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COLONIALISM IN CONTENTION: THE 1874 AND 1898 SIMING GONGSUO RIOTS IN
QING CHINA

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

The 1874 and 1898 *Siming gongsuo* riots were two violent conflicts that occurred between a local commercial guild and the French authority in the French concession in Shanghai. Arguably, these two incidents were the greatest popular disturbances in the history of foreign concessions in Shanghai. Although previous scholarship has shed light on the reasons for and the repercussion of the riots, a rigid Sino-France dichotomy and China-centered approach seem to have been uncritically applied. Based upon voluminous multi-lingual primary sources housed in the Shanghai Municipal Archive and the Shanghai Library, this study, first and foremost, suggests that the 1874 and 1898 riots are much more complicated than a simplistic Sino-France binary. Also, this study aims to draw attention to the multi-dimensional challenges with which the French colonial institutions were confronted in these cases. In order to better conceptualize the two riots, I propose the concept of “the modern colonial quandary” to describe the convergence of local opposition from China, imperial rivalry between Britain and France and the internal discord within the French colonial institutions. Moreover, this study draws heavily on the recent studies of empire and its correlation with colonialism which highlight empire not as an invincible and all-powerful hegemon but as a constantly expanding entity replete with anxiety and vulnerability. Lastly, the present study also attempts to contribute to the growing body of scholarship on examining Chinese history from an international perspective.

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INTRODUCTION

Siming gongsuo (四明公所), also known as the Ningbo association¹, was a native place association predominantly composed of people who were sojourners in Shanghai from Ningbo prefecture, Zhejiang province. Like other native place associations, *Siming gongsuo* served to promote common origin solidarity as well as to maximize its members' commercial interests. Moreover, *Siming gongsuo*'s another function was to provide charitable cemetery (yi zhong 義冢) and mourning hall for the impoverished Ningbo men. From 1797 to 1802, a number of sojourning Ningbo merchants continuously purchased land in Shanghai and subsequently sponsored the establishment of cemetery and surrounding compounds. In the year of 1803, the association named “*Siming gongsuo*” was officially established.²

During the early years of the reign of Emperor Daoguang (roughly from 1820s to 1830s), *Siming gongsuo* compounds underwent a series of renovation and expansion. In particular, in 1836, the association property was included in the officially-endorsed map (guan tu 官圖), documented in the local official records and granted the exemption from taxation. At the same time, the association board members decided to set up a “bureau of lending coffins on credit” (she guan ju 賒棺局), which was essentially a charitable organization providing free coffins for the indigent Ningbo men who could not afford to purchase their own.³ In short, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, *Siming gongsuo* stood out as one of the largest and most prestigious associations in Shanghai.

¹ In this study, *Gongsuo* is translated as native place association, although some other possible translations, such as native place association, can also be applied. Also, for the sake of narrative, *Siming gongsuo* and association in this study are used interchangeably.

² The vast majority of the primary sources used in this study are kept in Shanghai Municipal Archive (SMA). These archival sources will be cited as SMA followed by the name of the document and the number of the archive. SMA, Zhang Rangsan 张让三, *Shanghai Siming gongsuo yuan qi* 《上海四明公所缘起》, Q118-2-30.

³ Ibid.

However, the circumstances in which Siming gongsuo, along with other associations in Shanghai, operated changed dramatically and fatefully in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, a host of unequal treaties were concluded between China and western imperial powers following the Qing troop's humiliating defeat in several military conflicts. As the unequal treaties dictated, several imperial powers, notably Britain, France, and the United States, were granted the privilege to create "foreign concessions (zu jie 租界)" in Shanghai.⁴ Whether French concession was created in 1849, the association property of Siming gongsuo was included in the French concession. As Ge Siyuan (葛思元), one of the prominent board members of Siming gongsuo in the early Republican era, lamented, "(Ever since) Siming gongsuo was included in the French concession, multiple incidents ensued afterwards."⁵

Although in general the Ningbo association could maintain a peaceful relationship with the French authority, two riots, which happened in 1874 and 1898 respectively, ruptured their seemingly harmonious coexistence. These two conflicts yielded a multitude of casualties, serious physical injuries, large-scale property destruction and city-wide civil disobedience. Moreover, the severity of the riots was so great that high officials and diplomats from China, France and Britain were involved in order to resolve the conflicts. These two riots are generally noted in the historiography as "1874 and 1898 Siming gongsuo riots." Arguably, the 1874 and 1898 Siming gongsuo riots were probably the largest popular disturbances in the history of foreign concessions in Shanghai. Therefore, these two incidents have drawn much scholarly attention in the academia.

⁴ Wang Tieya 王铁崖 ed., *Zhong wai jiu yue zhang hui bian* 《中外旧约章汇编》, vol. 1, (San lian shudian 三联书店, 1957).

⁵ SMA, Ge Siyuan 葛思元, *Shanghai Siming gongsuo dashi ji* 《上海四明公所大事记》, Y4-1-762-21, 25, 27, 29.

Current scholarship has examined the Siming gongsuo riots through the lens of socio-economic history, political history and cultural history. In general, scholars have studied the riots from the perspectives of class relations within Siming gongsuo, death ritual, nationalism, as well as diplomatic history. In “The Ningpo Bang and Financial Power at Shanghai,” Susan M. Jones takes note of the significant role of Shen Honglai (沈洪賚), who, as Jones suggests, represented the rise of “mass labor.” According to Jones, the 1898 Siming gongsuo riot was an epitome of the decline of the traditional “kinship-based” leadership of the association, which symbolized the “modernization of power structure” within the Ningbo association.⁶ Similarly, Su Zhiliang argues that the 1898 Siming gongsuo riot symbolized the formation of the bourgeois class in Shanghai, in that the board members of Siming gongsuo, whom Su identifies as “the first generation of capitalists,” played an indispensable part in the resolution of the riot.⁷

R. D. Belsky provides an alternative analysis of the 1874 and 1898 riots. Focused upon the preponderance of death ritual among Ningbo men in Shanghai, Belsky argues that the provision of “funerary patronage”, that is charitable cemetery and mourning hall, forged the organizational “cohesiveness” of the commoner-members of the association. As a result, the resistance against the French encroachment can be better understood as these Ningbo commoners’ deeds of defending their “collective interest.”⁸ In her study of labor movement in Shanghai, Elizabeth Perry directly cited Belsky’s thesis in her book.⁹

Bryna Goodman’s study of the 1874 and 1898 Siming gongsuo riots offers another interpretation of the riots. Goodman’s central argument rests upon the connection between the

⁶ Susan Mann Jones, “The Ningpo Pang and Financial Power at Shanghai,” in Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner, eds., *The Chinese City between Two Worlds*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 86.

⁷ Su Zhiliang 苏智良, “Shi lun 1898 nian Siming gongsuo shijian de lishi zuoyong,” 试论 1898 年四明公所事件的历史作用 *Xueshu yue kan* 学术月刊, no. 6 (1991).

⁸ R. D. Belsky, “Bones of Contention: The Siming Gongsuo Riots of 1874 and 1898,” in *Papers on Chinese History*, ed. Richard Belsky et al. (The Fairbank Center, Harvard University, 1992).

⁹ Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 23.

locality and the nation. As she convincingly points out, although the eruption of the 1898 Siming gongsuo riot was not directly caused by Ningbo men's nationalist sentiment, the reports of Shenbao portrayed the riot as a conflict between China and France and extolled Ningbo men's stalwart defense of Chinese sovereignty. In accordance with Goodman, these reports reflected the "popular understandings" of nationalism in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰ Wu Jianxi echoes Goodman's argument in his research on the 1898 Siming gongsuo riot. Employing some distinctive dichotomies to illustrate his arguments, Wu brings to light Ningbo men's opposition to the French encroachment.¹¹

In addition, Fu Liang examines the Siming gongsuo riots from the perspective of diplomatic history. His study is primarily centered on how the diplomatic strategies of Liu Kunyi (劉坤一), the Liang jiang (兩江) governor-general at the time, were manifested through his handling of the 1898 Siming gongsuo riot. The most outstanding contributions of Fu Liang's research, I think, is that he is by far the only scholar who mentions the involvement, or rather intervention, of Britain in the 1898 riot.¹²

To sum up, current scholarship has investigated the Siming gongsuo riots from different perspectives. Nonetheless, these studies have reduced nations to individual actors, neglected the tension and conflicts between different agents of each country, and thus obscured the dynamic process in which a series of negotiations, resistance, violence, tensions, and competition took place in a complex matrix of differentiated power relations.

¹⁰ Bryna Goodman, "The Locality as Microcosm of the Nation?", *Modern China*, Vol. 21, No 4, 1995, pp. 387-419; Bryman Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 158-159.

¹¹ Wu Jianxi 吴健熙, "Dui di er ci Siming gongsuo shijian zhong zhu xianxiang zhi kaocha" 对第二次四明公所事件中诸现象之考察, *Shilin* 史林, no. 4 (2001).

¹² Fu Liang 傅亮, "Liu Kunyi yu di er ci Siming gongsuo shijian jiaoshe" 《刘坤一与第二次四明公所事件交涉》, *Jindai zhongguo* 近代中国, vol. 24 (2015).

This study attempts to present a broader vista on the 1874 and 1898 Siming gongsuo riots and calls for a different perspective. It is not adequate to document how and why Chinese people, especially Ningbo men, resisted France's imperial authority in the riots. We need to examine these riots from a global perspective on colonialism in China, focusing on the multi-dimensional challenges with which the French colonial institutions were confronted.¹³ I propose the concept of "modern colonial quandary" to generalize the multifarious challenges facing the French colonial rule.¹⁴ In the case of the 1874 and 1898 Siming gongsu riots, the "modern colonial quandary" was manifested through three aspects. First of all, I will argue that local Ningbo men resisted the French authority through multiple strategies, including negotiations, collective violence and civil disobedience in 1874 and 1898. The second dimension of the "modern colonial quandary" concerns the internal discord within the French colonial institutions, especially the conflict between the consul-general and the Municipal Council. As a matter of fact, this study will argue that it was the tension within the French authority that to a considerable degree contributed to the occurrence of the 1874 riot. The last aspect deals with the imperial rivalry between France and Britain, which ran through the entire 1874 and 1898 riots. I will also argue that, following the 1898 riot, Britain's intervention in the Sino-France negotiation drastically altered the way the riot was resolved.

Additionally, some words should be said about the primary sources employed in this study. I have found that the primary sources that previous scholars have used to study the 1874 and 1898 riots are mainly in Chinese and English languages while relevant French sources have

¹³ In the most recent historical studies, scholars have started to challenge the conventional representation of colonial empires as all-powerful, dominant and hegemonic. Instead, current scholarship tends to reveal the multiple limits of colonial empires, often beleaguered by anxiety and vulnerability. For more information, please refer to: Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reaches of the Global 1870-1945* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Further research needs to be done in order to see if this concept can be universally applied in the study of colonialism and China, or even more broadly, the study of colonial empire.

not been fully examined.¹⁵ Utilizing multi-lingual sources, this study attempts to offer a global perspective on European colonialism in China. To be slightly more specific, *the Manuscripts of Siming gongsuo* (*Siming gongsuo wen di gao* 四明公所文底稿) reveals the property dispute between Siming gongsuo and the French Council which presaged the eruption of the 1874 riot. Also, *Compte-Rendu Annuel de Gestion du Conseil D' Administration Municipale de la Concession Francaise A Shanghai* (the Minutes of the French Municipal Council in Shanghai) as well as *l' écho de Chine* (the Records of China), which have never been consulted in the studies of the Siming gongsuo riots, show the internal discord within the French colonial institutions.¹⁶ Meanwhile, a large number of newspaper reports, including *Shenbao*, *North China Herald*, and so forth, not only offer detailed accounts with a sense of immediacy, but also reflect the popular sentiments of different countries at the time. Moreover, a wide range of documents regarding the Siming gongsuo association, official memorials, personal writings, gazetteers and steles will also be used.

¹⁵ Previous scholars were heavily reliant upon the published documents, such as *Shenbao*, *North China Herald*, steles and so forth, when they studied the 1874 and 1898 riots.

¹⁶ It is necessary to clarify that the “Mémoire Explicatif (Memorandum)” of the document was written by some members of the Municipal Council, which made a certain degree of bias virtually inevitable. In this study, instead of taking these accounts as face value, I focus on the various discords between the consul-general and the Municipal Council as manifested in this document. Moreover, the “less-than-satisfactory” representation of the consul-general in the document precisely reflects the underlying tension between the Municipal Council and the consul-general.

CHAPTER 1: LAND OF CONTENTION: CONTESTED PROPERTY AND THE ISSUE OF VAGABONDS

The 1874 and 1898 Siming gongsuo riots did not happen as two isolated incidents subject to a certain general-consul's wishful whimsy or a group of Ningbo men's antagonistic animosity. On the contrary, the location where the riots erupted had a long history replete with contention, intricacy and negotiation. This chapter attempts to reveal some of the major contentions between Siming gongsuo and the French authority which predated the 1874 riot. By doing so, the 1874 and 1898 riots can be re-contextualized in the history of the contested relationship between Siming gongsuo and the French authority. In short, it was the long-standing contestation over the association's property that sowed the seed for the outbreak of the riots.

