

# Writing the War in **Asia** – a documentary history

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## Remembering the Pain of “Others”: Reflections on the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and Beyond



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### The Journey to the Far East: Jewish Refugees in Shanghai during WWII

The exodus of the European Jews to Shanghai merits attention, as it represents a special chapter in the history of their exile during WWII. For the refugees, the journey to a country that was an unlikely choice of destination for European Jews was extraordinarily long. During this period, China was not well known among Europeans, and it was battling its own war against Japan. The waves of persecution of European Jews in Germany, Austria, Poland, and other countries were motivated by the frantic racial policies of the Nazis and further aggravated by the violence during the Kristallnacht in 1938 and later by the murderous “Final Solution.” Consequently, millions of German Jews and their families were forced to leave their “homeland.” The early refugees were lucky enough to find shelter in the US and in other European countries, such as Switzerland. Unfortunately, not all German and Austrian Jews managed to find refuge abroad after several countries began to reject the immigration of the Jews who were fleeing Nazi Germany.

Shanghai immediately offered a light of hope into this bleak “life or death” situation. The city held a special status at that time, as it was divided into different sectors under British-American, French and Chinese, and Japanese control. As the largest metropolis in East Asia, Shanghai was the only place in the world that did not require a visa to enter and stay for an indefinite period.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the cost of living in Shanghai was extremely low; an adult refugee could eat with only Sh.\$ 20 per month (or approximately US\$ 2.70 at the then-exchange rate). Subsequently, the Tilanqiao area in the old Shanghai Hongkew (now Hongkou) district became the only place in the world that offered a safe haven for approximately 30,000 Jews, who had come all the way from central Europe to East Asia. Many of the refugees were well educated and had proper and respectable occupations as craftsmen, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, technicians, doctors, and musicians. On top of their status as refugees and the ongoing war between China and Japan, the abrupt change in their living environment created a huge backlash in their lives in various ways. Nevertheless, most of these “Shanghaianders” not only survived the war but also built a thriving community of their own with a vibrant economic and cultural life. The children of the refugees were born in Shanghai, and some of them were

receiving proper education prior to the Japanese takeover of Shanghai following the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. After the fall of Shanghai, the Jewish refugees were unable to leave the Shanghai ghetto and were only able to do so when Japan surrendered in 1945. The Jewish community began to vanish rapidly when the Communists in China won the Civil War against the Nationalists in 1949. The number of Jews in Shanghai dwindled down after 1950. The Jewish population in Shanghai dropped to 32,000 to 35,000 at the end of the Pacific War. This period in history later came under a veil of silence that lasted for decades.

Encounters between the Jews and the Chinese can be traced as far back as the Yuan Dynasty in the 13th century.<sup>2</sup> Jews from different parts of the world had already

settled in Shanghai for different reasons even before the Jewish refugees from Europe fled the Nazi pogroms and came to this metropolis. The early contact between the Jews and the Chinese in the 19th century was marked by two strains of Jewish migrants.

The first was the famous merchant family of the Sassoons, who were originally based in Baghdad, Iraq, and then spread to Bombay, India, before settling in the newly opened treaty ports in China in the mid-19th century. The second strain was made up of the Russian Ashkenazi Jews, who came to China in the beginning of the 20th century, and of the white Russian Jews, whose population increased considerably after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Most of these migrants first fled to Harbin and to other parts of North China and then landed in Shanghai. The two strains were very different in terms of their backgrounds, professions, and financial status. Undoubtedly, the Sephardi Jews in Shanghai, including the famous Hardoons and the Kadoories, changed the urban space of the metropolis through the following contributions: the mansion of the Sassoons on the Bund, the Marble Hall of the Kadoories in the former French Concession, and the legendary Hardoon Garden, where the Shanghai Exhibition Hall (the former Sino-Soviet Friendship Mansion) now stands. These buildings are among the most significant architectural legacies of China's pre-revolutionary era in Shanghai. Jacob Elias Sassoon erected the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, which was named after his wife Rachel, on Seymour Road (today Shanxi Bei Road) in 1920. In memory of his father Aaron, Silas A. Hardoon built the Beth Aaron Synagogue on Museum Road (today Huqiu Road) in 1927.

