SHANGHAI SANCTUARY

Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II

GAO BEI

Shanghai Sanctuary

Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II

Gao Bei

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the
University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective
of excellence in research, scholarship, and education
by publishing worldwide

Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Published in the United States of America by
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Gao, Bei.
Shanghai sanctuary : Chinese and Japanese policy toward European Jewish
refugees during World War II / Gao Bei.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-19-984090-8 (hardback : alk. paper)
1. Jews—China—Shanghai—History—20th century.
2. Jewish refugees—China—Shanghai—History—20th century.
3. World War, 1939-1945—Refugees—China—Shanghai.
4. China—Politics and government—1937-1945.
5. Shanghai (China)—Ethnic relations. I. Title.
DS135.C5G36 2013
940.53′181420951132—dc23 2012013153

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2
Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

Shanghai Sanctuary

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am delighted to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to the many institutions and individuals who made this book possible. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Chen Jian, my dissertation director at the University of Virginia and mentor throughout my graduate studies. I began corresponding with Professor Chen in 1997 when I was still a master's student at the University of Kitakyushu, Japan, and his invitation to study with him in the United States changed my life. I deeply appreciate the time he has devoted to me and to my work over the past decade. He has shown me what it means to be a scholar.

I would also like to thank warmly the members of my dissertation committee, Professors Bradly Reed, Ronald Dimberg, and Brantly Womack, for their thoughtful comments on my work. Professor Reed first introduced me to the story of the Shanghai Jews, and I am grateful for his encouragement and support over the years. Professor Dimberg, director of graduate studies at the University of Virginia's history department during most of the time I was a student, offered me sound guidance on both academic and nonacademic matters. Professor Gabriel Finder also deserves my special thanks. His willingness to discuss with me key aspects of Jewish history and his invitation to participate in Virginia's Jewish Studies Workshop gave me new insights and fresh perspectives on my research topic.

My classmates and fellow graduate students at Virginia gave me good counsel and helpful advice as we presented our dissertation proposals and learned together what it means to be historians. I treasure their help and support. I would also like to thank the librarians, particularly the interlibrary loan staff, at Alderman Library, University of Virginia, and Randall Library, University of North Carolina Wilmington, for their patience and constant help.

It would have been impossible for me to finish my book without financial support from many sources. As a graduate student, summer research funds from the history department at the University of Virginia, two Ellen Bayard Weedon Travel Grants from Virginia's East Asia Center, and a

Graduate Research Award from the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry at Brandeis University made my trips to Asia possible. A Dumas Malone Fellowship for Graduate Research from the University of Virginia's College of Arts and Sciences enabled me to devote myself fully to writing. At my professional home, the College of Charleston, faculty research funds from the history department, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the college made it possible for me to finish and revise my manuscript.

My book would have been quite different had I not received a Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellowship for Archival Research from the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Steven Sage, the center's staff, and my fellow scholars in residence during the fall of 2004 offered constant support and intellectual stimulation. While in Washington, D.C., I was also fortunate enough to work with the late John Taylor at the U.S. National Archives, as well as Marcia Ristaino and the librarians of the Asian Division at the Library of Congress.

Professor Pan Guang and his fellow scholars at the Center for Jewish Studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences welcomed me and introduced me to valuable resources. Professors Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also helped me to collect vital research materials. I am forever grateful for their scholarly support and kindness. Professor Chang Li of the Institute of Modern History at the Academia Sinica in Taipei also deserves special thanks. Professor Chang not only made possible my two research trips to Taipei but also devoted his time to helping me collect materials and make contacts during my stay.