Contestation over Siming gongsuo Land Property

The contestation over Siming gongsuo's rights to the land property can be dated back to 1861. Some explanations regarding the property right in Shanghai are in order before we proceed further. After Shanghai was open as one of the first five "treaty ports," foreign merchants' primary concerns lay in the issue of land. Therefore, land management became one of the most urgent tasks facing the foreign concessions. It is not a pure coincidence that one of the most important regulations of the foreign concessions was, in fact, named after "Land Regulations." The "Land Regulations" unequivocally dictated the fundamental principle of land management in the foreign concessions in Shanghai, that is, the institution of permanent renting. In order for

foreign merchants to obtain the contracts to permanently rent a piece of land, it was imperative for them to complete a stringent land registration procedure.¹⁷

In the foreign concessions, the land registration had to be authorized by a Chinese legitimate authority. In Shanghai, the most prevalent contract was called “Taotai contract” (Dao qi 道契), because all the contracts of foreign merchants had to be authorized by Shanghai Taotai in the form of his seal (qian yin 鈐印). However, despite its prevalence, it was not always ubiquitously applied. As Chen Zhengshu points out, from 1854 to 1874, “Taotai contract” was not in use in the French concession. Instead, the general-consul in Shanghai unilaterally issued “consulate contract” (gong guan qi 公館契) in place of “Taotai contract”.¹⁸

In addition, although in theory Chinese people were not permitted to rent land in the foreign concessions, some Chinese merchants entrusted foreign company to apply for contracts from Shanghai Taotai. After obtaining the “Taotai contract,” the entrusted foreign company transferred the contract, as well as a “property right sheet” (quan bing dan 權柄單), to the Chinese merchants who were originally intended to rent the land. This transference later on became a common practice in the foreign concessions, and such type of contract was generally known as “the contract of registration for permanent renting” (guahao yong zu qi 掛號永租契).¹⁹

Back to the issue of Siming gongsuo’s land property. Over a decade after the association property was included in the French Concession, the board members of Siming gongsuo had been continuously anxious about whether or not the land property would be rented by foreign merchants in Shanghai. In 1861, Ge Fanfu (葛蕃甫), one of the leading board members of the

¹⁷ Lian Yuqiang 练育强, “Shanghai zujie tudi dengji falu fenxi” 《上海租界土地“登记”法理分析》, *Dongfang faxue* 东方法学, no. 1 (2009).

¹⁸ Chen Zhengshu 陈正书, “Dao qi yu dao qi dang’an zhi kaocha” 《道契与道契档案之考察》, *Jindai shi yanjiu* 近代史研究, no. 3 (1997).

¹⁹ Ibid.

association, decided to pay a visit to the French consul-general so as to utter their misgivings about the precarious fate of the charitable cemetery. Upon hearing Ge's concerns, the consul-general Benait Edan decided to protect the cemetery. As a result, he suggested that Siming gongsuo rent the association property to his brother Victor Edan, a merchant in Shanghai, so that the French authority could exercise legitimate protection over it. In the meantime, the consul-general required Siming gongsuo to sign the contract and deliver it to the consulate so that the contract could be authorized.²⁰ Based upon Benait Edan's suggestion, Siming gongsuo formulated a contract and submitted it to the French consulate. Essentially, the transaction between Siming gongsuo and Victor Edan was the implementation of "the contract of registration for permanent renting".²¹

However, while the transaction was endorsed by the French consul-general, Siming gongsuo never received its authorized contract. In 1863, two years after the transaction had been concluded, Ge Fanfu still could not obtain the authorized contract from Benait Edan.²² Also, what seemed to be unpropitious to Siming gongsuo was that Benait Edan was transferred to be the consul-general in Tianjin in 1863. His successor, Mauboussin, not only refused to acknowledge the agreement reached between Siming gongsuo and Benait Edan, but also informed Siming gongsuo board members of other French merchants' intention to rent its property. Faced with the hazardous situation, the board members of Siming gongsuo desperately sought for assistance. On the one hand, the board members spared no efforts to continue the contact with Benait Edan, pleading him to communicate with the incumbent consul-general. On

²⁰ SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao* 四明公所文稿底, Q118-2-15.

²¹ Cao Shengmei 曹勝梅, "Siming gongsuo shijian zhi genyuan" 《四明公所事件之根源》, *Dangan yu shixue* 档案与史学, no. 4 (2002).

²² SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao* 四明公所文稿底, Q118-2-15.

the other hand, Ge Fanfu even wrote a letter to the French ambassador in Tianjin and enlisted his help for protecting the charitable cemetery.²³

Noticeably, according to Cao Shengmei's research based upon voluminous French documents kept in *Archives diplomatiques*, Benait Edan indeed attempted to communicate with Mauboussin and informed him of the negotiation between himself and Siming gongsuo. Surprisingly, for some unknown reasons, Mauboussin turned a deaf ear to Benait Edan's mediation and insisted that the property registered under the name of Victor Edan belonged to the French concession.²⁴ Shortly after, Mauboussin passed away, leaving the issue of the proprietorship unresolved. As a result, the issue of Siming gongsuo's right to property unfortunately remained to be a "Gordian knot."

While the contention over the proprietorship of the association property temporarily subsided, the French authority never totally gave up the intention of occupying the land. It is noteworthy that French authority would utilize multiple subterfuges to justify its expropriation of the land. In the year of 1865, the French Municipal Council requested that the police station, which had been originally built to the north of Siming gongsuo compounds, be relocated to a new location coterminous to Siming gongsuo due to security concerns. At the same time, the French authority argued that the area where Siming gongsuo was located was rather low-lying and uneven, which, according to the Council, necessitated the filling of the ditch and the building of a new road. Consequently, the Council required Siming gongsuo to empty several housings for the use of a new police station.²⁵

In opposition to the French Council's scheme, Siming gongsuo board members not only refused to rent any property to the French authority, but also pinpointed the French Council's

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cao Shengmei 曹勝梅, "Siming gongsuo shijian zhi genyuan" 《四明公所事件之根源》.

²⁵ SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao*, Q118-2-15

folly of filling the ditch rather than re-channel it. More significantly, the board members contended that the charitable cemetery was of central importance to the association, thus any attempts to disturb or even remove it would not be accepted.²⁶

In addition, the French Council also argued that Siming gongsuo should compensate the expenditure that the Council spent on filling in the ditch and building the new road. In defiance, Siming gongsuo board members accused the Council of unilaterally making the decision without acquiring the recognition of the association. In order to resolve the impasse, the Shanghai magistrate convoked members from both the French Council and Siming gongsuo for a panel discussion on this matter. Unfortunately, by no means was the discussion fruitful. While the association members considered the French Council's decision as uncondusive and unnecessary, the members of the Council insisted that not only could the new road provide greater convenience for pedestrians, but it also contributed to the protection of the charitable cemetery. Nonetheless, under the tremendous pressure exerted by the French authority, the Shanghai magistrate had no choice but to further negotiate with the association board members. Finally, after rounds of painstaking behind-the-curtain negotiations, the association members acceded to paying a reduced amount of remuneration to the French Council under the condition that the charitable cemetery would be left intact.²⁷

Two years later (1867), another dispute arose with regard to whether or not Siming gongsuo was obliged to pay tax to the French Council. According to the "Land Regulations," the property included in the French concession was subject to taxation levied by the French Council.²⁸ However, the board members of the association were not willing to pay the tax. Therefore, they delivered a petition to the French Council, highlighting the fact that their

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wang Tieya 王铁崖 ed., *Zhong wai jiu yue zhang hui bian* 《中外旧约章汇编》.

property was not originally established to gain any profits but rather as a charitable cemetery providing graveyard for the impoverished sojourning Ningbo men. Additionally, what is remarkably interesting about their petition is that they drew a parallel between their cemetery and the cemetery pertaining to the French concession. Based upon this argument, they contended that since the cemetery of the French concession was exempt from taxation, it would be unreasonable to expect the association to pay the tax for their cemetery.²⁹

Fortunately, before the negotiation fell into another intricate deadlock, the French consul-general M. Brenier promptly intervened. In his letter to the Shanghai Taotai, M. Brenier explicitly stated that Siming gongsuo could be exempt from taxation in accordance with the precedent where the cemetery belonging to the French concession was under no obligation of paying tax. In the meantime, the consul-general also promised that he would discuss with the French Council so as to exempt the association from taxation.³⁰ Obviously, the consul-general and the French Council reached an agreement on this issue, because the Siming gongsuo property was officially exempt from taxation in the following year.³¹

The above cases provide us with some inklings as to how the French authority operated in its concession and how the board members of the association responded to the newly-established foreign authority. The elongated, protracted and invariably complicated negotiations between Siming gongsuo and the French authority belie the stereotypical representation of the colonial empire characterized by uni-directional imposition of its will and its overarching dominance. Instead, the way that the French authority functioned in the concession was more often than not dependent upon negotiation and compromise rather than coercion. In other words, France's rule in its concession in Shanghai was never unchallenged or undisturbed. Furthermore,

²⁹ SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao*, Q118-2-15.

³⁰ SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao*, Q118-2-15.

³¹ SMA, Ge Siyuan 葛思元, *Shanghai Siming gongsuo dashi ji* 《上海四明公所大事记》, Y4-1-762-21, 25, 27, 29.

it is equally clear that the dispute and contention over the association's property persisted throughout the entire 1860s. Although the French authority asserted that it had legitimate claims over the association's land, the board members of Siming gongsuo seemed to firmly believe that the *de facto* ownership undoubtedly belonged to them. Likewise, while the French authority was constantly coveted to expropriate the association's land property, Siming gongsuo showed no sign of yielding to its pressures. In this regard, the outbreak of the 1874 riot almost seemed to be unavoidable.

Vagabonds from Ningbo: A Vexing Issue

As Belsky suggests, the 1874 riot was an "extramural" incident, in that there is no evidence suggesting that the riot was carefully planned by anyone.³² However, this view is only partially true. Although the historical contingency to some extent played a role in the eruption of the riot, there were some other concrete causes of the riot. As the next chapter will indicate, one of the important reasons for the outbreak of the riot was the irreconcilable tension between the French consul-general and the Municipal Council. In this chapter, however, I will primarily focus on how the issue of rampant vagrants precipitated the occurrence of the riot and how the riot unfolded and subsequently escalated into collective violence.

In the 1840s, after Shanghai was open as one of the "treaty ports," it became a popular destination for both domestic and foreign investments. The establishment of the foreign concessions provided Shanghai with a safe and stable economic environment. Naturally, the prosperous and steadily-growing economy created more job opportunities. As a result, a large

³² R. D. Belsky, "Bones of Contention: The Siming Gongsuo Riots of 1874 and 1898," in *Papers on Chinese History*, ed. Richard Belsky et al. (The Fairbank Center, Harvard University, 1992), 61.

number of merchants and craftsmen, who hailed from such traditional commercial centers as Suzhou and Ningbo, flocked to Shanghai to eke out a better life.

However, it was impossible for Shanghai to continuously provide jobs for migrant workers for over several decades, especially given the pressure of increasing population. Therefore, not every single one of the inbound laborers was able to find a stable and well-paid occupation. The growing number of the unemployed migrant laborers created a rather grave social predicament: vagrants. From the 1840s to 1850s, the Shanghai magistrates had issued a few announcements, alerting the local residents of some of the vagrants' rampant activities as well as their collusion with the bandits.³³

Among the migrant vendors, porters, lowly-skilled craftsmen and other miscellaneous workers, the overwhelming majority of them were from Ningbo. In the 1860s, the unemployed sojourning Ningbo workers posed a menacing threat for the local order of Shanghai. One of the local orders issued by the Shanghai magistrate vividly depicted these people's living conditions: "the unemployed vagrants rambled around the city... at first they may take up some temporary labors, but there was no guarantee that they would not become bandits once they had no work to do."³⁴

Faced with the challenge of the Ningbo vagabonds, the Shanghai magistrate once attempted to solicit help from Siming gongsuo. To be specific, the magistrate expected the association to collect information about unemployed Ningbo workers in Shanghai and compile a detailed record. Afterwards, the association was required to submit the record to the local magistrate's office. On the ground of the record to be provided by Siming gongsuo, the

³³ Shanghai bowu guan tushu ziliao shi 上海博物馆图书资料室 eds., *Shanghai beike ziliao xuanji* 《上海碑刻资料选辑》 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), pp. 440-445.

³⁴ SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao*, Q118-2-15.

magistrate would dispense a certain amount of remuneration to the association as subsidies (although it was acquiesced that the association would be responsible for the rest of the expenditure). Then, the association was expected to use their own pecuniary resources, as well as the allotted money from the magistrate's office, to deport the unemployed Ningbo vagrants back to their hometown.³⁵

To the Shanghai magistrate's chagrin, the board members of Siming gongsuo were obviously not willing to assist the local government in dealing with the issue. In its reply to the magistrate, the association members considered it a fairly impractical measure because it was remarkably easy for deported Ningbo men to return back to Shanghai given the geographical proximity. More significantly, undertaking such a grand responsibility entailed an immense quantity of monetary investment, which was precisely what the association fell short of at the time. Also, the board members contended that deporting sojourning Ningbo men back to their home of origins would warp the original purpose of establishing the association which had always been to provide Ningbo paupers with the charitable cemetery.³⁶ As we will see in the next chapter, the vagrants from Ningbo were critical to the ways in which Siming gongsuo resisted the French authority.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: LOCAL OPPOSITION: STRATEGIC NEGOTIATION, COLLECTIVE ACTIONS AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

In the thought-provoking book *Empires and the Reaches of the Global 1870-1945*, the authors caution us that “we must be careful not to ascribe the outcome of every event... policy to an inevitable imperial global hegemony without attention to the kind of contingencies and ruptures to which we understand all histories to be subject.”³⁷ Indeed, when a certain imperial power exercised its rule over its colonial subjects, the most salient “rupture” facing it would be the opposition of indigenous residents.