Despite the significant Jewish presence in Shanghai's history, the interest in this part of local history only emerged in 1992 when China and Israel established diplomatic relations; in fact, "in the mid-1990s, the Shanghai authorities began to notice increasing pressure to recognize the Jewish history of the city."<sup>3</sup> This newly won interest was illustrated by the decision of the municipal government of Shanghai in 1998 to extensively renovate and reopen the former Ohel Rachel Synagogue, the largest remaining synagogue in East Asia. Another synagogue in Shanghai, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue, was turned into the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum (see Figures 1 and 2) after the Ohel Rachel Synagogue received honored guests, such as the former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the former First Lady of the United States Hillary Clinton.

This study takes the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum as a case study and presents the subtle transformations of the war narratives in post-revolutionary China. The study also investigates the possible motivations behind the building of war memorial sites for "others," namely, the foreign communities, rather than for local Chinese communities. The case is worth exploring because it can provide insights into the broad context of memory making, history writing, and transformation of urban space in China. Without denying the historical worth and necessity of the museum as an important part of World War II memory on a global scale, this paper focuses on some critical perspectives that intend to push further the discussion on commemorative spaces and the public and war memories in China. The study contextualizes possible reasons for the erection of the museum in terms of the political circumstances of contemporary China. Moreover, the study provides two critical perspectives on the narratives of the museum, particularly with regard to those that were excluded and the reasons for the exclusion.

## The Museum

Located at 62 Changyang Road, Hongkou District, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is now open to the public after it was fully repaired in 2007. It consists of three sections, namely, the renovated site of the synagogue and two exhibition halls. The ground floor of the main building was restored to its historical appearance in 1928 (Figure 3). The second floor houses over 140 pieces of visual material, a multimedia installation, and a rich collection of artistic works relevant to the Jewish experience in Shanghai (Figure 3). The documentary Shanghai

Ghetto (2002) by Dana Janklowicz-Mann and Amir Mann is continuously played on a screen. The museum also displays duplicates of the passport of a refugee, the Shanghai Jewish Chronicle, and a large stone tablet engraved with the handwritten message of Yitzhak Rabin during his visit to the museum. A digital database of the Shanghai Jewish community was established on the initiative of the Israeli consulate in Shanghai in 2008. The database lists the names, genders, addresses, nationalities, exile itineraries, arrival-departure dates, occupations, final destinations of immigration, and photos and contacts of about 600 of the 30,000 Jews who fled to Shanghai. Visitors can search for and enter information into the digital portal located in the exhibition hall to "give a record of the community, where its residents came from, their stories and struggles, where they have since moved and even how they might now be reached."<sup>4</sup> Prominent positions in Exhibition Hall No. 2 are also occupied by photos of the honored guests of the museum, most of whom are politicians and officials from Israel, Germany, and the US; staff of foreign consulates in Shanghai; and leaders of the Hong Kou District (Figure 5).

The third floor presents the history of the Holocaust and the Auschwitz Camp through archived and reproduced materials. Exhibition Hall No. 3, which is outside the synagogue, was erected in 2008 as a venue for past temporary exhibitions. Today, the hall displays the stories of 27 Jewish refugees and their lives in Shanghai. In the courtyard, the shop sign of Atlantic Café, which was run by Jewish refugees 70 years ago, was removed from the façade of the original building and now decorates the new Atlantic Café, the opening ceremony of which was attended by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his short visit to China in May 2013. Occasionally, the museum also hosts Jewish weddings and coming-of-age rites. "North Bank Suzhou Creek," a musical stage play about the stories of Jewish refugees in Shanghai, premiered in the museum in March 2012.

The museum proudly displays the contributions of Shanghai and China to the anti-fascist movement in WWII even beyond the East Asian context. The People's Government of Hongkou District allocated more than US\$ 1 million in special funds to the full renovation of the synagogue in accordance with the original architectural drawings found in the city archives (Figure 4).

