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A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REASSESSMENT

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GUAN'HUA WANG

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Ph.D. degree in HISTORY

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THE 1905 ANTI-AMERICAN BOYCOTT: A SOCIAL
AND CULTURAL REASSESSMENT

By

Guanhua Wang

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ABSTRACT

THE 1905 ANTI-AMERICAN BOYCOTT: A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REASSESSMENT

By

Guanhua Wang

The 1905 anti-American boycott was a new type of popular movement. This study argues that the movement was the result of long-term, accumulative, and multi-facet developments in urban political culture which directly led to urban political activism in the form of urban nationalism.

Significant developments in early twentieth century China included commercialization of mass communication, rise of urban entertainment, and politicization of new urban social groups. It was in these long-term accumulative developments not in a few shocking effects of military defeats and other national humiliations that this author try to find the roots of Chinese urban nationalism.

In the early twentieth century, Chinese-exclusion acts by the United States provided a perfect issue for Chinese urbanites to express themselves politically. The exclusion acts seemed to be unjust and at odds with both Western ideals and Confucian humanism which banned all and only Chinese immigrants. The fact that the Qing government was too weak to obtain equal rights for its people provided an opportunity for

the urbanites to show their strength. To do so they decided to boycott American goods. As a means, the boycott seemed to be perfect because it was peaceful and by the people.

The boycott might have been more effective and successful if big merchants had not betrayed the movement half-way through. The eventual failure of the boycott exposed the difficulty of the sovereign status boycotters assigned to the "public" (*gong*) vis-a-vis the private and official spheres. Merchants wanted to assert their rights as individuals to trade freely with whoever they wished. The Qing government stepped in to protect this claim as a sovereign government would do. In the final analysis, although we can see from the 1905 boycott elements of an emerging public sphere in China, there was a long way for the Chinese people to go in order to build a mutual civic society.

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The 1905 Anti-American Boycott:

A Social and Cultural Reassessment

Introduction

In the early 1900s China saw its first urban popular movements in the modern sense--patriotic, organized, and, by and large, peaceful. In both geographic and social terms, the 1905 anti-American boycott was the largest of numerous such movements between the Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900 and the May Fourth Movement of 1919 (Liao 1986:57-59). Drawing on new scholarship by China scholars (Rankin 1986; Rowe 1989, 1984; Link 1981) and theories by Benedict Anderson (on nationalism) and Jurgen Habermas (on the public sphere), among others, this study will put the movement into much broader political, social, and cultural perspectives than has been done by previous studies, which have often treated the movement strictly as a diplomatic or political event.

In other words, this is not just a study of a political movement but also of a changing political culture in which new social and political organizations acted upon new political and cultural symbols, new language and media of mass communication were adopted, and politics was conducted in a totally open manner. From their respective angles, Anderson and Habermas provide useful analytical tools to examine these phenomena--while one (Anderson) sees preconditions for the emergence of urban nationalism, the other (Habermas) sees an expanding public sphere (or spheres). Before elaborating on

these points, I shall first provide a brief account of the movement and a summary of previous scholarship on the subject.

The direct cause of the popular agitation was apparently America's barring of Chinese immigrants from entering the United States. Based upon immigration treaties signed with the reluctant Qing government and numerous exclusion acts passed by the Congress, the United States not only excluded Chinese laborers and sometimes even privileged Chinese from entering America, but also treated them in an extremely humiliating manner.

Disappointed with the Qing government's apparent inability to protect their interests, some overseas Chinese in the United States began to foment a boycott against American goods in 1903. When the Sino-American negotiations on a new immigration treaty became deadlocked in the late spring of 1905, Chinese merchants in the United States sent urgent telegrams to the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce for help.

In Shanghai, the merchants immediately adopted a boycott plan in May and invited merchants of twenty-four cities to join in their retaliation against the U.S. The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce decided to give the United States two months in which to drop its discriminatory practices and treat Chinese people as equals (*Shibao* 11 May 1905; Zhang 1966:14). Thus, a nationwide anti-American boycott started with unprecedented public enthusiasm and solidarity.

In the summer of 1905, tens of thousands of excited

urbanites held numerous meetings in major metropolises, provincial capitals, and small towns throughout China. Passionate public speeches were made. Large posters decorated city streets, store windows, and telephone poles. Kites with boycott slogans on them flew in the sky over boisterous Guangzhou city. Pamphlets and handbills advocating boycott against American goods were distributed everywhere. Actors in Shanghai staged a patriotic play (A Ying 1962:669). Anti-exclusion novels, folk songs, and poems were written by a growing new type of urban intellectuals to mobilize the public for the cause. The agitation became so emotional that it claimed the first martyr of China's modern urban political protest--a young man who poisoned himself in front of the American Consulate in Shanghai.

In fifty-five hot days from 22 July to 3 September 1905, there was at least one boycott pledge each day published in Shanghai's *Shibao* alone. A rough calculation shows that about 13,000 individuals and stores published their boycott pledges. They were from ten provinces and more than twenty cities. Only when Chinese merchants and American business firms in China suffered heavy financial losses and the U.S. government and the Qing court intervened did the boycott movement began to fade away.