In the case of the Siming gongsuo riots, the local opposition mainly took three distinctive forms: strategic negotiation, collective violence and civil disobedience. The aim of this part is to reveal various strategies utilized by Siming gongsuo to antagonize the French authority in different contexts and different periods of time. Also, it also argues that the forms of resistance varied with different social status group of the association.

Strategic Negotiation Prior to the 1874 Riot

Despite several occasional minor disputes between the French authority and Siming gongsuo in the 1860s over legitimate proprietorship or tax liability, both sides managed to retain a peaceful coexistence. However, the equilibrium was broken and the situation started to deteriorate in the 1870s. To begin with, in 1873, the French Municipal Council made a decision to build a new road which would potentially traverse the charitable cemetery of Siming gongsuo. For the extension project, some scholars speculate that it might have derived from the French

³⁷ Ballantyne and Burton, *Empires and the Reaches of the Global 1870-1945*, 19.

Council's abhorrence to the association's charitable cemetery which they perceived as a potential threat to public sanitation.³⁸

Appalled by this decision, the board members of Siming gongsuo wasted no time in submitting a petition to the consul-general. In the petition, they especially emphasized three reasons for their request. Firstly, the charitable cemetery was established for furnishing graveyard for the desolate sojourning Ningbo men, so any attempt to remove or trespass it would amount to a severe desecration for the dead. Secondly, the charitable cemetery was built prior to its inclusion in the French concession, and its inviolability had been recognized by the previous French consul-general. Lastly, the board members invoked a practical reason, arguing that their graveyard was too close to the city moat and it was hardly necessary to extend the new road to such a remote location.³⁹

Approximately a month later, the board members of the association also sent a petition to the French Council. Not only did the board members reiterated what they had claimed in the letter to the consul-general, but they also clearly stated that they would agree to cover all the expenditure if the Council rechanneled the road so as not to trespass the cemetery. What is more, the board members also proposed a new route to build the road and submitted a blueprint attached to the petition. Apparently, according to the board members, extending the road to the association property was not merely adversary to the cemetery, but also strategically imprudent.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, Siming gongsuo's petition to the French Council was firmly rejected. In his letter delivered back to the association, Voisin, the president of the Council at the time, made

³⁸ Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai* (The History of the French Concession in Shanghai 《上海法租界史》), trans. Ni Jinglan (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yuan chubanshe, 2007), 469.

³⁹ SMA: *Siming gongsuo wen di gao* 四明公所文底稿, Q118-2-15, 1873 December.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1874 January.

it crystal-clear that the establishment of the new road had been endorsed by the members of the French Council in 1863 and an existing map could attest to the original agenda. Meanwhile, although Voisin expressed sympathy to the “souls of the dead”, he implicitly suggested that the cemetery actually posed a grave threat to the public health and therefore should be relocated to an un-populated area.⁴¹ Frustrated with the French Council’s rejection, the board members resorted to the consul-general once again in an attempt to persuade him to negotiate with the Council. In order to reinforce the legitimacy of their request, the board members attached two proclamations of tax-exemption, respectively issued by the former consul-general Benait Edan and the French Council in 1862 and 1868, to the petition.⁴²

In addition, not only did Siming gongsuo endeavor to negotiate with the French authority, but it also enlisted support from local officials, notably the Shanghai Taotai and magistrate. In their letter to Shen Bingcheng (沈秉成), the Shanghai Taotai at the time, the board members faithfully represented what they had argued and proposed in their previous petitions, and bemoaned how their requests were mercilessly denied by the French Council. What is particularly noteworthy is that the board members warned the Taotai that “the charitable cemetery” was of central importance to the sojourning Ningbo men and an unscrupulous handling of the matter might potentially result in a certain degree of commotion. Hence, the board members pleaded that Shen assist them in negotiating with the French consul-general so that he would convince the Council of relinquishing its previous agenda to build the road.⁴³

Possibly alerted by the potentiality of a popular disturbance, Shen immediately responded to the association, promising that he would negotiate with the French consul-general.⁴⁴ Shortly

⁴¹ Ibid., 1874 April.

⁴² Ibid., 1874 April.

⁴³ Ibid., 1874 April.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1874 April.

after, Ye Tingjuan, the Shanghai magistrate, issued a proclamation, informing Siming gongsuo that their concerns had been well received by the French consul-general. In the same proclamation, Ye ordered that sojourning Ningbo people patiently await the response from the French Council and not instigate any turmoil.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the Shanghai Taotai wasted no time in delivering a letter to the French consul-general, Godeaux. In his letter, Shen especially highlighted the symbolic significance of “the charitable cemetery” to the association. At the same time, Shen also pointed out the joint responsibilities of the consul-general and the Taotai, which was to promote social stability and local order. Applying such a distinctive Confucian phraseology as “the virtuous politics” (*ren zheng* 仁政), Shen extolled Godeaux’s previous decision of prohibiting the recruitment of prostitutes in “opium halls” (*yan guan* 煙館) as a policy to promote local ethos. Based upon the same logic, Shen argued that “the charitable cemetery” served a philanthropic function and thus should be protected.⁴⁶

The above multiple rounds of negotiation are indicative of how the association members navigated in the Shanghai local “matrix of powers” primarily composed of Chinese officials and the French authority. Instead of readily succumbing to the requests of the French Council, the board members of Siming gongsuo proactively sought assistance from Chinese local officials. Moreover, as Maybon and Fredet suggest that the board members of Siming gongsuo were well aware of the tension between consul-general and the Municipal Council, therefore, they “plotted a great conspiracy” and took advantage of the internal discord so as to achieve their own goals.⁴⁷ It is imperative to point out that this co-authored work, completed in the 1930s, was written in a

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1874 April.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1874 May.

⁴⁷ Maybon and Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai*, 476.

highly “Orientalist” manner and thus conveys the authors’ prejudice. However, it is indeed true that the board members of Siming gongsuo knew very well that the Municipal Council and the consul-general were two separate apparatuses. Therefore, when one of them rejected their requests, they immediately sought for recourses from the other. On the other hand, from the point of view of the French authority, what they were confronted with was not simply an inchoate native place association but a well-established organization with strong tie to the local bureaucracy. It was highly likely that the French authority found it extremely difficult to maneuver in such a complex local “power network.”

The 1874 Riot: The First Collective Violence in the French Concession in Shanghai

Thus far, the negotiation seems to have fared rather smoothly. As one of the local steles indicates, Godeaux made it crystal-clear that he would try his best to negotiate with the Council so that they would renounce their agenda.⁴⁸ In addition, Siming gongsuo also put up a poster so as to notify its members that the Shanghai Taotai had come to an agreement with the French consul-general. Therefore, all the association members should focus on their own work rather than foment any turmoil.⁴⁹

However, in spite of the efforts made by the board members of the association, Shanghai local officials and the French consul-general, a catastrophic riot still unfortunately broke out. As the next chapter will reveal, it was the irreconcilable tension between French consul-general and the Municipal Council that hampered the negotiation between Siming gongsuo and the French authority and thus contributed to the eruption of the riot. Except for the internal discord within the French colonial institutions, the entire incident seemed to be what North China Herald called

⁴⁸ *Shanghai beike ziliao xuanji* 《上海碑刻資料選輯》, 427.

⁴⁹ SMA, *Siming gongsuo wen di gao*, 1874 May.

“less intelligible than it would have been.”⁵⁰ As Belsky suggests, the 1874 riot should be “considered as an ‘extramural’ incident,” because there was hardly any evidence indicating “any planned or systematic” plots.⁵¹

Frustrated by the fact that the negotiation between the association members and the French authority did not make any concrete progress, the non-elite members of Siming gongsuo started to assemble and protest in front of the association compounds. As indicated earlier, there were many unemployed Ningbo vagrants in Shanghai, so it is completely plausible to surmise that a certain number of them joined the protest. On April 29th, approximately 1,000 sojourning Ningbo men gathered together around the association property. From 8 am to noon, the entire area was abuzz with vociferous discussions. It was purported that these Ningbo commoners intended to march to the office of the consul-general but was forestalled by the board members of the association. There is no doubt that a sense of misgiving was haunting over the whole association premise.⁵²

On May 3rd, numerous Ningbo men once again assembled in front of the association. According to the reports of *Shenbao*, some three hundred Ningbo men were scattered around the Siming gongsuo compound. Around 1:30 pm, a Cantonese prostitute came out of the west gate. When she passed by the association area, she encountered a torrent of verbal assault and humiliating mockery. Insulted and threatened by Ningbo men’s uncouth and aggressive behavior, the prostitute ran to a French police office to enlist help. The advent of the French police instantaneously touched off Ningbo people’s resentment. After rounds of fierce quarrels, a violent conflict immediately ensued.⁵³

⁵⁰ *North China Herald*, May. 9th, 1874.

⁵¹ Belsky, “Bones of Contention,” 61.

⁵² *Shenbao* 《申報》, April 29th, 1874.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, May 4th, 1874.

Outnumbered by Ningbo men, the French police was swiftly subdued, physically assailed and gravely wounded. Under the assistance of some European bystanders, the police officer managed to escape from the assault and reported the chaos back to the French police station. Shortly after, Mr. Percebois, the Inspector of Roads, ran to the police station in the hope of seeking for sanctuary. It turned out that Mr. Percebois, along with his wife and children, was severely assaulted by Ningbo mobsters and narrowly escaped from the scene. In the meantime, another missionary lady was reportedly attacked by accident.⁵⁴

At the behest of Godeaux advising prudence and calm-bearing, the French police department did not immediately deploy its forces. However, the tumult did not show any sign of subsiding. On the contrary, it escalated and well continued till the dusk. Over the course of the turmoil, Ningbo strong men hurled stones at foreign residence without any constraint. Worse still, some of them were even engaged in arson and large-scale property vandalizing. Consequently, more foreign residents were injured, foreign residence razed and other property destroyed.⁵⁵

Later on, the violence spread to the French police station. Greatly disturbed by the degree to which Ningbo men were able wreak such a disastrous havoc, the French consul-general finally ordered the deployment of policing forces to quell the local chaos. It was alleged that six Chinese mobsters were killed in the process of restoring order. Almost at the same time, some soldiers from the French navy was also dispatched to the scene. Under the leadership of local military officer, Chinese soldiers were also dispatched in order to safeguard the area of the association compounds. Roughly hours later, the International Settlement also sent their Voluntary Corps to the French concession in assisting the pacification of the local turmoil.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *North China Herald*, May 9th, 1874; *Shenbao*, May 4th, 1874.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *North China Herald*, May 9th, 1874; *Shenbao*, May 5th, 1874.

Furthermore, the military forces were used in conjunction with other strategies in order to pacify the popular disturbance. In response to the outburst of the violence, the French consul-general immediately issued a proclamation, promising Siming gongsuo that he had successfully persuaded the Municipal Council to give up its agenda of building road. According to him, the riot had occurred right before the agreement was about to be delivered to the association, therefore, the whole incident was merely an unpropitious happenstance. Similarly, the Shanghai Taotai and magistrate also issued proclamations respectively, admonished Ningbo commoners to abide by official instructions and vehemently condemned the instigators of the riot.⁵⁷ Thanks to the collective efforts of local officials, the French authority as well as the International Settlement, the once-disturbed area was brought back to order without any ensuing turbulence. The riot yielded a sequence of calamitous consequences: six casualties, all of whom were Chinese, severe injuries of both Chinese and foreigners and irrevocable property damages.⁵⁸

To sum up, as indicated above, the board members of Siming gongsuo did not participate in the riot in any ways. As the contemporary English newspaper speculated, “it was a spontaneous act of Ningbo men.”⁵⁹ It is clear that while the board members of the association utilized a variety of resources to negotiate with the French authority, Ningbo commoners also had their particular ways to make their voices heard. By assembling and protesting, these Ningbo men endeavored to express their discontent, anxiety and indignation. When provoked by a foreign officer’s effrontery, violence seemed to be the best outlet for them. Unlike the elite members who maintained the inextricable tie with the local officials, Ningbo commoners often resorted to a more direct and radical approach.

⁵⁷ *Shanghai beike ziliao xuanji*, 426-428.

⁵⁸ *Shenbao*, May 5th, 1874.

⁵⁹ *North China Herald*, May 9th, 1874

As a matter of fact, the incident was not formally resolved until 1878 when an agreement was finalized after four years of protracted negotiation. As the 1878 agreement dictated, while China was responsible for a tremendous amount of indemnity for foreign residents' loss of property, the inviolability and sanctity of Siming gongsuo's charitable cemetery was once again acknowledged by the French authority in Shanghai.⁶⁰ To a considerable extent, the 1874 riot left an indelible imprint on the collective memory of both the association members and the French authority. The traumatic memory was revitalized over two decades later in the course of the 1898 riot.