### Commemorative Space in Modern China

From the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing to the Mausoleum of Mao in Beijing, the commemorative spaces in modern China have been carving out a new kind of public space for nation building. Built in line with various historical agendas modern China went through, these spaces play an important role in political education, the construction of Chinese national identity, and the establishment of new social norms and a specific kind of aesthetic environment for each historical context.<sup>5</sup> As a sub-category of modern national commemoration, war memorial sites represent the violence among human beings that is regarded as part of the founding myth of any nation state. As Nuala Johnson pointed out, "(w)ar memorials are of special significance because they offer insights into the ways in which national cultures conceive of their pasts and mourn the large-scale destruction of life."<sup>6</sup> Narratives associated with commemorative spaces that serve as memorial sites for both the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War strictly follow the socialist tradition of eulogizing these wars as "just wars," which were waged against internal and external enemies. As the nation also largely relied on the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the post-1949 historical narratives in China overtly emphasize the role of the Communist Party in liberating the nation and its people from suffering and humiliation during the Sino-Japanese and Civil Wars. However, by the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the student movement in 1989, the Chinese commemorative spaces and monuments no longer possessed an ideologically straightforward function as agencies in the construction of public memory. Since the late 1970s, the national agenda of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has turned from a fierce political struggle to an economy-oriented open-door policy. Consequently, the country has been experiencing an economic boom since the early 1990s. As a result of the firm political rule of the Chinese Communist Party, the political hierarchy of the PRC is confronted with the issue on the incorporation of Chinese national monuments into a revised national ideology that is still deeply entangled in the continuities and discontinuities of the PRC's political vicissitudes.

**The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum: A New Way of Commemorating WWII in China?**

The conditions described above seem to indicate that the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is an unusual war memorial in China when compared with others of its kind that continue to create popular memory through orthodox political education, such as the Beijing War of Resistance Museum.<sup>7</sup> Particularly, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is neither dedicated to overtly praising the Communist Party nor closely related to patriotism. The neutral and somehow detached point of view of the museum in narrating the war in Europe and the sufferings of the European Jews only vaguely corresponds to the long-term anti-fascist stance of communism and to abstract internationalism. The official commemoration of World War II in today's China is deeply related to the political tensions not only between China and Japan but also between the PRC and Republic of China on Taiwan. The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum addresses neither area.

How can one understand the erection of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum in the larger context of commemorative space making in contemporary China? Does it mark a true departure from orthodox war memorials in China? The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum commemorates the suffering of others, but how are China and its people featured in its narratives? In the following, the birth of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and its historical narrative are described in the context of the status quo of World War II memory making in China and beyond as they are represented in the country's public commemorative spaces.

### 1. Reasons for Erection

This study considers two major conditions that can account for the establishment of the museum and its current situation. The first condition is that this commemorative space was used as a tool for making specific diplomatic profile. The principal part of cultural memory in China is still largely shaped by the state in a top-down manner. Thus, the memory discourse on "Jews in China" must be endorsed by the government. The early 1990s represent a turning point, as they gave rise to a growing interest of Chinese research institutions in Jewish studies in China; this interest is logically associated with the establishment of Sino-Israeli diplomatic relations in 1992 after the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> As a result of mutual political recognition between China and Israel, the rise in the number of Jewish studies in China, especially in Shanghai, is understandable; "in the mid-1990s, the Shanghai authorities began to notice increasing pressure to recognize the Jewish history of the city".<sup>9</sup> The motivation to rediscover the Jewish history of Shanghai does not entirely reveal an interest in understanding the city's multi-layered past as such. The salvation of the "memories" of Shanghai was prioritized for international diplomacy and not for the public participation of users in the city. As with other religious relics in China, the restoration of a physical structure does not result in the restoration of the events that were once held in the space. "Despite the narrative of an ab initio humanitarian impulse in China, being Jewish is not an acceptable ongoing identity for Chinese nationals. Judaism is not a recognized religion in China."<sup>10</sup> The website of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum proudly quotes the following comment of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin about the museum during his visit to Shanghai: "To the people of Shanghai for unique humanitarian act of saving thousands of Jews during the WWII, thanks in the name of the government of Israel."<sup>11</sup> Although it encourages local audiences to visit this commemorative space as a tourist spot that introduces the war experience of foreign communities in a "neutral" or even tenderhearted narrative, the museum is actually managed by the Foreign Affairs Office in Hongkou District; the primary target audience does not seem to be the local residential population. The entrance fee to the museum amounts to RMB 50, or approximately € 5, and is hence rather high for a visit to a museum of limited scale and may thwart a good many of local visitors.<sup>12</sup>