Why did a seemingly minor diplomatic dispute between two otherwise friendly countries touch off such a large-scale

urban popular movement? Unlike other confrontations with foreign powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the anti-exclusion boycott was not triggered by immediate territorial threats from imperial powers. Neither was it caused by foreign missionary intrusions. Rather, it was inflamed largely by an issue with more symbolic than real meaning* to most Chinese urbanites--a racist insult to Chinese national pride (Tsai 1986:97). Most Chinese immigrants were from just two or three counties in China's southernmost provinces and they constituted only a tiny fraction of the Chinese population. Besides, Chinese exclusion was by no means a new development in American immigration policy in the early twentieth century. The first exclusion act was promulgated as early as 1882--more than twenty years before the boycott eventually started. How do we explain the scope and the timing of this major urban uprising, then?

Scholars have provided various interpretations on the origins and significance of the boycott. Three major interpretations stand out. The first stresses "national awakening" (*minzu juexing*) under foreign pressure (Field 1957; Rhoads 1962; Zhang 1966; Tsai 1976; McKee 1977).** Zhang Cunwu

*Only a very limited number of Chinese needed to and actually did go to the United States (see Chapter One). This statement is of course not true for Chinese immigrants. For them, American exclusion laws went far beyond an insult. They threatened their very livelihood (McKee 1977:105).

**For many historians the 1905 boycott stood for something new emerging from the aging civilization--nationalism. Edward J. M. Rhoads praises the movement as

(of the Academia Sinica, Taiwan), who so far has written the most comprehensive study of the movement, states: "The meaning of national awakening* is to secure the independence and integrity of national sovereignty, and to maintain the dignity and equality of national position... American exclusion policy went against these principles; therefore, American goods were boycotted" (Zhang 1966:243)."

Historians of the "national awakening" school emphasize the shocking psychological effect that political events,""

"one of the first manifestations of Chinese nationalism as a mass-based political movement." (Rhoads 1962:155). Historians from Hongkong and Taiwan argue that "[In the early twentieth century,] nationalism in China was represented unambiguously by strong and explicit articulation of ideas for national reconstruction," and that the 1905 boycott was a "manifestation of the new sense of nationalism....". (Liao 1986:57-59; Zhang 1966).

*"National awakening" is interpreted by Zhang Cunwu as meaning that "...the public recognized their own strength and increased their self confidence." More specifically, national awakening meant that "[people] sought more actively for the right of discussing national affairs internally and for independence and equality among nations externally." (Zhang 1966:243).

"The most important contribution that Zhang has made is to relate the political events to specific structural and institutional developments--emergence of new schools, daily press, modern printing houses, translations of Western books, political novels, new social and political organizations, and new ideas, notably Social Darwinism and populism--in China around 1900 (Zhang 1966:34-41). The major shortcoming of Zhang's study is, however, that he fails to analyze these changes and fails to show the inner relationship between these new phenomena and collectively how they gave rise to a new political culture as manifested in the boycott movement.

***The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and the Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900 in particular (Zhang 1966:34-36; Tsai 1976:96).

humiliating incidents against Chinese nationals,* and the introduction of Social Darwinism into China after the Sino-Japanese War had in stimulating Chinese nationalism (Zhang 1966:34-36; Tsai 1976:96, 97). Clearly the focus of this school is more on the *sudden* change of the popular mood than on long-term social, economic, and cultural changes documented by recent studies on late Qing China (Rankin 1986; Link 1981).

The second major interpretation emphasizes the importance of gradual economic changes in late Qing China. Zhu Shijia (a PRC-based historian with a Columbia Ph.D) contends that the boycott movement was the result of a clash between the Chinese national bourgeois class and the foreign imperialistic capitalists (Zhu 1958:7). Likewise, Japanese scholar Takaharu Kikuchi (1974:18-26) relates the boycott movement to the rising Chinese national industries and the increasing popularity of economic nationalism in China. This view is supported by the fact that modern Chinese chambers of commerce were established in 1903-5, and that the boycott was organized and led, among others, by Chinese merchants. The idea of "commercial warfare" (*shangzhan*) was an important concept of the boycott discourse (see Chapter Three). The trouble with this interpretation is, as I shall show in

*One of the most well-known cases occurred in 1903, two years before the boycott movement broke out. The incident involved Yung Tom-kim, a military attache of the Chinese legation, who was badly beaten by two policemen in San Francisco. Yung was handcuffed and tied by his queue to a fence before being taken to the police station. Humiliated, the attache committed suicide (Tsai 1976:97).

Chapter Four, that the long-term ideal of establishing a national industry directly conflicted with specific interests of Shanghai merchants who abandoned the boycott almost right after it started (see Chapter Five). The movement, however, continued despite the merchants' sabotage.