The 1898 Riot: Concerns about Public Sanitation and a Pre-Meditated Slaughter

The 1878 agreement between Siming gongsuo and the French authority did not preclude any potentiality for future conflicts. In *Siming gongsuo da shi ji*, there is an entry detailing the French Council's decision to grant tax exemption to the association in 1879.⁶¹ However, what was left unsaid in this document was the French Council's concern about public sanitation. As a matter of fact, although the Council recognized the sanctity of the charitable cemetery, it did inform the local magistrate that the storage of coffins in the mourning hall should be henceforth prohibited given the latent threat they posed to the public health.⁶²

Indeed, from 1880s to 1890s, the French Council's concern about public sanitation gradually took precedence over other issues. In 1882, the French Council notified Siming gongsuo that the association area was susceptible to epidemic plague due to the unbearably hot weather as well as the fetid smell emitted from the remaining coffins in the mourning hall.⁶³ In

⁶⁰ SMA, *Shanghai Siming gongsuo dashi ji*.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² SMA, *Compte-Rendu Annuel de Gestion du Conseil D' Administration Municipale de la Concession Francaie A Shanghai*, U38-1-2743 12, August, 1878.

⁶³ *Shenbao* June 28th, 1882.

the same year, Siming gongsuo board members also endeavored to reform its policy on the charitable cemetery. They purchased land in the northern bank of the Junzhi River and established a “charitable mountain” (yi shan 義山) designed as a replacement of the charitable cemetery.⁶⁴

Despite Siming gongsuo board members’ efforts to relocate some of the coffins, the French Council still seemed to be rather discontent. In 1885, the French Council delivered a letter to the association, warning them that the storage of as many as over 2,000 coffins posed a menacing threat to the public sanitation in the French concession. At the same time, the Council’s concern was passed down to the Shanghai Taotai who was urged to promptly deal with the issue.⁶⁵

In the 1890s, the concerns about public health and the coffin-storage of the association culminated, which was manifested through both Chinese and English newspaper reports. For instance, *Shenbao* suggested that corpses should be placed in a coffin and interred immediately after the bodily demise in order to prevent coffins from reeking. Also, it pointed out that storing coffins in the mourning hall was a deplorable funerary practice because of the potentiality of causing plague.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the editorial of *North China Herald* was also an epitome of foreign residents’ anxiety about public health, especially the storage of coffins in Siming gongsuo, in Shanghai. Apparently, for residents of the International Settlement, the storage of numerous coffins was “a dangerous nuisance to natives and foreigners alike.”⁶⁷

Under such circumstances, the French Council felt even more compelled to cope with the issue of coffin-storage of Siming gongsuo. In 1891, the Council dispatched a doctor to inspect

⁶⁴ SMA, *Shanghai Siming gongsuo dashi ji*.

⁶⁵ SMA, *Shanghai shi tongzhi guan qikan* 《上海市通志館期刊》, vol. 1, Y15-1-17-696, 1933.

⁶⁶ *Shenbao*, August 27th and 30th, 1890.

⁶⁷ *North China Herald*, August 29th, 1890.

the conditions of all the stored coffins at the association. To their surprise, the doctor Blanc concluded that the storage of coffins did not pose any substantial threat to the public health because all of coffins were well-sealed and had been disinfected by quicklime. Nevertheless, even though the doctor's professional opinion failed to provide the Council with a justifiable pretext to wipe out the entire storage, the Council still notified the Shanghai Taotai and required him to take measures to gradually remove the coffins. However, there seemed not be any concrete progress in the whole process of negotiation.⁶⁸

Dwarfed by the stagnant negotiation, the French authority resorted to a different strategy so as to achieve its goal. Since it had been extremely difficult for the French council to arbitrarily remove all the coffins in the association, it sought for a way to physically occupy the adjacent land around the association and then wipe out the storage of coffins, which they perceived as a potential threat. In 1895, the Municipal Council rejected the association's proposal to establish a "wall of closure" surrounding the No. 187 land and the coterminous Ba li qiao street (八里橋).

In 1897, Gaston de Bezaure, notoriously known for his bellicose disposition and steadfast conviction in concession-expansion, was appointed as the consul-general of Shanghai. Only several months after his appointment, Bezaure appended one more article to the original Regulations of the French Municipal Council regarding the prohibition of the storage of corpses in the French concession. In January of 1898, Bezaure ordered that all coffins within the confinement of the French concession should be removed in six months.⁶⁹

In May, the Council submitted an overture concerning a series of urban constructions including schools, hospital and slaughter houses on the lands of No. 186 and 191 which was under the use of the association at the time. In the proposal, the Council requested the consul-

⁶⁸ SMA, *Shanghai shi tongzhi guan qikan*, vol. 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

general to use his consular authority, granted by the unequal treaty, to requisition these two plots of land from Siming gongsuo. Therefore, Bezaure informed Siming gongsuo of presenting land deeds and contracts as evidences of their proprietorship, but the board members of the association failed to present any legitimate documents. Taking advantage of the absence of land deeds, the Council, under Bezaure's instruction, demanded the return of No. 186 and 191 lands.⁷⁰

As more than twenty years ago, Siming gongsuo's charitable cemetery was once again faced with the threat of eradication. In fear of losing their property, the board members of the association collectively submitted a petition to the Shanghai Taotai. Not only did the board members invoke the "field deed" (tian dan 田單) as the proof of proprietorship, but they also claimed that the current French authority's demand blatantly violated the previous agreements between its predecessors and the association. In addition, the board members alluded that there might be a possibility of popular disturbances if the integrity of the charitable cemetery was infringed upon. The Shanghai Taotai, Cai Jun, was unfortunately under dual pressures from both the Ningbo association and the French authority. Caught between devil and the deep blue sea, Cai was rather reluctant to take any proactive actions.⁷¹

Infuriated by the state of impasse, Bezaure decided to take initiative and forcefully requisition the association property. In order to prevent the tragedy of the 1874 riot from recurring again, Bezaure carefully prepared his scheme of invasion. At his behest, a regiment of naval soldiers, led by the naval admiral Texier, was summoned to execute the consul-general's

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Yao Wenzhan 姚文柵 ed., *Minguo Shanghai xian zhi* 《民國上海縣志》, Vol. 14, 1936; SMA, *Shanghai shi tongzhi guan qikan*, vol. 1.

plot. Shortly after, they marched down to the association compounds and tore down some parts of the wall.⁷²

Upon hearing of the French troop's invasion, local Chinese soon aggregated around the association premises. Possibly enraged by the breaches done by the French soldiers, some Chinese people launched attack to several European onlookers and the entire situation was immediately exacerbated. At the same time, the French soldiers were not hesitant at all in drawing their bayonets and thereby killed two Chinese people.⁷³

The French troop's aggressive assailing met with local Chinese people's riotous resistance. They fanatically flung stones and bricks at French soldiers and randomly vandalized adjoining foreign residence. However, the sporadic attacks were swiftly repressed by the French forces and some arrests were made. By the midnight, peace was temporarily restored.⁷⁴

However, next day's early morning, some local Chinese mobsters abruptly assaulted patrolling soldiers with bamboo sticks and self-crafted spears. Confronted with mobsters' fierce attack, Bezaure, as well as other military officers, lost no time in launching large-scale counterattack. Four to five Chinese were gunned down and died. Although some mobsters still harassed the French troop with stone-hurling, the vast majority of them were quickly dispersed. Simultaneously, a gang of Ningbo men gathered around the Siming gongsuo compounds and started to assault the French soldiers who were stationing in that area. The French soldiers reacted with ruthless slaughter resulting in the death of several Chinese mobsters.⁷⁵ Furthermore, like the 1874 riot, the chaos was quelled by the coordination of international forces. This time a

⁷² *L' écho de Chine*, July 16th and 17th, 1898.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

gunboat deployed by an Italian commander came to replenish the French naval force and Chinese patrolling soldiers.⁷⁶

In the middle of the chaos, a conference of exigency was organized at an American trading company, with the Shanghai Taotai, influential board members of the association and the French consul-general present. Despite the proclamation, issued by the association members, admonishing Ningbo men's abstinence from violence, they nevertheless castigated the French consul-general for his decision of coercively pulling down parts of the Siming gongsuo premises. On the other hand, however, Bezaure insisted the necessity of taking back the ground in question. The entire conference was, at one point, in "a state of suspense." In spite of their bifurcations, a consensus was reached in terms of the necessity of bringing order back to the locality. Fortunately, under the collaborative efforts of both Chinese and French officials, the riot on the street finally came to an end, with tranquility restored.⁷⁷

A couple of words should be said about the striking differences between the 1874 and 1898 riots. While the 1874 riot by and large resulted from a vociferous brawl on the street, the 1898 riot was a systematically pre-meditated invasion carefully plotted by the French consul-general. Moreover, in the months preceding the 1874 riot, the association members worked closely with the local officials so as to negotiate with the French authority. However, the association-official alliance seemed to be in the wane. Prior to the 1898 riot, despite the Shanghai Taotai's intention to mediate between the association and the Municipal Council, they failed to form any effective negotiations with one another. All these curious questions still remain to be explored.

⁷⁶ Albert-Auguste Fauvel, "Histoire de la Concession française de Chang-ha," Jiang Jie 蒋杰, trans., in *Shanghai dang'an shiliao yanjiu* 上海档案史料研究, ed. Shanghai shi dang'an guan 上海市档案馆. (Shanghai: san lian shudian, 2014), 161.

⁷⁷ *North China Herald*, July 25th, 1898.

Civil Disobedience: Strike and Boycott during the 1898 Riot

As indicated above, the 1898 riot was by and large a pre-meditated slaughter resulting in many casualties. The massacre of fellow countrymen, as well as the coercive demolition of the association property, seriously enraged sojourning Ningbo people in Shanghai. When the negotiation was mired in stagnant deadlock and the collective violence was relentlessly smashed, Ningbo men resorted to a different strategy, that is, strike and boycott, in defiance of the French authority.

The strike and boycott were first and foremost initiated by the leading board members of Siming gongsuo. On July 18th, the board members expressed their resentment as to Bezaure's aggressive encroachment. Therefore, a circular was issued, calling upon "fellow provincials (Ningbo men) to stop temporarily from doing all business... for reason and right is on our side... That all of you, whether merchants or artisans have temporarily stopped business and trade is a proof of your united indignation at the treatment our cemetery has received..."⁷⁸

This circular instantly incited a large-scale strike and boycott among Ningbo men in Shanghai. Shen Honglai (沈洪賚), the leader of an affiliated sub-division of Siming gongsuo, played an indispensable role in the entire process. Upon receiving instructions from the leading board members regarding the strike and boycott, Shen rallied his branch and informed his followers of the necessity of ceasing to engage in any business or trade as a gesture of resistance. It is purported that he eloquently delivered a sensational speech in front of his fellow provincials, accusing the Shanghai Taotai of "colluding and adulating the foreigners (French in particular)."⁷⁹

The instruction of strike and boycott was rapidly carried out in the foreign concessions including the French concession and the International Settlement. Virtually all Ningbo men in

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *Shanghai beike ziliao xuanji* 《上海碑刻資料選輯》, 430; SMA, *Shanghai Siming gongsuo dashi ji*.

Shanghai, who were engaged in a wide range of trades and occupations, unanimously abstained from any business. The shops were closed; the native banks ceased to conduct any business; most Ningbo vendors refused to go to the marketplace; porters at the wharf stopped working; and even post offices and ship companies were in a temporary state of abeyance.⁸⁰ It was also said that several Cantonese associations emulated Siming gongsuo and called for strike and boycott.⁸¹

The strike and boycott lasted for a couple of days and its repercussion was widely felt not only in the French concession but also in the International Settlement. Complaints could be ubiquitously heard in the International Settlement about its sufferance resulting from Ningbo men's civil disobedience.⁸² *North China Herald* specifically pointed out that the cessation of business at Ningbo native banks had a "peculiar impact upon its Import markets."⁸³ It is safe to argue that the International Settlement was even more threatened by Ningbo men's strike than its French counterpart given the preponderance of trade and commerce to the former.

Profoundly disquieted by the dire situation, various parties started to take initiative to resolve the dilemma. On the one hand, there was a behind-the-scene between the consul-general of the United States and Shen Honglai. The American consul-general complained that the International Settlement was in effect an innocent victim since the conflict was entirely between Siming gongsuo and France. Additionally, the consul-general warned Shen that if the situation kept exasperating, the only recourse left to the International Settlement was to forcefully intervene, which would certainly lead to very unpleasant consequences.⁸⁴ On the other hand, intense negotiations among the Provincial Administrative Inspector, the Shanghai Taotai, board

⁸⁰ *Shenbao*, July 19th and 20th, 1898.

⁸¹ Ouyang Yu 欧阳昱, *Jian wen suo lu* 《见闻琐录》 (Hunan: Yue lu shu she 岳麓书社, 1986), 190. It is noteworthy, however, that only in Ouyang Yu's account did I find the information about Cantonese's involvement in the riot.

⁸² *North China Herald*, July 25th, 1898.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Shanghai beike ziliao xuanji* 《上海碑刻资料选辑》, 430.

members of Siming gongsuo and Bezaure was ongoing. As a result, it was finally concluded that Siming gongsuo agreed to permit its members to restore business under the condition that further discussion should be made in order to fully resolve the issue surrounding the charitable cemetery.⁸⁵

Some scholars may attribute some grand historical significance to the civil disobedience, whereas others discern the historical continuity in terms of strike and boycott orchestrated by the association in opposition to foreigners.⁸⁶ However, what is especially germane to the present study is the fact that when other strategies, such as collective violence and negotiation, did not work effectively, the board members, as well as other non-elite Ningbo men, were able to coordinate and initiate strikes and boycott in defiance of the French authority.

Summary

To conclude, this chapter mainly deals with the local opposition of the association. It is clear that when the association property (the charitable cemetery) was threatened to be either trespassed or removed by the French Council, the association members, elites and non-elites, would resort to different strategies so as to forestall the French authority from achieving its agenda. From the perspective of the French authorities, what challenged its dominance was not simply a loose conglomeration of sojourning Ningbo men, but rather an elaborate organization with the ability to mobilize its members and a strong connection with local officials.

