish Council'.³⁹ In an editorial, B. Powell, declared that 'to an outsider it appears strange that a foreigner [Ezra's name was not mentioned] could switch his nationality about the map of the world in this way and do it almost overnight, so to speak'. Ezra lost his libel suit against the paper for 'express malice', as the judge failed to see any tendency to disgrace Ezra or to hold him up to ridicule.⁴⁰ The case against Yi and the other Chinese opium dealers was dismissed when the court became convinced that they had bought the opium from Dadunashvilli who had vanished from Shanghai. Evidently Ezra and Dadunashvilli had used the threat of legal action only to blackmail Yi into paying them, and had not intended the matter to come to court. In January 1926, Ezra lost his case. Nonetheless, he claimed to have come through it all with a clear conscience:

...I have done nothing of which I should be ashamed and feel proud that having rendered a signal service to the Government of the Chinese Republic and the local authorities helping them to unmask a huge conspiracy of opium smuggling in China... I have so far won no recognition but have been rewarded with hate, ridicule and scorn due largely to the malicious campaigns initiated against me by one local reptile Press; and I was looked upon as if I was the accused person....⁴¹

The case reveals many undercurrents within the Community. That feeling ran high between the pro-and anti-Ezra factions is apparent in the correspondence columns of the local press.

'The Shanghai Dope Case' concerning the largest and most thoroughly organised illegal narcotics deals of the 1930s, came to light with the arrest of Judah Ezra, former millionaire resident of Shanghai and his brother Isaac, while attempting to re-route an opium

³⁵ John Pal, *Shanghai Saga*, (London, 1963), pp.36-39.

³⁶ *NCH*, 24/1/25, p.151, 2/5/25, p.205, 6/6/25, p.419, 22/8/25, 12/9/25, p.360, 29/8/25, p.267.19/9/25, p.399, 19/9/25; 16/1/26, p.114.

³⁷ Clifford, *op. cit.*, pp.30-31.

³⁸ *IM*, 15/2/25, and 7/5/26, p.14; 'Question of Mr. Ezra's nationality still unsettled, *NCH*, 14/1/25, p.273.

³⁹ *NCH*, 21/2/25, p.317, 7/3/25, p.404, 4/4/25, p.27, 2/5/25, p.204.

⁴⁰ *NCH*, 23/1/26, 157, and 24/4/26, p.168.

⁴¹ *IM*, 11/9/25, p.12.

shipment valued at \$250,000 from San Francisco to Los Angeles.⁴² They were charged by the federal narcotics squad with having sent to San Francisco eight shipments of narcotics valued at \$1,500,000. The ninth shipment was later found concealed in oil barrels on the Japanese liner *Asama Marau*. The elder brother, charged with being the Pacific coast agent and the brains of an international smuggling organisation, made a full confession. He had amassed a fortune smuggling narcotics, particularly morphine, from China into the United States, disguised as tea and other canned and packaged products. Organised commercial firms in the Orient and on the Pacific coast handled the shipments and the Standard Silk company was founded in order to shorten costly insurance periods because silk shipments were usually speeded across the country. A unique hiding place constructed in their home concealed drugs valued at more than \$50,000. Confessions of the brothers revealed that they had been swindled by shippers when they attempted to smuggle opium into Europe and were sent a cargo of 'rope instead of dope'.⁴³ The brothers were sentenced to twelve years imprisonment and fined \$12,000. The United States Department of Labour ordered the deportation of the elder brother and his wife, who had become American citizens.

⁴² 'Two of the richest men ever to come out of China', *United Press*, 14/7/33; *NCH*, 24/5/33, p.296, 14/6/33, p.415, and 24/7/33. p.150.

⁴³ 'Rope for Dope', *NCH*, 19/7/33, p.109.