Shanghai has its own good reason for exploring the precious memory that can easily sensationalize not only the local people but also the whole world. Being a symbolic space of the rapidly developing Chinese economy and a symbol of its fast-paced modernization, cultural memory narratives about the past of Shanghai have usually been characterized by their eagerness to connect with their cosmopolitan past. A persistent wave of old Shanghai nostalgia for the interwar years when it enjoyed its alleged golden time has had its long-lasting influence on the cultural scene of the city since the 1990s. The image of Shanghai as a showcase of the post-Mao economic achievement of China and its rising role in a globalizing world finds the most suitable soil in the history of the Jewish refugees. The generosity of the nation and the practice of international humanitarianism in the city and nation, despite the change in regime, continue and deserve the respect of the world, as the scholars of the Shanghai Social Science Academy have suggested. They argue that this part of Shanghai's

history can serve as "a unique 'cultural name card' for Shanghai in foreign communication and exchange," thereby suggesting that the city can be a showcase for a global audience.<sup>13</sup> The following is the comment of a Chinese expert on Jewish studies, Prof. Xu Xin from Nanjing University, on the launch of the database of Jewish refugees:

Academically speaking, the history of Shanghailanders is a part of the global research data on the Jewish diaspora around the world. It is therefore valuable to collect the data for the purpose of social statistics; in the meantime, most of the "Shanghailanders" have wonderful memories of China, their children would come to Shanghai for root seeking. This will increase their interest in and favorable impression of China, which will enhance mutual friendship and China's soft power. This has been the first time for both China and Israel to collect and compile such data on a remarkable scale and in such an intensive collaboration. This project is valuable in multiple reasons: in consummating social statistics, rescuing historical materials and promoting diplomatic relations.<sup>14</sup>

For the creation of a cosmopolitan image of Shanghai (and thus of China) in the West, the unique Jewish experience during the Holocaust becomes a highly valuable cultural capital for the global profile of the city. Jeffrey Sichel, one of the directors of the stage play "North Bank Suzhou Creek," claimed that the experience of Shanghailanders is "the Chinese version of 'Schindler's List.'"<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum can be seen as a process with which Chinese authorities could present China as a mirror image of the West. The museum epitomizes a historical self that is eager to be affirmed in the eye of others, that is, by assertion from the West. In this sense, this endeavor to be in line with the West, discourse serves as a means of articulating the spectacle of China's imagined modernity.

## 2. Critical Reflections

### 1) Missing Narratives

According to Pierre Nora's famous concept of "lieu de mémoire" (site of memory), the lieux "are created by a play of memory and history" and "a schematic outline of the objects of memory."<sup>16</sup> In this form, Nora argues that the commemorative spaces of our time lack spontaneous memory. Museums are built to remind people that they are unable to remember if they are not reminded. Memory becomes a passageway toward history; no "true memory" can be traced. Nonetheless, the endless birth, rebirth, and re-discoveries of numerous memories of past events are triggered not only by the forgetfulness of the public but also by the obsession with archives and "paper memories" of institutions and individuals. As a result, "what is being remembered is memory itself."<sup>17</sup> The infinite re-discoveries reversely legitimize the ruptures in history and memory as well as the responsibility to "rescue" them from oblivion.