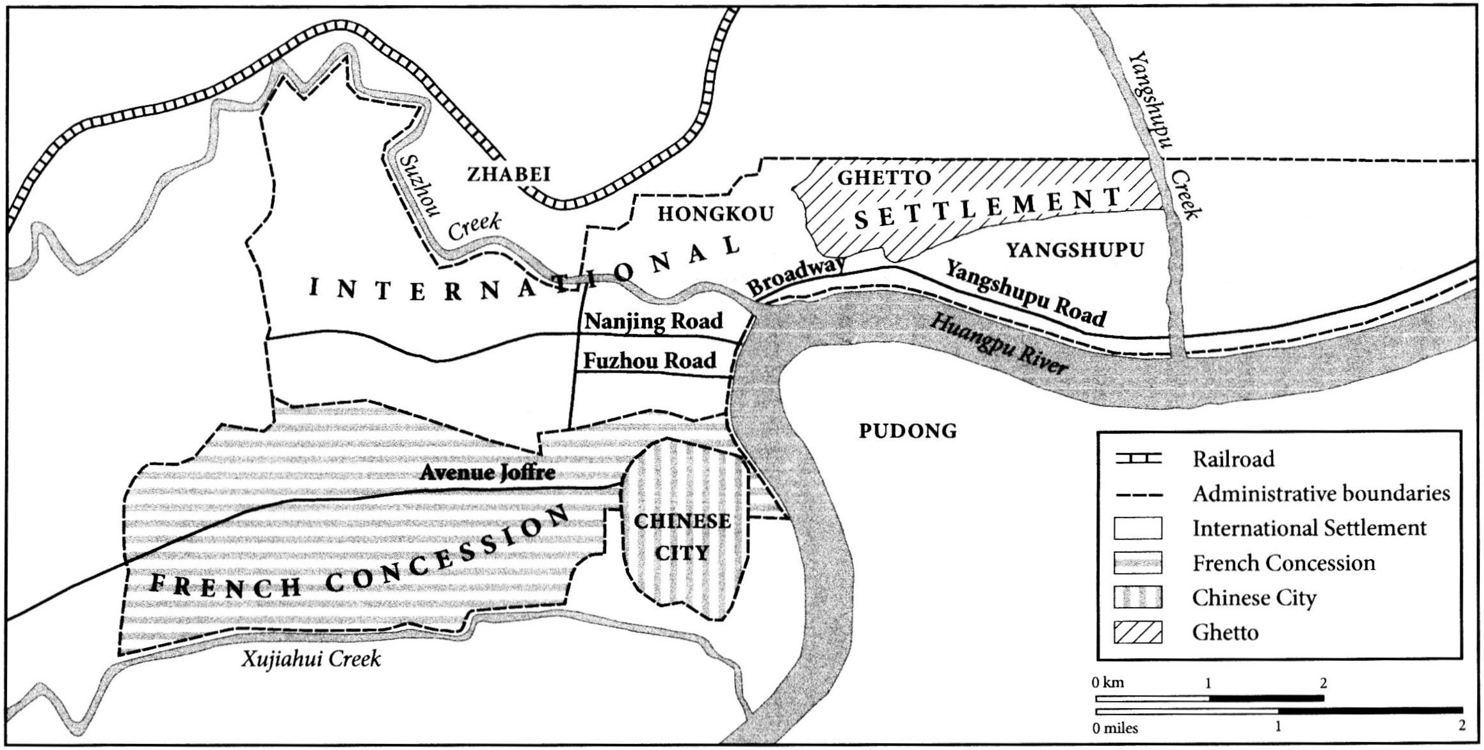
Professor Tamura Keiko, my graduate adviser at the University of Kitakyushu, Japan, lent me moral support and collected valuable Japanese materials for me. Her encouragement and friendship have been precious to me, and she inspired me to pursue my dream of becoming a scholar. I am fortunate to have her as a role model. I also owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor Sasaguri Junko. Twenty years ago she began teaching me Japanese, and her help in translating difficult Japanese sources was especially important as I wrote this book. Professor Chikuma Yoshiki at the College of Charleston also helped confirm the Romanization of Japanese titles and names.

I would also like to thank friends and colleagues who have provided endless friendship and encouragement throughout the completion of this book: Kathleen Berkeley, Yixin Chen, Chen Yue, Tim Coates, Jim Keller, Laura Witten-Keller, Susan McCaffray, Amy McCandless, Mark Spaulding, Tian Feng, and Wang Shurong. In addition, my department chairs, Bill

Olejniczak and Richard Bodek, have been extremely supportive of my research since I arrived at the College of Charleston.

My editors at Oxford University Press, Nancy Toff and Sonia Tycko, also deserve my gratitude for capably shepherding this project to completion. My thanks also go to Sage Publications, Professor Kathryn Bernhardt, and the editorial staff of the journal *Modern China*. Chapter 2 of this book was adapted as an article, which appeared as "The Chinese Nationalist Government's Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II," published in *Modern China* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 203–237 (http://online.sagepub.com).

Most important, I want to thank my families in China, Japan, and the United States: my father Gao Yuqing, mother Wang Hui, and sister Gao Yi; my Japanese host parents Itō Tetsuo and Itō Shizue; and my mother-in-law Clara Ann Fain. I appreciate all their support and encouragement during my years of research and writing. My daughter, Mika Catherine, was born during the final stages of this project. She has been a further inspiration to me, and her quiet, cooperative good nature made it possible for me to finish reviewing the copyedited manuscript in a timely manner. Finally, I dedicate this book to my husband and best friend, Taylor Fain. His love and support carried me on from the beginning to the end. I could never imagine myself finishing this work without him by my side.