The third interpretation relates the boycott to specific exclusion acts and to late Qing constitutional reforms. Diplomatic historian Delber L. McKee, who has written the most detailed English account of the Chinese exclusion acts and the movement, "questions the view that it [the boycott] began because of the exclusion policy in general or solely because Chinese national sentiment was aroused." (McKee 1977:217). McKee argues that "the exclusion act of 1902, often regarded as a minor revision of earlier legislation, actually represented a new stage in the exclusion movement... This stage, moving beyond the barring of laborers, struck a blow against upper-class Chinese, particularly merchants and students." Therefore, McKee concludes, "the movement started in America with the Chinese-American community in desperation over a particular stage in the exclusion policy." (McKee 1977:216-7). Stressing the foreign origin of the movement, McKee points out the important role played by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who were then active among overseas Chinese. McKee shows that Kang's people were the earliest organizers and promoters of the boycott (McKee 1977:110). Shih-shan Henry Tsai's study supports this view (1983:129-36).

Mckee's study thus shifts our attention from nationalism in general to political reforms in late Qing China, a theme carefully studied by many China scholars (Wright 1968; Esherick 1976; Rankin 1986). To the extent that the boycott can be examined as part of the reform movement, there is strong evidence to support this view. For instance, *Shibao*, which played a pivotal role in publicizing the boycott ideas and in orchestrating the boycott activities, was founded and run by Liang Qichao's followers and financed by the Chinese Empire Reform Association (*Baohuang hui*, see Chapter Two). Liang Qichao's idea of "new citizen" (*xinmin*) in general and his criticism of Chinese exclusion acts in particular unquestionably inspired the boycotters.

The biggest problem with Mckee's interpretation is, however, that he connected such a broad popular movement with just a small group of reformist elites whose primary interest was constitutional reform. The capability of Kang and Liang to control constitutional reformers in China is questionable in the first place.* More importantly, a variety of social groups--literary groups, study societies, newspaper reading societies, speech societies, women's organizations, chambers of commerce--all spontaneously joined the boycott. Constitutional reformers constituted only a fraction of the boycotters.

*Di Cuqing, the owner of *Shibao*, was very much his own boss. His relationship with Liang Qichao deteriorated over the years.

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This brief review of previous studies on the boycott movement shows that none of them have fully explained the following questions: how were the shocking humiliations China experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries transformed into a mass psychology of crisis? How was the mass psychology of crisis turned into nationalism, or "national awakening"? How was the patriotism transformed into well-organized collective economic action? And finally, why did the rising urban Chinese nationalism focus upon the Americans? In order fully to understand the origins and significance of the boycott movement we have to examine broad social and institutional changes in late Qing China.

Two Theoretical Models

In his highly inspiring study of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that the origins and spread of nationalism should be understood in a broad context of emerging "print capitalism." (Anderson 1991:Chapter 3). He argues that nationalism was the result of the extended imagination obtained by modern people thanks to the changing and expanding means of modern communication. He stresses in particular three related developments in this regard: the secularization and standardization of national language; the rise of a daily press; and the proliferation of a popular entertainment form--modern fiction (Anderson 1991:Chapters 2 and 3).

According to Anderson, a modern sense of nation *gradually* has developed with the emergence of national languages which have taken the place of universal languages (Latin in case of Europe) on the one hand, and local dialects on the other as dominant communicative forms (Anderson 1991:Chapter 3). This emergence of national languages is in turn the consequence of print-as-commodity in the modern era. Print-capitalism, for the first time in history, gave rise to a truly mass readership, and made it possible for a large reading public to have access *simultaneously* to the same events and ideas. The novel and the newspaper were particular important in creating a new sense of simultaneity (Anderson 1991:25). Anderson points out:

Why this transformation* should be so important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for "re-presenting" the kind of imagined community that is the nation (Anderson 1991:25; *Emphasis in original*).

While an actor in a novel might have had no idea what the others were up to at a given moment, Anderson explains, all the characters in the novel were "embedded in the minds of the omniscient readers." "Only they, like God, watch A telephoning C, B shopping, and D playing pool all at once (Anderson

*"From the medieval conception of simultaneity-along-time to an idea of homogeneous, empty time, in which simultaneity is transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar" (Anderson 1991:24).

1991:26; *Italics in original*). With the help of novels and other popular print materials, Anderson says:

An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000-odd [*sic*] fellow-Americans. he has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity (Anderson 1991:26).

Anderson's thesis is quite suggestive given the broad nature of his generalization. It was not just a coincidence that the first urban nationalistic movement in China occurred during the same period when language reform was advocated and practiced, daily newspapers flourished, and novels proliferated (see Chapter Two). Only when we put the 1905 boycott into this broad context can we fully appreciate its origins and significance.

Like Anderson, Jurgen Habermas also stresses the political significance of new communicative means--newspapers, literary journals, coffee houses, and theaters--though he relates the emerging mass communication not to nationalism but to the public sphere (Habermas 1991, especially Chapters 12, 20). According to Habermas, in eighteenth century Europe there emerged a bourgeois public sphere between the realm of state authority and the private (or intimate) realm of family. It consisted of private individuals who had come together to debate among themselves and with state authorities about political affairs. It was a reasoned, open, and relatively unconstrained debate. The emergence of the public sphere was of course preconditioned by the rise of a bourgeois class.