In addition, the way that Siming gongsuo members responded to the threats posed by the French authority was largely class-based. As Belsky correctly points out, “the funerary patronage” constituted a significant element in the cohesiveness of the entire association. The reasons for

⁸⁵ *Shenbao*, July 22nd, 1898.

⁸⁶ Belsky, “Bones of Contention,” 66; Su Zhiliang 苏智良, “Shi lun 1898 nian Siming gongsuo shijian de lishi zuoyong,” 试论 1898 年四明公所事件的历史作用.

Ningbo mass laborers to participate in the riots were their motivations to defend “collective interest” of the association and thereby ensure their spirits would be properly attended after their death.⁸⁷ However, for elite members (the board members) of the association, they seemed to be primarily concerned with their property, that is, the charitable cemetery.

Furthermore, while the board members, equipped with a strong connection with local officials, predominantly resorted to negotiation as their way of resistance, non-elite Ningbo men used collective actions, which subsequently escalated into collective violence, as “means to an end” to “impede social changes” (cleansing of the charitable cemetery) imposed by the French authority.⁸⁸ However, when faced with existential crisis, both elite and non-elite members were able to coordinate and unite with one another in opposition of external challenges as in the case of strike and boycott.

⁸⁷ Belsky, “Bones of Contention,” 69-70.

⁸⁸ Steven E. Barkan and Lynne L. Snowden, *Collective Violence*, (Sloan Educational Publishing, 2007), 5.

CHAPTER 3: INTERNAL DISCORD WITHIN THE FRENCH COLONIAL ESTABLISHMENT: THE CONSUL-GENERAL VS THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

As shown in the previous chapter, the French authorities in Shanghai were confronted with challenges of Chinese people across different social strata, ranging from top governmental official such as Li Hongzhang to the non-elite Ningbo commoners. The diverse participants of the local oppositions should caution us against essentializing China as a monolithic entity. In fact, the same can be said about the French authorities in Shanghai as well. As this chapter will demonstrate, the tension between the consul-general and the Municipal Council was an enduring phenomenon. In addition, it is surrounding the 1874 Siming gongsuo riot that their discord was once again materialized and crystalized.

Prelude of the Tension: from 1862 to 1873

Ever since the conclusion of the Ningjing Treaty (Ningjing tiaoyue 《南京条约》), Shanghai, along with four other coastal cities, was open to the western countries as “treaty ports.” This privilege was originally only granted to Britain, but the most favored nation clause, crystalized in the Treaty of Wanghia (Wangxia tiaoyue 《望廈條約》), enabled other imperial powers to receive the same beneficial treatments that China gave to countries such as Britain. Under the auspices of the unequal treaties, westerners were granted the rights to conduct commercial transactions as well as to reside in the treaty ports. Although the newly-arrived westerners were able to maintain a rather peaceful coexistence with the local Chinese residents, sporadic conflicts still inevitably arose, which propelled the British consul in Shanghai to consider the option of “concession” separating themselves from the local Chinese.

After rounds of negotiations, this idea was put in effect in 1845 when the British concession was formally installed in Shanghai, signified by the signing of the “Shanghai Land Regulation.” Britain’s success of creating a foreign enclave in Shanghai tantalized the itching demand of France to enjoy the same prerogative. As a result, from 1845 to 1849, the French consul in Shanghai sought to negotiate with the Shanghai Taotai in demand of the establishment of the French concession. Due to the French consul’s consistent efforts, he managed to finalize an agreement with the Shanghai Taotai regarding the establishment of the French concession. In 1854, the original “Shanghai Land Regulation” was revised by the consuls of Britain, America, as well as France, the end-product of which was the coalescence of the three concessions.

Over a decade later, after a sequence of contentions with Britain and the United States surrounding the status of the French concession, the French consul-general, M. Edan, finally made the decision to withdraw the French concession from the collective concession and assert its independent status. The newly-independent French concession was suddenly deluged by myriad tasks. The growing pressure of population augmented the consul-general’s daily workload. More importantly, it was urgently necessary for the French concession to create a municipal agency equivalent to the British Municipal Council so as to establish administrative relations with its counterpart across Yang-king-pang river.⁸⁹

The French Municipal Council, in its nascent form, looked more like an administrative agency affiliated to the consulate, with the consul-general monopolizing all the authority. However, after M. Edan departed for his new post as the Tianjin consul-general, none of his successors lasted very long on this position, which enabled the Municipal Council to accumulate

⁸⁹ Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai* (The History of the French Concession in Shanghai 《上海法租界史》), 327.

more powers. Except for the diplomatic issues, the Municipal Council almost single-handedly took charge of all the administrative duties, ranging from local policing to financial decisions.⁹⁰

The shift of power from the consul-general to the Municipal Council unavoidably aroused a certain degree of discontent among M. Edan's successors. However, no serious conflicts occurred until the late 1864. This year, M. Brenier's appointment as the consul-general in Shanghai undermined the overall equilibrium. Born in a high-brow minister's family, he inherited a very strong sense of honor and dignity, which made him rather sensitive to his social standing and official position. Given his family background and personal temperament, it is understandable that M. Brenier was extremely dissatisfied with the weakening authority of the consul-general.⁹¹

The relationship between M. Brenier and the leading members of the Municipal Council, M. Meynard and M. Schmidt, was hardly harmonious in the first place. They first had a series of frictions because of the issue of renovating the consulate complex. Then, when a large bulk of opium owned by Meynard's friend was confiscated by a Chinese local official, consul-general M. Brenier turned a deaf ear to Meynard's plea for help.⁹²

In 1865, the contradiction between the consul-general and the Municipal Council further escalated. In May, during one of the sessions of the Land Renters' Meeting, M. Brenier had a vociferous argument with Meynard and Schmidt apropos to the Council's rights and obligations. The worst clash happened in October. The French police arrested two Chinese outlaws in the French concession and remanded them to the Shanghai Taotai without acquiring any forms of

⁹⁰ Shanghai shi wen shi guan ed., *Shanghai difang shi ziliao* 《上海地方史资料》, vol. 2, 78.

⁹¹ Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai* (The History of the French Concession in Shanghai 《上海法租界史》), 391.

⁹² Shanghai shi wen shi guan ed., *Shanghai difang shi ziliao* 《上海地方史资料》, vol. 2, 78.

endorsement from the consul-general.⁹³ Infuriated by this unilateral decision-making, M. Brenier vehemently condemned the president of the Council, accused him of abusing his municipal authority, and admonished him to return the Chinese criminals as soon as possible. The severity of this clash was so great that the Municipal Council was at one point on the verge of being dissolved.⁹⁴ The eventful relationship lasted for roughly another four years until a new consul-general assumed this position.

The Consul-General's Non-Militant Reaction Prior to the 1874 Riot: Ineptitude or Discretion

In 1872, M. Godeaux took over the post of the consul-general in Shanghai. Unfortunately, his replacement of M. Brenier did not prevent the conflict between the consulate and the municipality from happening. In 1873, their relationship was at one point rather tense due to the different opinions regarding the re-election of the members of municipality. However, it was over the course of the 1874 riot that this underlying tension culminated in its full extent.

As discussed in chapter two, the board members of the Ningbo association submitted a petition to the consul-general, M. Godeaux, in the hope that the latter would sympathize with their sentiments, and thus make efforts to convince the Municipal Council to relinquish its agenda of expanding the road. In the face of this petition, the consul-general did not initially opine too much of his judgements, but rather faithfully presented the petition to the Municipal Council.⁹⁵

⁹³ According to the normative practice in the French concession, any arrested Chinese people had to be first sent to the consulate for documentation. Only after that could the Taotai decide what to do with the outlaws.

⁹⁴ Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai* (The History of the French Concession in Shanghai 《上海法租界史》), 407.

⁹⁵ *Conseil D' Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai* (extraction from North China Herald Elibron Classics, Adamant Media Corporation), letters and correspondence, 4.

Several days later, the president of the Municipal Council, M. A. Voisin, convoked his colleagues for a general session so as to discuss the issue surrounding the roads in contention. Not surprisingly, all the members of the Municipal Council unanimously concurred that “it does not accept the reclamation of the administrators of the Ningbo Pagoda (the Ningbo association) ... the roads are (our) public and unalienable lanes.”⁹⁶ They enumerated three reasons for their rejecting the petition. Firstly, the Municipal Council was deeply concerned with the sanitary conditions in the French concession, and the members argued that the existence of charitable cemeteries and morgues would pose a menacing threat to the local hygiene. Also, the Municipal Council invoked the principle of “equal treatment” between Chinese and European residents. As the Council pointed out, even the European residents were obliged to relocate their cemeteries to an area remote from the French concession for the sake of public health. Lastly, the Council attributed its refusal to a historical reason, namely the 1863 blueprint encompassing the roads in contestation under the Council’s jurisdiction, which has been addressed in greater length in chapter one.⁹⁷

Having been informed by his colleagues’ stance on this matter, M. Voisin proceeded to deliver a letter to the consul-general, in which he reported to the latter what had been discussed in the session. At the same time, he passed down the final decision of the Council to the Ningbo association, explaining the reasons for rejecting their previous petition despite the Council members’ sympathy with the Ningbo people’s sentiments.⁹⁸

Thus far, there seems to have been no frontal conflict between the consul-general and the Municipal Council. However, on April 28th, M. Godeaux wrote a personal letter to the president of the Council, reminding him that the primary goal of the consulate was to ensure the local

⁹⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

order. More importantly, he urged the president that the project of expanding roads be suspended in order to prevent any disturbances from transpiring. Additionally, he made it clear that the consulate would take over this case from this point on.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, under M. Godeaux's behest, the secretary of the consulate alerted the local police force to keep a closer eye on the site where the planned expanding project had been initially scheduled.¹⁰⁰

However, M. Godeaux's clear intention of intervention notwithstanding, by no means did his relationship with the Council reach an irreconcilable state. The Municipal Council's memorandum documents the private meeting between M. Godeaux and M. Voisin on May 2nd. On the one hand, M. Voisin did not consider it wise to coercively expand the roads onto Ningbo association's cemeteries as well as the mourning hall, although he maintained, as his predecessors did, that the cemeteries should be displaced eventually. He also promised to "act with prudence and not to cause any disturbances."¹⁰¹ On the other hand, M. Godeaux did acknowledge that he had failed to find any evidence in his dossier that would have corroborated the Ningbo association's stance.¹⁰² Shortly after this meeting, the general-consul delivered a personal letter to the president of the Council, recapitulating the leitmotif of their conversation with a more formalistic tone.¹⁰³ It is safe to say that both sides showed a decent amount of understandings of each other's position.

Unfortunately, this mutual understanding did not really yield any substantial or concrete agreements between the two parties involved. As a matter of fact, had both consul-general and the Municipal Council been able to deal with their disagreement better, the negotiations with the Ningbo association, as well as the Shanghai Taotai, may not have been trapped in such a stagnant

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *Conseil D' Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai*, Mémoire Explicatif, pp. 31-32.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ *Conseil D' Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai*, letters and correspondence, 9.

state. Furthermore, what was even more unpropitious was the eruption of the riot on the 3rd of May. In accordance with the same memorandum, “it was only after May 3rd that the event began to take a very deplorable turn.”¹⁰⁴ Here, the “deplorable turn” has dual connotations, which denote both the eruption of the riot as well as the fissure between the consul-general and the Council. Indeed, following the outbreak of the popular violence, the discord between the consul-general and the Municipal Council began to come to surface. At the heart of their tension was how the riot should be repressed.