The timing of the reemergence of rescued memories from the stories of Jewish refugees was highly orchestrated and attempted to smoothly suture the rupture between the past and the present. The neighborhood in which the Shanghailanders lived turned from a milieu de mémoire, which refers to the real environment of historical happenings, into a lieu de mémoire, or the Refugees Museum. This past "on arrival" inevitably trims down twigs and branches that obscure the picture of a self-sustainable present and can be illustrated by what has not been elaborated on in exhibition displays. First, any controversial historical situations remain invisible. Examples of such situations include the subtle relation between Japan and Germany and its influence on the decision of accommodating the Jewish refugees in Shanghai as well as the postwar conditions that the Jews faced and those that forced the Jews to leave China for further exile. In fact, the architectural design proposals of the museum that endeavored to explore the contested meanings of the historical period were all only partly successful. In *The Carved History*, foreign actors Choa and Bar-Galand emphasize that the design of memorials is a symbol of the relations between life in exile and memory. This notion largely echoes some of the ideas of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin. The Shanghai-Toronto-based corporation Living Bridge reestablished a communal environment, instead of only gentrifying an individual architecture, of several other historical sites and cultural facilities in Tilanqiao as part of the North Bund Project.<sup>18</sup> Two projects that were proposed between 2004 and 2005 have yet to be completed.

No other contestation of China's attitude toward the Jews during the war can satisfactorily reveal the monolithic nature of the museum narrative. As in most academic research findings on Jewish history of China, arguments that justify the possibility of the survival of the Jews in Shanghai usually produce a harmonious picture. For example, most claims assert that anti-

Semitism is unknown in China, that Chinese and Jewish cultures historically have many aspects in common, and that China was very generous to accept the refugees who were denied a safe haven by all the other countries.<sup>19</sup> Shanghai was depicted as an abstract symbol of the tolerance of China toward Jewish refugees in the just cause of the fight against fascism. However, claiming that anti-Semitism did not exist in wartime China is inaccurate, although the majority of the Chinese population did not harbor strong resentments against the Jews. No large-scale persecutions occurred during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai and the degree of hostility towards Jews, as exhibited by Japan or by the pro-Japanese Chinese government, was largely motivated by immediate political interests. Zhou Xun studied Chinese perceptions of Jews and claimed that anti-Semitism in East Asia, such as in Japan and China, differed from its counterpart in the Western cultural context, "which was, as Sander Gilman put it, 'half of the dichotomy of 'Aryan' and 'Semite' which haunted the pseudoscience of ethnology during this period and beyond.'"<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that Western anti-Semitism may have provided the raw materials, hostility toward the Jews in Asia was constructed through other kinds of dichotomies, namely, those of "'East' and 'West,' of 'Japan' and 'America,' and of 'tradition' and 'modernity.'"<sup>21</sup> Thus, such dichotomies also played an important role in Japan's justification of its aggression toward China.<sup>22</sup> In Japanese-occupied Shanghai, the images of Jews were constructed in relation to capitalism and Western influence, thereby promoting the region's attempt to build a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."<sup>23</sup> Nationalist Wang Jingwei had been a staunch follower of Sun Ke (son of Sun Yat-sen) but eventually collaborated with the Japanese in Nanjing to set up a "puppet government"; Wang also joined the Japanese campaigns against the Jews. For Wang, "the 'Jews' were the antithesis of nationalism and a representation of the 'evil imperialistic West'; the 'Jews' were the 'ancestors of all anarchists and communists.'"<sup>24</sup> The statelessness of the European Jews posed a threat to nationalism and was therefore used by Wang in his anti-Jewish arguments to defend his consistency in building a new unified Chinese nation.<sup>25</sup> Other researchers have revealed the Sun-initiated but aborted and unrealized plans of relocating the Jewish refugees to Yunnan Province in Southwest China. The objective of this project was to influence the Far East policy of the US and Britain by reinforcing the diplomatic power of China against Japan through the Jews. However, concerns were also expressed over the Jews' statelessness, which would, it was claimed, negatively influence the nation building of the young Republic of China. Thus, the plan forbade the Jews from settling in inland China and being involved in political propaganda.<sup>26</sup>