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However, the advent of the public sphere was also closely related to the development of the newspaper industry, coffee houses, and salons. The press in particular became a key forum of critical political debate. Thus, the growth of the public sphere should be understood in the context of the use of certain forms of mass communication. With the formation of the public sphere, personal ideas could be transformed into public opinion. Later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the rise of state power and commercialization of mass communication the public sphere in Europe was gradually destroyed. The historical period of the rise and fall of the public sphere is nevertheless important to understand modern Western democratic societies (Habermas 1992 Chapters 7 and 12; Thompson 1990:110-113).

Recently some China scholars, notably Frederic Wakeman, Jr. and Philip C.C. Huang (1993), have criticized the use, or misuse, of the concept of the "public sphere" in analyzing modern China. The thrust of their criticism is that in China the relationship between state and society was vastly different from that of European countries. In Europe the autonomous rights of people--the bourgeoisie--vis-a-vis the state developed much more fully and were institutionalized. As a result, a civic society emerged. On the other hand, Chinese gentry-merchant elites, while they did assume larger responsibilities in extrabureaucratic activities in the late Qing period, were far from independent from state authority.

In other words, China did see some development toward a civic society in modern era, but the development remained in the form of quantitative accumulation not qualitative breakthrough. Therefore, the critics argue, the concept of public sphere cannot be applied to the Chinese situation without serious distortions of Chinese history (Wakeman 1993; Huang 1993).

It is true that the appearance of some elements characteristic of civic societies is very different from the emergence of a civic society itself. Similarly, to say that capitalistic relationships exist in China is different from claiming that China is a capitalist country. It is probably true that in China the accumulative developments toward a civic society were not comparable to the situation in European countries. However, the concept of public sphere can still be fruitfully used to analyze aspects of modern Chinese history for a number of reasons. For one thing, Chinese themselves had used the concept public (*gong*), in ways quite similar to the ambiguous ways that Westerners used the concept, in describing things that were opposite to private (*si*) and distinctive from official matters. In modern China, patriotic Chinese began to use the term to designate an intermediary realm between private and government (Rowe 1990:316-18). During the 1905 boycott in particular, Chinese urbanites consciously adopted the concept of "public" to indicate that the movement was launched and organized by the "people," not by the state or

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the government. The boycotters also employed the concept to mobilize Chinese urbanites because the boycott was for public interests (*gongyi*).

The boycotters, however, used the term "public" in two unique ways, which Habermas did not mention in his description of the bourgeois public sphere. First of all, the boycotters emphasized the importance of collective action (*jie tuanti*) in a public cause (*gongyi shiye*). Secondly, they assigned the meaning "universal" to the idea of public in such expressions as "universal principle" (*gongli*) and "universal law" (*gongfa*; see Chapter Three). Clearly, Chinese were very creative in manipulating and utilizing the concept for their specific situation and particular needs.

This leads to my second reason for feeling that the concept is applicable to modern Chinese history in general and to my own study in particular. The concept of the public sphere is an analytical tool for a changing relationship, not just a precise description of a stable condition such as the concept of civic society might suggest. This is why we might fruitfully use the concept public sphere to analyze certain aspects of modern Chinese history, but it would still be misleading to speak of a civic society in China.

The relationship among private, public, and official in the late Qing period, as was also the case in the Republic and the post-1949 period, underwent gradual and subtle changes which might or might not have specific institutional

manifestation. Yet, this does not mean no significant changes ever occurred. The concept of the public sphere will help us to pay more attention to certain changes upon which other analytical concepts do not focus.

The key to the rise and expansion of a public sphere, according to Habermas (1992), was the changing and expanding among ordinary citizens of a given society of *communicative* actions which had political significance. As I shall show in this study, communicative actions in the form of the growing public media and voluntary associations expanded significantly in late Qing China. If we focus on the political consequences of these expanding communicative actions, instead of just on who initiated and who had ultimate control of these actions, it is possible to say that these changes were revolutionary despite the fact that they were initiated from traditional sources (Reynolds 1993).

Thus, I shall stress two unique features of the Chinese public sphere to which Habermas's European model is not applicable. One is the close relationship between the state initiatives and the private efforts in giving rise to the communicative actions. The second is that nationalism played a particularly strong role in the rise of the Chinese public sphere.

The reason that Habermas' theory can be used along with Anderson's interpretation of nationalism is that for the boycotters, public interests (*gongyi*) were national interests.

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In early twentieth century China, an increasing popular sense of public^{*} emerged coincidentally with a growing sense of nation (see Chapter Three). In other words, as the boycott movement shows, nationalism took the form of populism in early twentieth century China. Habermas' theory of the public sphere is thus useful because it includes insightful discussions of the rise of voluntary associations--literary societies, chambers of commerce, and academies--not only as part of the new communicative interactions but also as the institutional basis of a new democratic politics (Habermas 1991:Chapter 5).

Now let us turn to some specific structural and institutional changes in late Qing China to illustrate how the two theoretical models can be applied to this study.