As shown in chapter two, after the brawl between the French police officer and the Ningbo strongmen escalated into a massive conflict, these mobsters fanatically attacked foreign residents, inflicted great damages to their residence, and set their properties on fire. In spite of the dire situation, M. Godeaux was still reluctant to deploy any militant forces. He forbade the local police from any direct engagement with the rioters, and refused to dispatch any police forces to the west quarter where a crowd of mobsters assembled and wreaked havoc. M. Godeaux seemed to have a great deal of faiths in the Chinese local officials’ ability to halt the turmoil. When alerted about the severity of the riot by the chief police officer, M. Godeaux still insisted upon writing to the Shanghai Taotai for this matter.¹⁰⁵

Not having encountered any major resistance yet, the mobsters kept marching toward the consulate and continued their vandalism on the way. It was at this critical moment that the chief police officer decided to engage the rioters in order to protect the consulate from any serious destructions. However, as the police forces were rallied in preparation for the repression, another

¹⁰⁴ *Conseil D’ Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai*, Mémoire Explicatif, 48.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

instruction note was delivered to the chief police officer from the consul-general, urging the former not to dispatch any forces.¹⁰⁶

Possibly deterred by the consul-general's reluctance of using militant means, a number of foreign residents in the French concession resorted to the president of the Municipal Council to enlist help. Therefore, M. Voisin, accompanied by several foreign notables at the locale, pleaded to the consul-general for permitting the French naval force to disembark. Nonetheless, the consul-general still insisted that the French authority could not afford to have any frontal collision with the mobsters, and thus should act with prudence without having any direct clashes with the rioters.¹⁰⁷ The consul-general's passive reaction to the riot aroused great discontent, if not resentment, among the members of the Municipal Council. In effect, during a general session of the Municipal Council following the eruption of the riot, nearly all the members bitterly bemoaned that "the riots could have easily been stopped right away, had the consul-general had a more 'energetic' reaction."¹⁰⁸

Irritated by the consul-general's obdurate reaction, M. Voisin contended that he would not allow some of the French voluntary defenders to keep making sacrifice without any hope of receiving military assistance. Also, he even threatened that he would encourage the foreign residents to seek refuge at the courtyard of the consulate if the consul-general kept refusing to deploy militant forces. M. Godeaux was apparently taken aback by this threat, which prompted him to reconsider how to deal with the current crisis.¹⁰⁹ Eventually, the consul-general agreed that he would allow a phalanx of French navy to disembark, and dispatch a score of local police forces to bring back order. At the same time, the president of the Council proposed that the riot

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹⁰⁸ SMA, *Conseil D' Administration Municipale de la Concession Franciae A Shanghai*, U38-1-2743 12, May 4th, 1874.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

would be oppressed more swiftly if the Voluntary Corps of the International Settlement could join the local forces. M. Godeaux simply approved of this proposal.¹¹⁰

Despite the temporary concordance, another fissure occurred when the Voluntary Corps arrived on the spot. When M. Penfold, the chief police officer of the British police, discerned the latent possibility of another conflagration by the rioters, he made an attempt to solicit manpower support from the French chief police. However, the latter told him that he was forbidden to dispatch any police under the consul-general's instruction, which could be confirmed by the president of the Council. In response to the rejection, M. Penfold once again asserted to M. Voisin that the rioters could be readily arrested provided he had adequate manpower under his command. M. Voisin bitterly complained that he was not authorized to deploy any police forces. Upon hearing this, M. Penfold simply issued an order to retreat his force back to the central police post, for he did not see it as appropriate or even necessary to safeguard the French consulate with the British military force.¹¹¹

On the contrary, the consul-general announced that "the terror had ceased, and the mob had dispersed and been pacified."¹¹² It was alleged that M. Godaux was reassured by the Chinese magistrate that the Chinese local forces would bring the riotous mob under control as well as restore peace and order. However, M. Voisin did not seem to subscribe to the consul-general's optimistic assessment of the situation at all. He explicitly said that by the time he left the consulate, he witnessed that several housings were under the threat of another round of arson.¹¹³

On the very same day, the consul-general wrote a personal letter to M. Voisin, requiring him to convoke the Council to discuss the controversy which, M. Godeaux thought, had resulted

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 51.

¹¹² Ibid., 52.

¹¹³ Ibid.

in the riot.¹¹⁴ Next day in the morning, the consul-general encountered the president of the Council on the street. When consulted whether or not the eruption of riot had changed the Council's perception on the road in contention, the president's reply was still negative. Additionally, although he agreed to convoke his colleagues once again to discuss this matter, he lamented that the Council was not able to take any proactive measures under the current circumstances, especially given the fact that the consulate was in charge of military deployment. M. Godeaux in turn responded that a decision favorable to the Ningbo association on the Council's end would enable him to initiate negotiations with its board members and Chinese local officials.¹¹⁵

The president of the Council was deeply vexed by the consul-general's letter as well as their conversation. M. Godeaux considered the Municipal Council's session as of little effect given the fact that the riot had not yet been completely ended. More significantly, the president thought that it would be dangerous to make the Chinese populace believe that they were able to achieve whatever they desired from the foreign authorities through violence and intimidation rather than peaceful and legalistic manners. Refusing to demonstrate any sign of weakness or incompetence in front of Chinese people, the president felt compelled to protest the consul-general's stance on this issue.¹¹⁶

Faced with the president's critique, the consul-general still harbored a tinge of hope to make a compromise with him. Thus, he held another conversation with the president at his residence later that day. Toward the end of the conversation, the president assured to the consul-general that he would endeavor to fulfill M. Godeaux's demand.¹¹⁷ Conversely, the French

¹¹⁴ *Conseil D' Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai*, letters and correspondence, 11.

¹¹⁵ *Conseil D' Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai*, Mémoire Explicatif, 53.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

community seemed to wholeheartedly embrace the president's stand of view, urging the president not to open any discussion until the riot was completely quelled.¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, M. Voisin came to realize that the French authority was not the sole player in this entire "game." Therefore, he reached out to several notables residing in the International Settlement so as to solicit suggestions and rally support.¹¹⁹ M. Voisin's stance on this matter was bolstered by residents on the north side of Yang-king-pang (洋涇浜) who even agreed to "repulse the violence with violence, if necessary."¹²⁰

Contention Surrounding the Consul-General's Proclamation

Under the joint forces of the French concession as well as the International Settlement, the riot finally subsided. Up to this point, there had not been any signs of a new round of upsurge of violence, despite the increasing number of Chinese people assembling on the northern end of the Consulate street. On May 4th, the general session of the Municipal Council was scheduled to take place to discuss the controversy surrounding the expansion of the roads. However, it was brought to the Council's attention that the consul-general had made a unilateral decision which "rendered the convocation of the Council to be futile and derisory."¹²¹

What decision did the consul-general make? What effects did it bring about? It turned out that the consul-general had never utterly suspended negotiations with the Shanghai Taotai despite the opposition from the Council, the French community, as well as other foreign residents in the International Settlement. A private correspondence between the Taotai and an elite member of Siming gongsuo (Zhuang Jianren 莊兼仁) gives us a glimpse of the consul-

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹²¹ Ibid., 56.

general's meeting with the Taotai. In this letter, the Taotai informed Zhuang that M. Godeaux had successfully dissuaded the Municipal Council from displacing the charitable cemetery and expanding the roads. Meanwhile, Zhuang was advised to build up a wall encircling the Siming gongsuo compound as a marker of boundary.¹²² The brainchild of this behind-the-scene negotiation was the proclamation issued by the consul-general, which largely echoed with what had been finalized between M. Godeaux and the Shanghai Taotai during their meeting.¹²³

This proclamation was undoubtedly a good news for the board members of Siming gongsuo. They lost no time in arranging the establishment of a wall surrounding the Siming gongsuo compound to demarcate the boundary. As for the Municipal Council, M. Voisin expressed his frustration as well as discontent in response to the consul-general's unilateral proclamation. As he bitterly complained, "neither unofficial nor official communication had been received from the Consulate."¹²⁴ It is therefore hardly surprising that the members of the Council would subsequently refer to the agreement between the consul-general and the Ningbo association as "an intervention."¹²⁵ In addition, the wall, which was under construction around the Siming gongsuo compound, was another upsetting sign of the latter's defiance. As a consequence, the president M. Voisin, on behalf of the Municipal Council, sent a letter to the consul-general, underscoring that the Council had to be informed before any measures could be taken, and the grave circumstances could not always justify "setting aside the administrative measures."¹²⁶

In response to the president's complaint, the consul-general refuted by accusing the Municipal Council's deliberation of "compromising the public tranquility." Also, he ordered that

¹²² Siming gongsuo wen di gao 《四明公所文底稿》, May. 3rd, 1874.

¹²³ Shanghai bei ke ziliao xuanji 《上海碑刻资料选辑》, p. 427

¹²⁴ *Conseil D' Administration Municipale De La Concession Francaise à Shanghai*, letters and correspondence, 12.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

the expansion of the new roads be immediately suspended, and further instructions were needed from the French minister in Beijing as to the handling of the case. With regard to the newly-established wall, the consul-general explained that “for the sake of calming the impatience of their compatriots (the fellow Ningbo men), the Ningbo men encircled the cemetery with bamboo as a provisionary enclosure... (they) also expressed the desire to... (allow the Municipal Council to) begin the construction work before next Sunday.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, this self-vindication obviously failed to convince M. Voisin. In the following correspondence, he explicitly said that M. Godeaux’s explanation was “hardly satisfactory,” and lamented the “fatigue and tension” of the Council resulting from this incident.¹²⁸

The tension between the consul-general and the Municipal Council did not merely remain a local matter. At the next general session of the Council, the members entrusted the president to write another letter, concomitant of the textual evidence related to the roads, to the French minister, M. De Geofroy, in Beijing, to further elaborate on the Council’s stance on the dispute.¹²⁹ The French minister did not respond to this correspondence until nearly two weeks later. However, while the Municipal Council’s was awaiting the French Minister’s response, its tension with the consul-general was only aggravating. During these two weeks, one of their most intense arguments revolved around the “right” to the ownership of the area adjoining to the Siming gongsuo compound. They diverged so greatly on this matter that the Council even vehemently questioned that “on what title you could... decide a priori in a contestation of property which is still in contention!”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

To M. Voisin's dismay, by no means did the French minister choose to support the Council's argument in this controversy. Instead, M. Geoffroy simply uttered his shock, as well as disappointment, to the way in which the Municipal Council reacted to the Ningbo association's petition which, according to the minister, was "so reasonable and agreeable in its form." Moreover, what troubled the French minister more was the disparaging letters, which M. Geoffroy considered as "deplorable," that the Council wrote to the consulate.¹³¹ At the same time, the French minister bolstered the consul-general's judgement through officially annulling the expansion of the roads around the Ningbo association.¹³²

Nonetheless, the French minister's admonition apparently did not deter the Council's efforts of self-vindication. In the president's reply to M. Geoffroy, not only did he allude that the minister failed to listen to both sides of the story, but he also described the consul-general's role as "of little assistance and even a hindrance" to the municipality. Worse still, the president unequivocally laid bare the "incompatibility between the current municipal system with the administration of M. Godeaux."¹³³

Approximately a month later, the French minister replied to M. Voisin's self-defense, the response which in many ways looked like an ultimatum. While acknowledging the receipt of the evidence associated with the controversy, M. Geoffroy firmly reiterated two points that he made in the previous letter: 1) the measures taken by the Council was inopportune; 2) the Council's letters to the consul-general, as well as the public assault on the newspaper, were regrettable. More importantly, the French minister explicitly stated that "my duty (as the French minister in

¹³¹ Ibid., 66.

¹³² Ibid., 65.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

Beijing) oriented me toward the point of view of France's general interest in China... the interest of our Concession should always be elevated above personal questions."¹³⁴

There is a possibility that president M. Voisin, together with his colleagues of the Municipal Council, was alarmed by the French minister's stalwart position on this issue. Thereafter, despite the Council's unwillingness to relinquish its expansion scheme, it eventually made compromise with the consul-general by withdrawing from the dispute.

Summary

This part of the thesis has revealed the second aspect of the "modern colonial quandary:" the internal discord within the French colonial establishment. Ever since the establishment of the Municipal Council, there had always existed tensions between the consul-general and the Council. Although every cleavage finally came to a full closure, the tension never completely vanished. To use an analogy, the relationship between the consul-general and the Municipal Council can be likened as a volcano which mostly remained dormant but erupted intermittently. While the general rapport and coexistence could persist, their relationship was bound to undergo various vicissitudes.

The conflict surrounding the 1874 riot can be seen as another eruption among a concatenation of the same kind, despite the disparities of severity. While the consul-general was more inclined to making compromises with Siming gongsuo as discretionary ruses to ensure local peace and stability, the Municipal Council usually took a more assertive stance in the face of the defiance from the Ningbo populace. While the consul-general prioritized negotiations over military means, the Municipal Council upheld the idea that any forms of negotiation were off the table until the riot was completely crushed. While the consul-general found it necessary to issue

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

a proclamation to demarcate the dividing parameter, the Municipal Council was fully convinced of its ownership of the targeted area.

One may wonder the causes behind this chronic tension. There are at least three reasons that could account for it. Firstly, the schism between the consul-general and the Municipal Council in most cases took form of the discord between the consul-general and the president of the Council. Therefore, conflicting dispositions and disparate ways of handling certain issues might well have resulted in tensions or even frontal conflicts. Secondly, the tension might have also resulted from the ambivalent status of the French Municipality. Although the consulate had the authority to appoint the president and the vice president of the Council, its members were still the representatives of the *Assemblée des Propriétaires Fonciers de la Concession Française* (the Assembly of the Real Estate Proprietors of the French Concession). When the Municipality was first established, neither its rights nor its obligations were clearly stipulated.¹³⁵ Thirdly, the consul-general and the Municipal Council represented different interest groups. As indicated earlier, the French minister in Beijing regarded the “general interest of the French concession” as the top priority. So did the consul-general. As the chief official of the French colonial establishment in Shanghai, the consul-general’s primary task was to maintain the stability of the French concession as well as the normal operation of the governmental apparatus. By contrast, the Municipal Council was principally constituted by the members of *Assemblée des Propriétaires Fonciers de la Concession Française* for whom the ownership of land property, more often than not, took precedence over other considerations.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the tension presented above transpired around the 1874 riot. As to the 1898 riot, there was no sign of any discordance between M. Bezaure, the consul-general at the time, and the Municipal Council. What happened in the years between 1874 and

¹³⁵ *Shanghai Fa zujie shi* 《上海法租界史》, 388.

1898? Why did the conflict seem to fade away? The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed France's concerted efforts to expand the "sphere of influence" in China along with other imperial powers. What impact did the impulse of self-galvanization/aggrandization have on France's mode of governance in Shanghai? Did it have any direct effects on the relationship between the consul-general and the Municipal Council? Is it possible that the discords between them were overshadowed by a larger common interest? If so, what might this common interest have been? These questions do not lend themselves to easy answers and remain to be explored in the future research.