## 2) Missing Chinese

If the absence of controversial images of the Jewish population in wartime Shanghai can still be seen as a continuation of the hardly reflective commemorative culture in China, it might be unsurprising to see that the narratives of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum also downplay the role of individual Chinese citizens and their wartime accounts. When Chinese scholars began to notice this period of history in the early 1990s, detailed descriptions in Chinese - not unlike Western narratives - soon began to include stories of Jewish refugees fleeing to Shanghai, of the refugees' community life, and of their departure from Europe.<sup>27</sup> Chinese academia has been attempting to connect Jewish and Chinese cultures from a grand historical perspective to remind the people of Shanghai of their forgotten friendship with the Jews, "thereby introducing this history and the themes of their cosmopolitan humanitarianism to the local population." See Jakubowicz 2009.165. Apart from the above academic contributions, the local mass media have also given the topic considerable exposure. World-renowned Chinese American painter and visual artist Chen Yifei even made a film entitled *Flee to Shanghai* (1999) based on the life story of the Austrian violinist Heinz Greenberg. In 2010, the first Chinese animation film addressing the Holocaust and Shanghailanders, *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai*, was co-produced by two major state-backed film producers in Shanghai, namely, Shanghai Animation Film Studio and Shanghai Film Group Corporation. The story and the main characters of the film are based on the account of an acquaintance of the director, Wu Lin, who was then living in Los Angeles. Wu was amazed to learn from the Chinese media about the previously unknown part of Shanghai and world history during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII in 2005. *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* was shown in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, the UK, and Israel. The movie was well received by both Chinese and Israeli audiences and the judges of film festivals at home and abroad. For more details about the film, visit <http://www.jewishgirlinsh.com/index.php>. The film was nominated for the Jewish Experience Award at the Jerusalem Film Festival. In 2010, the film received the Golden Cartoon Award for Best Chinese Film Prize at the China International Animation and Digital Arts Festival in Changzhou, Jiangsu, China. [/ref]

These historical narratives echo those of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. In the museum narratives, "the Chinese people" are depicted solely as a humanistic and generous collective which aided the foreigners in surviving warfare and persecution. As described above, the rationale behind the database and its contents support the observation that Chinese academia has no interest in the living memory of Chinese individuals during the war and in the insights this could offer for the present. Chinese museum curators and historians do not consider the historical memory of the Jewish refugees as being a part of the troubled war memory of China and therefore worth "rescuing". Similar to Western postwar studies, the post-1949 war narratives dealing with China are predominantly focused on the Civil War between the Communists and the Nationalists from 1945 to 1949. The memory related to World War II and the corresponding studies remain ambiguous given the ever-changing situation in domestic politics and diplomatic relations, such as the cross-strait Taiwan-China, Sino-Japan, and Sino-US relations. Therefore, the writing on World War II history in Chinese academia was carefully deliberated so as not to touch upon any possible "political incorrectness" in the official historiography.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, no historic relic related to any Sino-Japanese War experience is listed in Shanghai under the Conservation Unit of Cultural Relics, which is the Chinese preservation system for protecting the important cultural legacies of the nation. The neglect of Shanghai's own spaces of war memories, e.g. Sihang Warehouse where one of the most famous battles between the Chinese and the Japanese troops took place in 1937, is set off by the application for UNESCO recognition of the Tilanqiao area, which covers the site of the Jewish community, as the only historic site of the Jewish refugees in World War II in China. This cosmopolitan stance has been largely institutionalized and therefore continues to be instrumental. The story of the Shanghailanders offers a theme that still generates little room for dialogue for both global and domestic speculations on new possibilities in understanding China at present.

### Shanghailanders: A Jewish Experience Only?

This study has suggested that the major subjectivities in the pervading current narratives of the unique war experience of the Shanghailanders need to be revisited. On the one hand, this study suggested that the historical period of World War II be viewed from a perspective that integrates Jewish and Chinese experiences. The "war-ravaged Shanghai," according to Vera Schwarcz, "was a world in which Jewish as well as Chinese refugees tried to preserve themselves and their cultural identity. For the Chinese, the predicament of having become refugees in their own country was particularly painful...The pathos of Chinese dislocation, however, touched the lives of Jewish refugees only lightly..."<sup>29</sup> The similar ordeal of Jewish and Chinese lives during the war is remains partly in the shadows.