Administrative Districts of Shanghai during World War II

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments *vii*

Introduction 3
Chapter 1 Chinese and Japanese Perceptions of the Jews 11
Chapter 2 The Chinese Nationalist Government and the Shanghai Jewish Refugees 31
Chapter 3 Yasue Norihiro, Inuzuka Koreshige, and Japan's Policy toward the Shanghai Jewish Refugees, December 1937–December 1939 58
Chapter 4 The Tripartite Pact and Japan's Policy toward the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Issue, January 1940–August 1945 93
Epilogue The European Jewish Refugees and Shanghai 127

Notes *139*
Bibliography *167*
Index *179*

Shanghai Sanctuary

Introduction

When German anti-Semitism turned to widespread terror in 1938, the world and most persecuted Jews realized that flight offered the only hope. For three years that hope remained a possibility. Then the Nazis blocked the exits. If, in the crucial years from 1938 to 1941, the world had opened its doors to the victims of persecution, the history of Europe's Jews from 1942 to 1945 would have been significantly different. Instead, the barriers held firm and relatively few refugees found asylum.

—David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938–1941*

When David Wyman wrote these words in 1968, he neglected to mention that when the world closed its borders to the desperate Jews of Europe, Shanghai, an open port in East Asia, which could be entered without visas or any documents, became an unexpected last haven for Jewish refugees. Between 1938 and 1941, nearly twenty thousand European Jews fled to Shanghai, and the great majority survived the war.

Nazi Germany's persecution of the Jews is one of the most exhaustively documented tragedies of the twentieth century. However, the story of the European Jewish refugees in China during the Second World War is still not well known and has been explored almost exclusively by Western scholars. The purpose of this book is to examine the story of these wartime Jews from the Chinese and Japanese perspectives. This approach is important because the story of the Jewish refugees in China not only involved tens of thousands of European Jews struggling for survival in a time of great chaos, but also reflects the complicated relationships among China, Japan, Germany, and the United States before and during World War II. The Great Powers' policies toward the Jewish refugee issue reveal much about their national priorities, their international agendas, and their perceptions of the global balance of power.

Shanghai had served as a beacon to Jewish immigrants since the previous century. As early as the second half of the nineteenth century, Jews from Baghdad had come to the city. Some of them flourished in business. Notable Jewish families such as the Sassoons, the Hardoons, and the Kadoories almost dominated Shanghai's economy.[1] After the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian Jews began to settle in Shanghai. The majority of them came to the city because of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the unstable social conditions caused by Japan's invasion of Manchuria in the early 1930s.[2] However, the European Jews who escaped to Shanghai during the late 1930s did so for very different reasons.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, the Nazi regime decided to force Jews to emigrate from Germany and, later, Europe.[3] By the end of the decade, the *Anschluss* with Austria, the anti-Semitic brutality of *Kristallnacht*, and the invasion of Poland created a flood of European Jewish refugees. But after the annexation of Austria, European Jews found it increasingly difficult to flee to neighboring countries or elsewhere in the world because it became almost impossible for them to obtain entry visas.[4] A great number attempted to escape to the United States, but often they had to wait, sometimes as long as a year, for their quota numbers to come up to enter the country.[5] Even the neutral state of Switzerland was not willing to take in the Jews.[6] From July 6 to 14, 1938, thirty-two countries, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, and Australia, sent delegates to France to participate in the Evian Conference. The conference, convened at the request of U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, aimed to resolve Europe's growing Jewish refugee crisis. Nevertheless, "no country, America not excepted, declared itself ready to accept unconditionally any number of Jews."[7]

The open port of Shanghai became the last haven for many European Jews. A young Austrian doctor, Samuel Didner, came to Shanghai at the end of 1938. Like thousands of his Austrian coreligionists, Didner had to leave his home country but was unable to find a place of refuge. He first tried the United States, but the American consulate told him that since he was Polish-born, the smaller Polish quota applied to him; it would take a year, at least, until he would be able to obtain a U.S. visa. Time, however, was limited for Didner. The European countries were closing their borders to Jews. He went to the Viennese cafes to collect information about emigration. In the cafes Shanghai was mentioned in discussions, but no one said anything positive about it. "China, they said, was a terrible place to live and thousands of miles away." But Didner was fascinated. "This will be my last resort," he recalled later to Professor James R. Ross of Northeastern University, "at any rate, it doesn't hurt to be on the safe side." As the people in the cafes had foreseen, Didner was told when he visited the Chinese consulate that he would be welcomed in Shanghai. He obtained a visa, although it was not required, and on November 17, 1938, Didner boarded a ship in Italy bound for China.[8]