New Social and Political Organizations

William T. Rowe (1989, 1984) and Mary Backus Rankin (1986) have carefully documented some of these changes in Hankou and Zhejiang by examining merchant organizations and their extrabureaucratic initiatives in sponsoring public works, establishing new schools, organizing charities, militias, and enterprises, and eventually participating in national politics. Rankin in particular attributes merchants'

^{*}Public opinion (yulun), public interests, public principle (gongli), etc.

involvement in national politics to the sense of domestic and foreign crisis (Rankin 1986:29, 30, 301). Indeed, the merchant organizations did play organizing roles in the boycott.*

However, other social groups also, more or less spontaneously and independently, participated in and led the boycott movement. Most notable were study societies, literary associations, reading groups, women's organizations, speech societies, and new schools. Most of these organizations were newly founded for specific purposes by reform-minded intellectuals, urban professionals, and small merchants. The organizers of these social groups had extensive ties with new urban institutions such as newspapers, publishing houses, schools, and hospitals. Some of these social groups had their own publications, and all had regular meeting places. Collectively these organizations constituted an important part of the growing public sphere in late Qing China. During the 1905 boycott they, along with merchant organizations, made the immigration issue a public concern by organizing most of the public meetings (see Chapter Five).

None of the organizers of these social groups, however, could be called urban bourgeoisie. Few of them were even urban elites. As such they did not fit in Habermas's definition of the new stratum of "bourgeois" people in eighteenth century Europe--the merchants, bankers, entrepreneurs, and

*For a detailed discussion of merchant organizations please see Chapter Four.

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manufacturers--which occupied a central position within the "public" and which was the "real carrier of the public..." (Habermas 1992:22-23). But their public role was undeniable, as was amply demonstrated during the 1905 boycott movement. When the merchant organizations abandoned the public cause for their own interests these organizations continued to provide the leadership for the movement. After the movement was finally suppressed by the Qing government, they began to organize the urban public for new social and political causes (see conclusion).

New Political and Cultural Symbols*

Voluntary associations mobilized the Chinese urban public by using new as well as traditional political and cultural symbols. "The exercise of power always requires symbolic practices." (Hunt 1984:54). During the boycott movement, the boycotters adopted and created numerous symbols for the patriotic cause and for their new political beliefs. By so doing, they rallied urbanites together and gave the boycott movement a sense of legitimacy.**

The boycotters used three types of symbolic practices:

*A note has to be made on what I mean by "new" symbols. Obviously, not all symbolic practices by the boycotters were newly created. But during the boycott movement, even the familiar images--flowers and dragons, for example--common sayings, and physical gestures had new meanings.

**As Lynn Hunt (1984:54) points out: "In a sense, legitimacy is the general agreement on signs and symbols."

visual, verbal, and symbolic action. From what we can see today, the most popular images invoked by the boycotters were flowers, the rising sun, and an energetic youth.* Individually and collectively these symbols represented a new China. The contemporary novelist Li Boyuan started his famous *A Short History of Civilization* (*Wenming xiaoshi*) with a vivid description of a rising sun in the sea. "Looking at the situation [in China] now," Li wrote, "the sun is about to rise,...with the new policies and new schools of these years..." (Li 1962:1).

The image of an energetic youth, on the other hand, clearly epitomized a new people. On the cover of *A Comprehensive Book on the Sino-American Exclusion Treaty* (*Zhongmei jingyue quanshu*), published in 1905, was a young soldier with a Western-style uniform blowing a trumpet (A Ying 1962:vii). In an anti-exclusion play, *Adventures of Haiqiaochun* (*Haiqiaochun chuanqi*), a mystic youth representing the young spirit of China (*shaonian Zhongguo hun*) presumably guided a boycott hero (see Chapter Five). The practice of letting young school students make public speeches had similar symbolic meaning (Zhang 1966:114).

New words and phrases more than anything else served as political symbols rather than just providing ideas. "Things compete" (*wujing*), "natural selection" (*tianze*), "struggle for

*All of these images appeared on covers of anti-exclusion novels and pamphlets (A Ying 1962:iii-vii).

survival" (zhengcun), "commercial warfare" (shangzhan), "civilization" (wenming), "people's power" (renmin youquan), and "unite to form groups" (jie tuanti) became the catch words of the day thanks to the new media--daily press, literary journals, publishing houses, and public speeches.

New Language, Rising Media of Mass Communication, and the Politicization of Literary Forms

What is amazing is not the fact that these new ideas and political symbols were adopted at all during the boycott movement but the fact that they were so widely used in popular as well as in elite literature--novels, popular songs, plays, pamphlets, and newspaper essays (see Chapter Three). This can be explained mainly by some conscious efforts by reform-minded individuals and voluntary associations in late Qing China. As I mentioned earlier, speech societies and newspaper reading clubs were organized prior to and during the boycott movement to mobilize the illiterate and the semi-literate. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a vernacular movement was underway (De Francis 1950 Chapters 3 and 4; QMWZGG 1958). During the boycott movement most anti-exclusion literature was written in vernacular instead of classical Chinese. What needs to be pointed out is, however, that unlike the situation during the May Fourth period of 1919, in 1905 the vernacular movement had just started and the dominant boycott ideas were written in a transitional language--semi-classical Chinese

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(see Chapter Two). Still, it is clear that the language of political discourse was changing.