CHAPTER 4: IMPERIAL RIVALRY BETWEEN BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE 1874 AND 1898 RIOTS

The imperial rivalry between Britain and France in China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is nothing new to scholars of Chinese history. As Ernest Young points out, Britain and France were the most powerful colonizers in China at the time.¹³⁶ Driven by different imperial ambitions and competing national interests, these two countries more often than not found themselves caught up in direct competition. In the case of Shanghai, the geographical proximity of their respective concessions as well as the conflicting imperial agenda rendered their tensions to be hardly avoidable. In some measure, the 1874 and 1898 Siming gongsuo riots can be understood as a microcosm of these two imperial nations' power struggles in Shanghai. As this chapter will show, the "secession controversy" in the 1860s sowed the seeds for the future tension between France and Britain. As to the 1874 and 1898 riots, the imperial rivalry was mainly manifested through two aspects: public opinion assault and Britain's intervention in the Sino-Franco negotiation.

From Collectivity to Separation: the Origin of the Britain-France Schism

As indicated in the previous chapters, by the end of the 1840s, Britain, the United States and France had all obtained their concessions in Shanghai. In the early 1850s, due to the Small Sword Rebellion (xiaodao hui qiyi 小刀會起義), a large number of Chinese residents flocked to the foreign concessions to seek for asylum. The growing population in the concessions created numerous social problems, which to a considerable degree complicated the imperial powers' municipal administration and urban management in Shanghai.

¹³⁶ Ernest Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony: China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Faced with the changing social reality, the British, French, and American consuls collectively revised the original Shanghai Land Regulation and formulated new municipal regulations in 1854. The brainchild of this revision was the establishment of the Shanghai Municipal Council, a coalescence of three separate concessions under the auspices of one single administration. However, the French consulate had a great deal of misgiving as well as doubts about the administrative collectivity. Nonetheless, the French authority in Shanghai had no choice but to endorse the revision, in that there was no sufficient French military forces in Shanghai to safeguard its nationals.¹³⁷

However, fissions soon emerged in the same year. Firstly, France took issue with the revised version of the Regulations, contending that the protection of the French concession was not clearly stated. Thereafter, when France was in battle with the rebels of the Small Sword Society, the French authority bitterly complained that Britain did not provide duly military support. Frustrated with the so-called “unfair treatments,” France decided to secede from the International Settlement and establish its independent concession.¹³⁸

Finally, in the year of 1862, France established the Municipal Council, officially announcing its status as an independent concession. However, this decision apparently failed to win the support and endorsement of the International Settlement¹³⁹, for it contradicted the ideal that Shanghai should be under control of the unified administrative apparatus. During the years following the establishment of the Municipal Council, Britain and America launched rounds after rounds of protests and negotiations in order to restore the collectivity of foreign concessions.

¹³⁷ Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, ed., vol. 3 of *Shanghai tongshi* 《上海通史》 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chuban she, 1999), 127.

¹³⁸ Xiong Yuezhi, ed., 129-131. In this study, I refer to France’s decision to withdraw from the International Settlement and the subsequent disputes as “secession controversy.”

¹³⁹ In 1862, the British and American concessions merged into one single administration: the International Settlement.

As discussed in the last chapter, the internal power struggle between the consul-general and the Municipal Council heightened within the French concession toward the end of the 1860s. Upon learning this information, American consul George F. Seward openly questioned the necessity and the efficacy of the French Municipal Council. Moreover, British consul Charles A. Winchester pleaded the British ambassador in France to negotiate with the French foreign ministry. He argued that the independent French concession essentially amounted to a “protectorate” for the British residents living in there, and was thus “disturbing,” “inappropriate,” and needed to be “abrogated.”¹⁴⁰

Despite the international pressures, the French government refused to abolish the newly-established Municipal Council, neither did it agree to fuse its concession with the International Settlement. Instead, it organized a provisionary committee and formulated the *Règlement d'Organisation Municipale de la Concession Française de Changhai* (The Regulation of the Municipal Organization of the French Concession in Shanghai).¹⁴¹

The passage of the Regulation aroused another wave of protests in the International Settlement. Some of the consuls as well as residents on the northern side of Yang-king-pang publicly expressed their discontent through newspaper editorials. Under the pressure of public opinions, M. Brenier decided to make some revisions to the original Regulation in order to avert further contention. Thereafter, despite the oppositions from the International Settlement, the independence of the French concession was practically acquiesced.¹⁴² Unmistakably, the tension between France and International Settlement left indelible marks on the collective memories of both sides, which foreshadowed their future conflicts.

¹⁴⁰ Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Française de Changhai* (The History of the French Concession in Shanghai 《上海法租界史》), pp. 319-324.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Xiong Yuezhi, ed., 134.

The 1874 Riot: Acrimonious Mockery and Public Opinion Assault

Over the course of the 1874 riot, the International Settlement was involved in primarily two ways. In the wake of the eruption of the riot, the president of the Municipal Council once enlisted militant forces from the International Settlement. As a result, the British consul deployed the Voluntary Corps, and the American consul decided to dispatch some of its naval force in support of the suppression of the riot. However, the military assistance from the International Settlement was only one side of the story. What this section is going to present is the darker side of the relationship between the International Settlement and the French concession during the 1874 riot.

Approximately a week after the outbreak of the riot, the editorial sections of *North China Herald* (*North China Daily News*) published numerous articles about the incident. While lamenting the occurrence of such a “regrettable event,” these editorials relentlessly launched their castigations against the French concession. These commentaries first took up the issue of “unnecessary violence.” Before M. Godeaux deployed any police forces, it was “voluntary defenders” who were charged with the duty of pacifying the disturbance. However, it was shown that some informants witnessed abuse of violence by these “voluntary defenders.” It was also reported that when an informant attempted to dissuade a certain defender from hewing down a fatally wounded victim, he was simply scolded to “mind his own business.” As the editorials showed, the use of “unnecessary violence” was correlated with the French administration’s delinquency of keeping a close eye on volunteers bearing arms. It was deemed dangerous that “men under no organization” carried deadly weapons and cruised around the concession.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ *North China Herald*, May 9th, 1874.

Moreover, another editorial article harshly lambasted the follies of both the consul-general and the Municipal Council. On the one hand, the trifling practical value of the roads in contention made the incident even more “deplorable.” According to the commentary, the conflict would well have been averted, had the French Municipal Council taken Chinese people’s sentiments into account and acted with more prudence. On the other hand, the consul-general’s reluctance of using military forces was considered imputable to the escalation of the violence. At the same time, this editorial took exception with the proclamation issued by the consul-general. Echoing with the Municipal Council’s opinion on this matter, the editorial went further by saying that “the precedent of yielding to the mob violence is a dangerous one... M. Godeaux’s action can hardly fail to encourage the Chinese in a belief that riot is a good means to their ends, in case of future dispute.”¹⁴⁴

In the following weeks, the editorials directed their most severe castigation toward the legitimacy and efficacy of the French concession as a whole. It argued that the Chinese’s animosity against the French administration mainly resulted from the latter’s “anomalous and arbitrary rule.” For the Chinese residents in the French concession, contended the editorial, the “exclusive jurisdiction” was a pure grievance. It even went further to say that the outbreak of the riot epitomized the complete breakdown of the exclusive administration of the French concession.¹⁴⁵ Interestingly, the criticism presented above bears striking historical resemblance to the resentment of the International Settlement on the heel of the “secession controversy.”

Some British residents even sought to defend the Ningbo association in the editorials. One of them argued that the reason for the Ningbo association’s opposition to the Municipal Council was because of its misconception of the Municipality as the “tax collectors or police.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ *North China Herald*, May 16th, 1874.

Although he acknowledged the board members' ignorance, he also pointed out that "the logic of events had demonstrated that the Municipal Council is regarded by the French authorities merely as a body meant only to play at administration." Therefore, when they saw the Municipal Council acting against the will of the consulate, the Ningbo association simply assumed that "resistance to the Municipality seemed to be obedience to the consulate."¹⁴⁶ Once again, this commentary pointed to the incoordination between the Municipality and the consulate, akin to the accusations coming from the International Settlement in the 1860s.

In addition to the serious editorial articles on *North China Herald*, other petty newspapers published a series of parody, caricature, and satirical limerick, all of which targeted the French consul-general. For instance, in one of the most widely circulated stories, the author lampooned M. Godeaux, ridiculing that when the riot first occurred, the consul-general was so "sick" (as in intimidated) that he had to hide underneath his bed. In another sarcastic commentary, the author wryly said that had M. Godeaux been appointed as the consul-general in Tianjin, the 1870 Tianjin Massacre could have been well avoided, alluding to the pusillanimity of the French consul-general in the face of the mobsters.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, mockery of the same kind appeared on all types of local newspapers in the following days.

The 1898 Riot: Britain's Intervention in the Sino-Franco Negotiation

Unlike the 1874 riot in which the British authority was not directly involved, the 1898 riot provided an arena where the rivalry between Britain and France fully played out. This section mainly addresses three questions: under what conditions did Britain decide to intervene? In what ways did it intervene? What impacts did its intervention have?

¹⁴⁶ *North China Herald*, May 23rd, 1874.

¹⁴⁷ Maybon and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai* (The History of the French Concession in Shanghai 《上海法租界史》), 487.

As shown in chapter two, the Ningbo men in Shanghai initiated a wave of strike and boycott in protestation of the French encroachment into the charitable cemetery as well as its slaughter of numerous innocent civilians. Ningbo people's strike not only jeopardized the trades and businesses of the French concession, it also inflicted great harms on the daily commercial activities of the other side of the Yang-king-pang.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the severity of the riot and its repercussion was so great that the Qing government dispatched Liu Kunyi (劉坤一), one of the most influential governors-general in Southern China, to negotiate with the French consul-general, M. Bezaure, so as to bring the incident to an end.

Upon receiving the imperial order, Liu Kunyi lost no time in initiating negotiations with the French consul-general. In order to do so, Liu required the governor of the Jiangsu province to come to Shanghai to participate in the discussion with him as well as the Shanghai Taotai. Then, he ordered the Shanghai Taotai to conduct another round of negotiation with the major leaders of the Ningbo association so as to prevent the situation from further exacerbating.¹⁴⁹ In addition to peaceful negotiations, Liu also began military preparations in case the French naval force made any aggressive moves along the coastal line.¹⁵⁰

The initial stage of the negotiation mainly revolved around the disposal of the coffins and relocation of the charitable cemetery. The French consul-general adamantly demanded that the entire area encompassing the Siming gongsuo compound as well as the cemetery be ceded under France's jurisdiction. This demand met very strong resistance from the board members of the

¹⁴⁸ *North China Herald*, July 25th, 1898.

¹⁴⁹ *North China Herald*, July 25th, 1898; Wang Yanwei 王彦威 and Wang Liang 王亮, eds., *Qing ji waijiao shiliao* 《清季外交史料》, vol. 133, (Taipei: Wenhai chuban she 文海出版社, 1985), 495.

¹⁵⁰ *Qing ji waijiao shiliao* 《清季外交史料》, 495.

Ningbo association, some of whom invoked several previous compacts concluded between Siming gongsuo and M. Bezaure's predecessors.¹⁵¹

However, what these board members failed to realize was the fact that M. Bezaure's ambition was more than the annexation of the Siming gongsuo area. Indeed, as Liu keenly observed, the French authorities had long been coveting to expand its concession in Shanghai. Also, Liu advised the Qing government that no hasty decision be made in case other imperial powers in China pushed forward the same demand for territorial expansion.¹⁵²

Noticeably, France was not alone in demanding the expansion of concession in Shanghai. As a matter of fact, as early as the March of 1898, the consul delegation (lingshi tuan 領事團) already made an attempt to negotiate with Shanghai Taotai for this matter. In May, the delegation's request was rejected by Taotai, but the delegation still sought to attract the attention of a higher authority, and thus submitted their petition to Liu Kunyi in July. However, Liu also rejected their demand. Disillusioned with the unfruitful negotiations with Chinese officials, some consuls hoped to have meetings with the ambassadors in Beijing so that the latter might bring this matter up with the Chinese central government.¹⁵³

The eruption of the riot in July provided Britain with a rare opportunity to push forward its expansion agenda. The president of the British Municipal Council explicitly said that "the issue of expanding concession in Shanghai... might come to a perfect resolution."¹⁵⁴ It can be deduced that it was then that Britain was planning on its intervention in the Sino-Franco negotiation. According to the president's estimation, if Britain helped China to resolve its

¹⁵¹ Yao Wenzhan 姚文柵 ed., *Minguo Shanghai xian zhi* 《民國上海縣志》, Vol. 14, 1936, 234; *Shenbao*, July 30th, 1898.

¹⁵² *Qing ji waijiao shiliao* 《清季外交史料》, pp. 495-496.

¹⁵³ Shanghai shi dangan guan 上海市档案馆 ed. *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council*, vol. 13, Mar. 23rd, May. 25th, July. 6th, July. 13th, 1898, Shanghai guji chuban she 上海古籍出版社.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, July 20th, 1898.

conflicts with France with regard to the riot, neither the Shanghai Taotai nor Liu Kunyi would have no reason to encumber Britain's plan of concession expansion.¹⁵⁵

While the British consul was preoccupied with negotiating with the Shanghai Taotai, the negotiation between China and France was also in process. Aside from the negotiation between Liu Kunyi and the French consul-general in Shanghai, Qing Chang (慶常), Chinese ambassador in France, also vigorously sought for negotiation with the French ministry of foreign affairs. By the same token, similar negotiations were ongoing between Zongli yamen (總理衙門 the prototype of Chinese ministry of foreign affairs) and the French ambassador in Beijing. These negotiations lasted for approximately two months, until the French ambassador in Beijing formulated a solution consisting of six articles and consigned the consul-general in Shanghai to finalize it with Liu Kunyi.