On the other hand, this study raised the following questions for the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and for other commemorative spaces in China: how can a winner, benefactor, or victim of a war construct a monument commemorating the war and their experiences? How will the audience perceive it and benefit from it? A plaque that is dedicated to the Jewish refugees from Hamburg at the entrance area of the museum offers an interesting contrast in this regard: the plaque illustrates the gratitude of the municipal government of Hamburg as the "perpetuator" of the persecution of German Jews (Figure 6). Does the museum only provide its local audience with a place where they can identify themselves with the images of Chinese people in an appreciation from the wrong-doer and feel proud? After all, what is there to be proud of? The people of Shanghai who tolerated their poor neighbors from Europe but are invisible in the museum or the city faced with a complex political situation that actually made the landing of Jewish refugees possible? The extent to which a modern commemorative space can further our understanding of WWII and its long-term influences remains an intriguing issue in contemporary China.

Thus, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum narrates history in a manner that separates China and its people from the realm of reflexive and reactive subjectivity. The majority of the local Chinese, however, appear to be unaware of and not participating in the official commemorative culture as prescribed by the Chinese government - a culture that is supposed to warn, and encourage reflection as well as contemplation. The museum can be an example of memorial site in contemporary China, where cultural remembrance is created for a specific non-Chinese community under the purview of the agents dominating China's historiography. The aim of this site is not (necessarily) nation building but rather "destination branding" and fostering transnational partnership. The goal of monuments is not only to remind people of the past or, in many cases, of the excluded narratives, but also to provide people with a space where they can observe and contemplate on their own reactions to the past. Reiterating the

value of the anti-fascist spirit of China and the generosity of its people places the memory narrative of the genocide and of political persecutions in Europe during World War II at an observational distance. Despite its effective restoration of architectural relics and attempts to re-invoke public interest (at home and abroad) in this period of history, the museum provides the local public only with an opportunity to acquire factual information rather than an opportunity to contemplate on the relations between memory, history, and the present and the visitors' personal place therein.

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#### Contributor:



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#### Notes:

1. Of course, circumstances changed when the Pacific War broke out in 1941, as Japan began to fight directly with the US. The lives of the Jewish refugees were largely dependent on the Japanese policy. See more in David Kranzler *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: the Jewish refugee community of Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York: Yeshiva University Press; distributed by Sifria Distributors 1976).
2. See Xun Zhou. *Chinese Perceptions of the "Jews" and Judaism: a History of the Youtai*. (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 7
3. Andrew Jakubowicz, "Cosmopolitanism with Roots: The Jewish Presence in Shanghai before the Communist Revolution and as Brand in the New Metropolis." In *Branding Cities: Cosmopolitanism, Parochialism and Social Change*, ed. Eleonore Kofman et al., (New York: Routledge, 2009), 165
4. Edmund Klamann "Database to chronicle Shanghai Jews who fled Nazis," last modified Fri Jun 6, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/06/07/us-china-jews-idUSSHA29194420080607>
5. See Hung Wu, "Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monument" *Representations*. No. 35 (1991): 84-117
6. See Nuala Johnson. "Cast in stone: Monuments, Geography, and Nationalism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13(1) (1995): 51-65
7. See Rana Mitter, "Behind the Scenes at the Museum: Nationalism, History and Memory in the Beijing War of Resistance Museum, 1987-1997." *The China Quarterly*. Vol. 161 (2000).
8. The mutual recognition between the PRC and Israel was smooth between 1948 and 1949. However, the bilateral relations experienced a long deadlock after the Korean War broke out and froze in the Suez Crisis when the Cold War upgraded. Consequently, the gap between the PRC and the pro-US Israel deepened. China's own reform of the Middle East policy after the death of Mao largely set the future tone of the normalization of the Sino-Israel relations.
9. Jakubowicz 2009: 165
10. Ibid.
11. verview of the museum provided by the official website of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, last modified in 2010, <http://www.shanghaijews.org.cn/english/article/?sid=14>
12. New measures were taken to attract local visitors during the researcher's last visit to the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum in May 2013; discounted entrance fee is provided to visitors who complete the visitor's survey question form.
13. Yichen, Dai, and Guojian Zhou. "Protection and Development of Jewish Sites and Characteristic Architectures in Shanghai" (论上海犹太遗址及特色建筑的保护和开发 Lun