Shanghai was also the last and only chance for Horst Levin. Levin's family was from a small German town in East Prussia and had moved to Berlin in 1935. In November 1938, Horst's father was arrested by the Gestapo. Afraid for his father's life, Horst went to the Gestapo's office and tried to rescue him. However, he was arrested as well and put into a concentration camp. After a week, the Levins received a notice from the Gestapo that they would release Horst if his family sent him out of the country. Meanwhile, Horst believed he had no chance to obtain a visa as thousands of Jews had been leaving since November. The only place he could travel without a visa was Shanghai. Horst returned home in January 1939, a week after his family had purchased him a ticket to Shanghai. Although the stories about the Chinese city alarmed the family, they knew that this was his only opportunity.[9]

Jewish refugees could go to Shanghai without visas because of its unique status as a city under the control of foreign powers. It had become a treaty port and opened its doors to the Western nations after the first Opium War in 1842. Before the first European Jewish refugees escaped to Shanghai in 1938, the city was ruled by fourteen different countries and divided into four separate administrative units: the "Chinese City" was controlled by Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government. A municipal council representing eleven Western powers was in charge of Shanghai's International Settlement. The eastern side of the International Settlement, Hongkou (Hongkew),[10] was exclusively dominated by the Japanese, who had occupied that area after August 1937. Finally, the French Concession was governed by the French consul. Chiang's regime directed passport control in Shanghai until the outbreak of the hostilities between China and Japan in July 1937. However, after the Japanese defeated the Nationalists and drove them out of the city in late 1937, no other country with a presence in Shanghai was given authority to take charge of passport control.[11] In short, the chaos created by the war in China made the Jewish refugees' flight to Shanghai possible.

As this book assesses this turbulent era in the history of East Asia, it aims, first, to examine the Chinese government's policy toward the Shanghai Jewish refugee issue. In early 1939, as China struggled to fend off the invading Japanese, Sun Ke (Sun Fo), president of the Legislative Yuan and son of Sun Yat-sen, formulated a plan to settle European Jewish refugees in China's southwestern Yunnan Province, which had a small population and a great deal of uncultivated land. The plan was a humanitarian one, but it was also intended to attract Jewish capital from abroad, since many leading Nationalist officials believed that Jewish communities throughout the world, and particularly in the United States, financially supported the Shanghai Jews. At the same time, the Nationalist government wanted to favorably impress the British and U.S. governments, which they hoped would aid China in its war against Japan.

However, although Germany recalled its ambassador to China in June 1938 and the two countries officially severed diplomatic relations in July 1941, China at this point was still nominally an ally of Germany. As a result, the Chinese also had to be sensitive to the plan's reception by Berlin. China could not afford to make Germany another enemy. Therefore, China's settlement plan initially aimed to assist "stateless" Jews—non-German or Austrian Jews. After American Jewish leaders enthusiastically participated in the settlement plan and promised to convince the Roosevelt administration to support China financially, Chinese officials gradually abandoned their concerns about Germany. China's highest priority during this period was to win international assistance in its war against Japan. Meanwhile, the U.S. government was restricting immigration by European Jews and was unwilling to provide financial assistance to China's Jewish settlement plan. Without funds, the Nationalist government simply could not implement the scheme.

This study also intends to shed new light on Japan's Jewish policy. By ousting the Chinese Nationalist government from Shanghai in late 1937, Japan became a major power controlling the city along with twelve Western countries. Although an ally of Germany, Japan treated the Jewish refugees in Shanghai less harshly than Berlin would have wished. It did so for pragmatic reasons. Instead of adopting Nazi Germany's policy of exterminating the Jews, the Japanese military "Jewish experts," army colonel Yasue Norihiro and naval captain Inuzuka Koreshige, key players in formulating Japan's official Jewish policies in the late 1930s, attempted to exploit the Jews' purported financial and political power in the service of Japan's war in East Asia. With the Shanghai Jews under their control, the Japanese believed that the international Jewish community would not be able to involve itself in anti-Japanese activities, and American Jewish leaders would work to pressure the Roosevelt administration on Japan's behalf. However, after the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September 1940, the pro-German faction in the military and the government gained power and demanded that Japan change its policy toward the Shanghai

Jewish refugees. After the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, the Shanghai Jews lost any remaining value they may have had to the Japanese, and the Japanese eventually forced them into a ghetto.