These six articles were: 1) the open-up and extension of Saigon and Ningbo roads adjacent to the Siming gongsuo compound; 2) inclusion of the Siming gongsuo compound under the protection of the municipal administration; 3) removal of the coffins at the charitable cemetery; 4) prohibition of the storage of new coffins; 5) expansion of the French concession; 6) the most favored country status associated with the expansion of concessions.¹⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, this solution did not receive the full consent from Liu Kunyi. Not only was he deeply apprehensive of the potential possibility of another riot, he also regarded some of these articles as a deleterious violation of the Chinese sovereignty. The Qing court obviously echoed his opinion. Under the central government's behest, Liu Kunyi rejected most of these articles one by one in another negotiation with M. Bezaure.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., July 27th, 1898.

¹⁵⁶ *Shenbao*, Jan. 23rd, 1899. Here, *Shenbao* simply published the negotiations between Liu Kunyi and M. Bezaure in the previous months.

¹⁵⁷ *Qing ji waijiao shiliao* 《清季外交史料》, pp. 497-498.

Frustrated with and enraged by the stagnant state of their negotiation, the French consul-general threatened that France's naval force was always ready to disembark if its demands failed to be met. It was at this critical moment that Britain decided to officially intervene. In December, the British ambassador, C. Macdonald, delivered an official correspondence to Zongli Yamen, in opposition to France's demand of expanding its territory because of the potential inclusion of some British properties under France's control. Sir. Macdonald was subsequently informed by Zongli Yamen to contact the British consul-general in Shanghai so that the latter could commence negotiations with M. Bezaure.¹⁵⁸ One day later, the Chinese ambassador in France suggested that France first resolve their differences with Britain before taking actions in China.¹⁵⁹

In addition to diplomatic measures, Britain also provided military assistance for Liu Kunyi to strengthen his coastal defense against any potential French aggression. Under the leadership of naval commandant Balfour, three British warships were deployed near Nanjing where Liu Kunyi was conducting negotiation with M. Bezaure. It was also alleged that both Japan and the United States deployed a few gunboats to counteract France's military presence near Nanjing.¹⁶⁰

It is remarkable how both Liu Kunyi and Zongli Yamen seized the opportunity of Britain's intervention to their own advantages, which resonated with the Qing's traditional diplomatic strategy "to use barbarian to control barbarian (yiyi zhiyi 以夷制夷)." In one of Liu's letter to his close confidant, he observed that the reason why Britain deployed navy to Nanjing was to help China gain more leverage against France. He also said, "under the current circumstances, we have to ally with Britain, the United States, and Japan... so that we were

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 542.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ *Shenbao*, Jan. 11th and 25th, 1899.

willing to help us with military defense.”¹⁶¹ Moreover, as the tension between Britain and France aggravated, Zongli Yamen proposed that these two countries conduct direct negotiation with one another rather than drag China into their rivalry.¹⁶²

In January, 1899, the ambassador of the United States also expressed his protestation against France’s demand of expanding concession in Shanghai in fear of American properties being under France’s control.¹⁶³ At the same time, the British consul-general pointed it out that it was intolerable for Chinese government to grant France such an exclusive jurisdiction over the concession without giving the same privilege to the International Settlement.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, in May, Liu Kunyi, on behalf of the Qing government, authorized the expansion of the International Settlement in a local announcement.¹⁶⁵ It was not entirely clear why this authorization was publicized at the time, but it was plausible that Liu Kunyi might have done so in exchange of Britain’s continuous support over his negotiation with France.

Confronted with the international pressures, France decided to employ diplomatic maneuvers on multiple levels in the following months. In Shanghai, M. Bezaure agreed to temporarily drop the agenda of expanding the French concession, and expedited his negotiation with the British consul-general. In Beijing, the French ambassador spared no efforts to make compromises with his British counterpart. In Paris, the French foreign ministry actively sought for constructive negotiation with Britain in order to obtain the latter’s consent on the issue of concession expansion.

¹⁶¹ Liu Kunyi 刘坤一, *Liu Kunyi yi ji* 《劉坤一遺集》, vol. 5, (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1959), 2239.

¹⁶² SMA, *Shanghai shi tongzhi guan qikan* 《上海市通志館期刊》, vol. 1, Y15-1-17-696, 1933, 738.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 739.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 738.

¹⁶⁵ Feng Shaoting ed. 冯绍霆, “Qingdai Shanghai difang zhangguan guanyu kuozhan zujie de liang jian gaoshi” 《清代上海长官关于扩展租界的两件告示》, *Shanghai dang'an* 上海档案, no. 1 (1985).

By the end of 1899, the French government had finally come to consensus with its British counterpart as a result of the former's efforts of multi-level negotiations. Both countries agreed upon three points: 1) all the documents related to the French (British) property should be registered at the French (British) consulate; 2) All the regulations of British (French) regulations should be ratified by the French (British) ambassador before implemented on French (British) citizens; 3) the property certificate validated by the French (British) consulate should also be validated by the British (French) authority.¹⁶⁶ Having seen that France had made a tremendous compromise over its original demand and reached an agreement with Britain, the Qing government finally agreed to start off its negotiation with France and subsequently authorized the expansion of the French concession in Shanghai.

Summary

This chapter addresses the last aspect of the “modern colonial quandary:” the imperial rivalry between Britain and France. One of the editorials of *North China Herald* adequately captures the intricate dynamics of foreign concessions in Shanghai: “the establishment of a genuine cosmopolitan republic on the bank of Whang-poo (Huangpu 黄浦) may be a dream; but Shanghai as the abiding place of International rivalries would become a nightmare.”¹⁶⁷

This comment certainly has a grain of truth in it. The ideal of “international cosmopolitanism” seemed to be only a luring mirage, whereas each individual nation's constant pursuit of its respective national interest was a rather salient phenomenon. When a sublime ideal clashed with the realistic vesting interests, the latter more often than not took precedence over the former. It has been shown that the tension between these two imperial powers can be traced

¹⁶⁶ SMA, *Shanghai shi tongzhi guan qikan* 《上海市通志館期刊》, vol. 1, Y15-1-17-696, 1933, pp. 742-743.

¹⁶⁷ *North China Herald*, Nov. 7th, 1898.

back to the “secession controversy” in the 1850s when both sides came to be disenchanted with the plainly unattainable dream of collective concession as well as unified administration.

It is not surprising that the “secession controversy” became one of the most frequent reference point in the disputes between the two powers over the following decades. As a matter of fact, ever since France decided to withdraw from the International Settlement in the 1860s, the very notion of a legitimate, effective, and independent concession had been continuously questioned, challenged, and, in some cases, utterly denied. The reactions of the International Settlement following the eruption of the 1874 riot was an epitome of this chronic contention. Additionally, in the wake of the 1898 riot, contention surrounding the legitimacy of the French concession incited a certain degree of debates between French residents and their counterparts in the International Settlement, whose correspondences were published on both sides’ leading newspapers.¹⁶⁸

In comparison with the public opinion assault, these two imperial powers’ rivalry did not really culminate till Britain’s intervention in the wake of the 1898 riot. As indicated in this chapter, the reasons are twofold. Ostensibly, Britain considered the potential inclusion of some of its residents’ properties equivalent to the violation of its sovereignty. More significantly, by offering both diplomatic and military assistance to the Qing government, Britain was, in actuality, working toward its ultimate goal: expansion of the International Settlement as a way to maximize its commercial interest in Shanghai. The triangle negotiation between Britain, France, and China to a considerable degree shaped the way in which the 1898 riot was resolved.

¹⁶⁸ For more information, one can refer to the correspondence published on both *North China Herald* as well as *L’*écho de Chine**, from July to December, 1898. For the sake of space, this part has not been highlighted in this chapter.

CONCLUSION: “MODERN COLONIAL QUANDARY” AND COLONIALISM/IMPERIALISM IN CHINA

Thus far, I have systematically examined all three aspects of what I call the “modern colonial quandary,” namely Chinese local opposition, internal discord within the French colonial establishment, as well as the imperial rivalry between Britain and France. This conclusion not only recapitulates the main arguments of previous chapters, but also explains the significance of my conceptualization in relation to recent scholarship on colonialism and China.

As chapter two demonstrates, the challenges facing the French colonial establishment first and foremost came from local opposition. This opposition took three major forms: strategic negotiations, collective violence, as well as civil disobedience. It is noteworthy that different members of Siming gongsuo resorted to different strategies in defiance of the French authority’s demand. While the elite members considered negotiations with the French officials as the most effective approach, the non-elite members seemed to rely more heavily upon protest, assembly, and, in the extreme cases, violence. However, at critical junctures, both elite and non-elite members were able to unite in opposition to the French authority as evident in the case of strike and boycott.

Chapter three unravels the internal discord within the French colonial establishment. It has been shown that there had long been tensions between the consul-general and the Municipal Council. In the case of the 1874 riot, the tension primarily lies in their different attitudes toward the riot. While the consul-general was reluctant to deploy military force and placed more emphasis on negotiations with the Shanghai local officials, the Municipality tended to hold a more aggressive stance against the Chinese resistance.

Chapter four highlights the imperial rivalry between Britain and France over the course of the Siming gongsuo riots. The “secession controversy” in the 1860s sowed the seeds for their future conflicts. In 1874, some major British presses launched a series of public opinion assault, questioning the legitimacy of the French municipal administration. In 1898, the British authority in Shanghai decided to directly intervene when the negotiation between China and France seemed to be mired in an impasse. More often than not, the overarching national interests took precedence over the appealing ideal of cosmopolitanism in foreign concessions.

A study of the Siming Gongsuo riots from the global perspective of colonialism is also meant to enter into conversation with scholarship on colonialism in China and beyond. Two works among many are particularly relevant to the present study. In his thought-provoking work *English Lessons*, James L. Hevia advocates the idea of “bringing China into colonial studies.” As Hevia insightfully observes, colonialism as well as imperialism is not just about economic exploitation, military conquest, and political imposition, but also encompasses another important dimension: “cultural process.” He primarily characterizes British colonial activities in China as a “pedagogical project,” essentially including the violence of force and the violence of languages.¹⁶⁹ In the case of the Siming Gongsuo riots, the “pedagogical project” of the colonial powers was forcefully challenged and foiled.

Antoinette Burton, a historian of the British empire, is one of the most prolific scholars who strives to question the assumption that an empire is a hegemonic entity devoid of any serious challenges. As Burton argues, the traditional paradigms of empire, notably the model of “rise and fall” as well as Pax Britannica, assumes a kind of teleology which only stresses the imperial extension and consolidation. Instead, she tends to highlight the troubles, insecurities,

¹⁶⁹ James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 1-4.

vulnerabilities, limits, or in general the “normative disorder” embedded in the imperial experiences as well as memories.¹⁷⁰

Noticeably, Burton’s focus on the “normative disorder” facing a certain empire should be differentiated from the subterranean studies whose fundamental premise is to restore the voices of the subaltern people. On the contrary, Burton’s greatest contribution lies in her challenge of the “methodological imperialism” which largely obscures the ordinary actors as well as their quotidian activities. Uncertainty was the standard experience rather than aberration for empire.¹⁷¹ Despite the admirable methodological inspiration, there is still one question regarding Burton’s study. If the imperial experiences should be understood as replete with limitations and vulnerabilities, did they only come from the challenges of the colonial subjects? The answer is certainly negative. As mentioned at the very beginning of chapter four, the imperial rivalry between Britain and France persisted for the most parts of the Chinese modern history. Furthermore, challenges to the imperial authority not only came from an external source, but also was deeply rooted in the internal dynamics within a certain colonial establishment.

The scholarship that we have reviewed thus far has one common problematik: how do we adequately present the imperial experience in China? This is where my concept of “modern colonial quandary” comes into play. The utility of this concept first and foremost lies in its synthetic nature. It emphasizes the multivalence of the challenges facing a certain colonial establishment, taking into account both internal dynamics as well as external forces.

Moreover, by no means do I aspire to present “modern colonial quandary” as any form of substantive theory or totalizing concept. Instead, it can be better understood as a concept that “structures” rather than “explains” the actions of the multiple historical agents in a colonial

¹⁷⁰ Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 1-23.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

setting. In this case, “modern colonial quandary” offers a more holistic way of thinking and writing about colonial operations in a given historical setting rather than suggests any “omnipotent” framework.

Some may question the applicability of the concept of “modern colonial quandary,” because it is extrapolated from a single event, or rather “a case study.” I depart from this point view on the ground of my understanding of “event.” For me, an event cannot be simply dismissed as episodic or ephemeral, but should rather be seen as a “site” in its abstract form where the broader historical reality or transformation is specifically crystalized or materialized. In other words, there is a very tacit, as well as complex, interplay between the prosaic and the transformational, between enduring and emergent, and between overall process and single event.

Finally, I would like to take a retrospective look at one aspect of Jurgen Osterhammel’s study which has been largely forgotten. When proposing the concept of “informal empire,” Osterhammel provides a list of criteria for any conceptualizing work. As Osterhammel suggests, any models “being a more or less schematic conceptual representation of a complex system” should be able to identify central elements in a certain historical setting, help construct cause-and-effect relations, loosely formulate a field of study, allow “preliminary processing” of empirical evidence, be open to further revision, be primarily descriptive, widely but not universally applicable to other historical cases.¹⁷² Ultimately, “modern colonial quandary” is a concept of this kind.

¹⁷² Jurgen Osterhammel, “Semicolonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis,” 296.

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