- Shanghai Youtai Yizhi Ji Tese Jianzhu De Bao Hu He Kaifa). *She hui ke xue* 11 (2006): 181
14. Background information on the chronicle database of the refugees provided by the official website of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, last modified in 2010, <http://www.shanghaijews.org.cn/english/article/?sid=33>. Original text in Chinese; the quotation is the researcher's own translation.
  15. "Play about Holocaust Debuts in China," last modified on March 23, 2012. <http://forward.com/articles/153650/play-about-holocaust-debuts-in-china/#ixzz2XyCze9At>
  16. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 19
  17. Nora 1989: 16
  18. Jakubowicz 2009: 167-170
  19. As background information for the Chinese public, academic research on Shanghai Jews is often accompanied by a brief introduction to the Chinese-Jewish community and its acculturation in ancient China or to the commonality between the Jewish and Chinese cultures in different aspects. See Pan Guang, "Shanghai Jewish Refugees During the Second World War" *Shanghai Academy of Social Science Quarterly* 2(1991); Pan Guang, "The Rise and Fall of Zionism in Shanghai and Its Characteristics," *Historic Review* 02(1994). Tang Peiji, "On Shanghai Jews 7," *Tonji University Journal Humanities and Social Science Section* (1994). ———, "On Shanghai Jews 9," *Tonji University Journal Humanities and Social Science Section* 6, No. 1 (1995). Dong Liying, "Jews in Shanghai in the WWII," *Journal of Tibet Nationalities Institute (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)* 26, No. 5 (2005). Tang Peiji, "Shanghai -Noah's Ark of the Jews," *Shanghai Studies on Ccphistory and Construction* 04(1995).
  20. Zhou 2001: 141
  21. Ibid.
  22. In Japan's propaganda, Japan came to help China restore its lost cultural confidence and promote "Asia self-awakening"; preserving the Chinese traditional classics and cultural heritage from the West was essential. "Western values were defined as liberalism, individualism, capitalism and communism as oppositions to 'Asian'" (Zhou, 143). The image of the Jews was characterized not only by western capitalism and imperialism but also by communist thoughts. Thus, they easily fell prey to the attacks of Japan-sponsored Chinese organizations such as Xinmin Hui as part of the war propaganda.
  23. This attempt to free Asia from western assimilation and violation also echoed the Pan-Asianism ideas of China in Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People." See Zhou 2001: 144
  24. Zhou 2001: 146
  25. Zhou 2001:148. 151-152
  26. Dong, "Jews in Shanghai in the WWII." Yin and Zhao 2007.
  27. Wang Qinyu, "Jews in the Old Shanghai," *Shanghai Academy of Social Science Quarterly* 2(1987). Xu Buzeng, "Jewish Musicians in Shanghai (1)," *The Art of Music (Journal of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music)* 03(1991). Tang Peiji, "On Jews in Shanghai 3," *Tonji University Journal Humanities and Social Science Section* 5, No. 2 (1994). Tang, "On Shanghai Jews 9." Jianchang Fang, "German Jewish Refugees in Shanghai During the WWII," *Deutschland-Studien* 13, No. 3 (1998). Tang Yading, "Music Life of Shanghai Jewish Refugee Community" *Art of Music (Journal of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music)* No. 04 (1998).
  28. See additional information on the vicissitudes of the making of the memorial for the Sino-Japanese War in postwar China in He Yanan, "Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006." In *History & Memory*, Volume 19, No. 2, Fall/Winter (2007): 43-74
  29. Vera Schwarcz, "Who can See a Miracle? The Language of Jewish Memory in Shanghai." In *The Jews of China*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (Armonk, N.Y. ; London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 293

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