The existing literature on this subject is scarce and essentially Eurocentric. This is because of the limited source materials available from the Asian, especially the Chinese, side and Western scholars' apparent inability to interpret fully the documentary record in East Asian languages. There are a number of memoirs by Shanghai survivors and a very few studies of the community life of the Jewish refugees in the city. A few scholars have examined the flight of the European Jews to Shanghai in the context of Japan's wartime foreign policy. Yet, despite the fact that this was a story that unfolded in wartime China, the Chinese are almost completely absent from these histories.

David Kranzler examines the unique role that the Japanese played in saving Jews in East Asia. In *Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938–1945*, Kranzler correctly argues that Japanese anti-Semitism was "sui generis." The Japanese were not interested in "eliminating the allegedly powerful and wealthy Jews, but rather in utilizing their great wealth and influence for Japan's 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Policy.'"[12] However, he also contends that Japan's first official Jewish policy of December 1938, in which the Japanese government claimed that it would not persecute Jews but would treat them as they did all other foreigners, was a "pro-Jewish policy."[13] In reality, Japan's Jewish policy in late 1938 was rooted in its own wartime needs and was designed to exploit Jews financially. In addition, the Japanese controlled the fate of the Jews in occupied China, and they made it clear that cooperation with Japan was the only choice left for the Jews if they wished to survive. Therefore, Japan's policy was never "pro-Jewish."

Pamela Rotner Sakamoto explores the story of the Japanese officials, diplomats in particular, and the Jewish refugees who escaped Nazi Europe to East Asia within the framework of a diplomatic history. In her 1998 volume *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma*, Sakamoto emphasizes that "Japanese policy saved Jews not out of humanitarianism, but rather as a haphazard response to external conditions."[14] However, Japan's Jewish policy during the Second World War was not "haphazard," and the Japanese government made its decisions after careful consideration. For instance, Japan's first official Jewish policy of late 1938 was initiated after a thorough investigation of Jewish matters by the South Manchurian Railway Company (the SMR or "Mantetsu," short for Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha), Japan's biggest and most comprehensive wartime research institute in and about China.

Marcia Ristaino's *Port of Last Resort: The Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* focuses on both the White Russian community and the European Jewish refugees in Shanghai. Ristaino argues that "the Japanese policy toward the European Jews especially can best be characterized as highly ambivalent. On the one hand, the Japanese felt gratitude to Jews in general.... On the other hand, the Japanese had been exposed to the anti-Semitism of White Russians...and...had translated and digested the contents of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."[15] She points out that it was American Jewish banker Jacob Schiff's loans that helped make possible Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, and that the Japanese also admired "Jewish talent and accomplishments."[16] It is true that the "Jewish experts," Colonel Yasue and Captain Inuzuka, were first exposed to anti-Semitism during the Siberian Expedition in 1918. However, Yasue and Inuzuka did not merely follow the White Russians' anti-Semitic ideas. Instead, they did intensive research on Jewish-related matters both in Japan and in Europe, and they had actual experience meeting Jews on different continents. Yasue and Inuzuka's anti-Semitic theories went beyond the tenets of traditional anti-Semitism. They attempted to attract as many Jews as possible to Japanese-occupied China in order to exploit them ruthlessly. To obtain the cooperation of the Jews in East Asia, the "experts" threatened regularly to stop providing Jews with protection. Thus, Japan's plan to take advantage of Jewish wealth was rooted deeply in anti-Semitic prejudices; no sense of "gratitude" or admiration played a role in saving the Jews.

A thorough examination of this subject requires a transnational and multiarchival approach. This study is firmly grounded in primary sources housed in archives throughout the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, the United States, Britain, and Israel. It makes use of documents from the Shanghai Municipal Archives, the National Archives of Taiwan, the Archives of the Chinese Nationalist Party in Taiwan, the Ministries of the Army and Navy of Japan, the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the files of the U.S. Department of State, and the Shanghai Municipal Police Files from the British authority in Shanghai.

Documents from Taiwan and Shanghai for the first time allow a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese Nationalist government's Jewish policy. The Chinese government's retreat from the city after late 1937 left Shanghai survivors, as well as scholars, with the impression that the Chinese had not been actively concerned with the Jewish refugee issue. However, these documents demonstrate that China at the time had a carefully formulated Jewish policy. Most important, the Chinese attempted to use the European