The change in political language was accompanied by the change in the media during the same period with the rise of telegraph services, publishing houses, and above all, the urban daily press. The growth of the new media had fundamental political consequences. Since most newspapers and journals were privately run and since these newspapers and journals published political news and comments, the government began to lose its monopoly on politics. While the urban public still did not have the power of political decision making, they began to enjoy the right of political discussion. During the boycott movement, newspapers served as an open public forum for political discussions. A critical public sphere was clearly forming. It is the use of the embryonic mass media for political purposes that made the political issues public concerns. This process of the publicization of politics is particularly evident when we note that in the nineteenth century the influential political ideas were almost exclusively written in forms such as memorials, private correspondence, and books rather than newspaper essays (see Chapter Two).

In the early twentieth century, private individuals engaged in political discussions not only by writing newspaper essays but also by expressing their political ideas and ideals through various literary forms--poems, folk songs, plays, and

novels. The politicization of novels was, however, most significant because fiction was the most popular literary form of the late Qing (A Ying 1991). In 1902, just three years before the boycott movement, many reform-minded individuals began to advocate novel-writing for political purposes (A Ying 1991). Naturally, American mistreatment of Chinese immigrants and Chinese exclusion acts also became subject matters for political novels. From 1902 to 1908, eight novels on these subjects were published, which constituted an important part of the boycott discourse (A Ying 1962).

The Communicative Web of the Boycott and the Role of Novels

The role of the boycott novels in the nationalistic movement was far more significant than simply promoting a propaganda scheme. As I discussed earlier, according to Anderson, the very structure (or plots) of novels in eighteenth century Europe "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind of imagined community that is the nation*" (Anderson 1991: 25. *Italics in original*).

As we can see in the late Qing novels, the main characters were *simultaneously* in much broader geographic settings all over China and the world (see Chapter Two). More importantly, as the boycott fiction shows, novels also synthesized and connected *all* the information presented in a highly complicated modern communicative web in a single text which was simultaneously read by mass readers.

To illustrate this point let us first recreate the communicative web of the boycott. The anti-exclusion message was circulated in basically two ways: from oral to printed message and vice-versa. In the first process, an individual who might or might not have had personal experiences of American mistreatment of Chinese would make a public speech in front of an audience of from one hundred to one thousand people. Of course, the message (or the sentiment contained in the message) was delivered only to a very limited number of people in a given area. The speech by itself had only local impact. Thanks to the newspapers in which the speech was published, the printed version of the oral message was read by larger audience in a given city. If the newspaper was also subscribed to by people in other cities, the message was shared by a still larger audience.

In the second process, a written version of anti-exclusion material was published in book form or in newspapers. In order to let the urban illiterate share the message, a speaker would transform the printed message into spoken vernacular. We can logically imagine that the two communicative processes became one when the spoken vernacular was once again published in text form. In both processes, however, the message reached the audience through a sequence like this: mistreatment of Chinese in the United States (action) --> initial message (spoken vernacular or text) --> publicized message (spoken vernacular or text). In reality,

all these could happen simultaneously, not necessarily in a sequential order. But individuals could physically experience only one thing at a time. Novels, on the other hand, provided a device in which an individual could see the whole process and a range of actors, speakers, and writers acting all at once in a single text. Thus, a stronger sense of community developed without the reader being consciously aware of it.

New Politics

New communicative devices provided the mental and psychological basis for public political actions. The boycotters did not just create a new political discourse by using new language and new media, they also experimented with a new politics. The boycott was considered by contemporaries to be a great experiment in the new politics: People do not just talk empty words but take real actions; they do not rely on officials but can exercise their own power (*xingyong zili*, *Shibao* '23 May 1905). As an economic means for solving economic, legal, and even political disputes, boycotts were nothing new. But in earlier cases, issues and participants involved had been much more limited (Remer 1933:13-15). The 1905 boycott, on the other hand, was taken up by Chinese of virtually all the major cities throughout China and the issue at stake was one of national concern.

Various social groups took the initiative in organizing a variety of boycott activities, with the government acting as

a bystander. The decision-making process of this new politics was in some respects quite egalitarian. In this regard, the newspapers, notably *Shibao* and *Shenbao*, played a pivotal role. They provided a forum in which concerned individuals and voluntary organizations openly discussed boycott tactics and goals. Public meetings played a similar role. At a typical boycott meeting, anti-exclusion resolutions would be suggested by speakers or organizers of the meeting. These resolutions would then be discussed and finally decided by the participants of the meeting with applause.

But the mass politics of the boycott was also coercive. What was new about the boycott politics was the fact that the coercive power of the boycotters clearly derived from public reason rather than from status, written law, or social customs. Since the boycott was felt by public opinion to be good for the general public (*gongyi*) and for the nation, violators of boycott resolutions were punished by the public instead of by any state apparatus. Violators would have their names published in newspapers and be forced to pay fines (see Chapter Five). The power of legitimate use of violence was, however, reserved to the Qing government.

So was the right of negotiating a new immigration treaty with the United States. This right of dealing with a foreign country and representing the nation was also reserved to the state. The phrase "negotiate treaty by officials; boycott by merchants" (*Yiyue zai guan; dizhi zai shang*) was an attempt by

the boycotters to define the boundary between the state authority and people's rights.

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One discusses the disputes between China and the United States on the issue of Chinese immigrants to America. It tries to show above all that the changing perception of the Qing government's authority and responsibilities over Chinese nationals, including overseas Chinese. The growing popular consciousness of political participation was not simply the result of the imperial government's increasing weakness, but also of a perception of expanding government responsibilities which must be shared by the people. Chapter Two describes the phenomenal change in the ways in which urban communication was conducted: the wide use of telegraph services by merchant organizations and newspapers, the rise of a commercial press, the commercialization and politicization of popular entertainment--novels of social criticism in particular--and the emergence of new language forms. This chapter also describes a much-neglected group of petty intellectual opinion-makers whose importance in political mobilization was significant because they worked for the leading newspapers and publishing houses and acted simultaneously as information providers, entertainers, and social critics. The boycott discourse which was largely created by these intellectuals is analyzed in detail in Chapter Three. But the key role in organizing the boycott activities was presumably played by an

entirely different group of people--the merchants. They were the best organized and economically and socially most powerful civil groups. As I point out in Chapter Four, the merchants' economic interests were such that they could not carry out the boycott without seriously damaging their own interests. More importantly, they had the most awkward and ambiguous relationship with the state. While they initiated and led the popular movement as the leaders of a growing civil society, they quickly discovered that they could not control the urban masses without state interference. Chapter Five goes on to analyze how the movement started out as an expression of popular solidarity and ended up with a deep schism among the boycotters.

While this study stresses that the origins of the boycott have to be found within China, especially in the cities deeply involved, it is nevertheless crucial to understand the nature of diplomatic and legal disputes over Chinese immigrants to the United States which sparked the popular upheaval. Thus, let us first examine the immigration controversy.

Chapter One

Immigration Disputes Between the United States and China -"Freezing Conditions are on the Way" - Yi Jing

The immediate cause of the 1905 anti-American boycott was American exclusion of Chinese immigrants to the United States. In order to understand why this relatively isolated issue^{*} would lead to a nationwide popular protest, we have to examine the social and political significance of Chinese emigration as a whole in late Qing China, for Chinese immigrants to the United States represented no more than one-tenth of the entire exodus of population from overpopulated China in the second half of the nineteenth century (Hunt 1983:61).

Although "Peking's position toward Chinese in the United States developed within the context of attitudes and policies that applied to overseas Chinese generally" (Hunt 1983:96), for purposes of this study I shall focus my account on particular problems Chinese immigration to the United States caused to both countries. Since many studies have been done on why and how the United States changed its policy from

^{*}Studies have shown that during the late Qing the United States had relatively good relations with China, and that the immigration controversy was the only major conflict between the two countries. See Hunt (1983).

welcome to exclusion of Chinese immigrants,* my primary focus will be on the changing policies of the Qing government toward overseas Chinese in general and Chinese-Americans in particular, and on actions taken by Chinese-Americans to protect their own interests. At least four distinctive political and social groups were actively involved in the shaping of Qing immigration policies: the Qing central government (the Grand Council, Zongli Yamen, and later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs); the diplomats representing China in the United States; Qing local officials, especially those in Guangdong; and Chinese-Americans and their allies in Hong Kong and China proper.

While it is generally true that the Qing central government was notoriously indifferent to and inept in protecting overseas Chinese, its policy toward emigrants changed gradually in the 1870s from callous indifference and occasional hostility to paternal sympathy and protectiveness. Making the imperial policy more complicated, the Chinese foreign service officials stationed in the United States varied in their diplomatic skills and perceptions of the issue, and they did not always see eye-to-eye with the Qing local officials on the immigration issue. Conflicting policy suggestions were often made.

At the same time, because of the increasing difficulties

*See especially McClellan (1971); Tsai (1986); Coolidge (1909), among others.

facing the growing number of overseas Chinese and various social problems and instabilities incurred in local emigration communities, there was greater demand for and expectations of Chinese government regulation and protection. The relationship between overseas Chinese communities and the imperial government was also changing as the former moved from evading governmental control to seeking its protection.

Unknowingly and inevitably, however, the increasing appeal of overseas Chinese to and reliance on their home country for help only deepened their awkward situation in the increasingly nationalistic world of the late nineteenth century. Gradually the Chinese immigrants were losing the advantages of their dual identity and their ambivalent allegiance to either country. Eventually, when their government proved to be unable to provide the protection they needed, they appealed directly to their countrymen.

1. The Great Exodus

According to legend, the first Chinese to set foot on the New World were three seamen, Ashing, Achun, and Accun, crewmen on the ship *Pallas*. In one of her voyages from Canton to the United States in 1785, it is said that the captain of the ship, John O' Donnell, decided to stay in Baltimore and get married. This purely personal decision left the three Chinese stranded in America. Later, a Philadelphia merchant

helped them to appeal to the United States Congress and it was believed that they eventually returned home safely (Tsai 1986:1; Yang et al 1989:3).

Nothing is unusual about this case except that accidental circumstance temporarily inconvenienced some indiscreet Chinese. Although the imperial court would not have been happy about Chinese employment on a foreign ship, the law of the Qing was not clear on this particular case. For decades after its conquest of China, the Qing regime feared a possible alliance between anti-Qing forces at home and Chinese rebels abroad; consequently, it first forbade foreign trade in the late seventeenth century, then in the early eighteenth century prohibited the emigration of Chinese people (Zhuang 1989:75,79). It was hard to prevent audacious people from sneaking out, however. Consequently the Qing government decided to punish those who eventually returned. One statute, for instance, stipulated: "Those who find excuses to sojourn abroad and then clandestinely return home, if captured, shall be executed immediately. Those who smuggle abroad cattle, horses, ammunition, or metal..., shall be whipped one hundred times. Those who smuggle human beings or weapons out of the country shall be hanged." (cited in Tsai 1986:2). Presumably, the three seamen were not considered deliberate and serious offenders of the law.

About half a century later, in 1848, two men and one

woman from China aboard the ship *Eagle* arrived in San Francisco harbor. This time the two men rushed to gold mines in California and the woman became a house servant of the priest Charles Gillespie (Yang et al. 1989:3). They were, according to American immigration records, the first Chinese settlers in California, later the home of tens of thousands of Chinese immigrants (Tsai 1986:2). Although we may safely guess that the prospect of quick fortunes must have played an important role in their decision to come and sojourn in the United States, the decision was still a bold one, for they came to a strange country at the risk of severe punishment if they ever chose to return to their homeland again. Legally, until 1893 those who returned home from extended overseas stays were still punishable, although the ban on emigration was gradually abolished after the 1850s in the Qing's treaties with foreign countries, the United States included (HGCGSL 1-1:295-6). However, more Chinese adventurers quickly followed the lead of the first Chinese-Americans. By January 1850, the Chinese population in San Francisco alone had increased to 787 men and two women. In the next few decades tens of thousands of Chinese, most of them young men, came to the New World (Tsai 1986:2).

There is no question that most of them came to the United States to seek economic opportunities instead of political freedom (Coolidge 1909:17). Nonetheless, they were no longer under Qing jurisdiction. This freedom also meant

that, at least until the late 1870s when a Chinese consulate was established in the United States, they were not protected as Chinese nationals in America. Before 1868, when the Burlingame Treaty was signed between China and the United States, Chinese immigrants in America were not even officially considered Chinese nationals (Wu 1983:219).

Many Chinese did not seem to consider the lack of protection as an important factor in influencing their decision to go abroad. By 1848 when the first Chinese settled in California, tens of thousands of Chinese had already emigrated to many other countries in Africa, Australia, South America, and Asia, especially Southeast Asia (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Year	Area	Number of Emigrants (estimate)	% of the total
1801- 1850	Southeast Asia	200,000	62.0%
	Cuba	17,000	5.3%
	Peru	10,000	3.1%
	Australia	10,000	3.1%
	The United States	18,000	5.6%
	West Indies	15,000	4.6%
	Others	50,000	16.0%
	Total	320,000	100.0%

Source: Chen Zexian, "Nineteenth Century Chinese Contract Laborers" (Shijiu shiji de qiyue huagong) *Lishi yanjiu*, (Study of History) No.1, 1963 (HGCGSL 4:169).

In the next quarter of a century Chinese emigrants increased three times to a total of 1,280,000; among them twelve percent were to the United States (see Table 2).

Table 2

Year	Area	Number of Emigrants (estimate)	% of the total
1851- 1875	West Indies	30,000	2.3%
	Cuba	135,000	10.5%
	Peru	110,000	8.5%
	Panama	25,000	2.0%
	U.S	160,000*	12.5%
	Canada	30,000	2.3%
	Australia	55,000	4.2%
	New Zealand	5,000	0.4%
	Hawaii	25,000	2.0%
	The Philippines	45,000	3.5%
	The Malay Peninsula	350,000	27.0%
	East Indies	250,000	19.5%
	Others	60,000	4.7%
	total	1,280,000	100.0%

*During the same period more than half of them (92,373) returned China.

Source: (HGCGSL 4:169).

Despite the much-publicized atrocities against Chinese

coolies in Latin America and Southeast Asia and American exclusion of Chinese laborers in the last quarter of the century, another 750,000 Chinese went abroad during the years 1876-1900, most of them to the Malay Peninsula and the East Indies (HGCGSL 4:169).

Generally speaking, Chinese emigration overseas can be divided into three historical periods: the seventh century, the fifteenth century, and the nineteenth century (HGCGSL 4:3), with the nineteenth century emigration numerically the largest. (Yang et al. 1989:9). The term *huaqiao* ("Overseas Chinese") appeared in Chinese in 1899 as a result of the third wave of Chinese emigration (Wu 1983:5). Historians and social scientists generally agree that it was a combination of internal and external causes that led to the great exodus. Population pressure, natural calamities, and the civil strife in the early and mid-nineteenth century were major internal causes (Yang et al. 1989:11-17). Large scale demand for laborers in America, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere, and the free immigration demanded by the Western powers during the same period, were the external causes (Peng in HGCGSL 4:174-80).

Three types of emigrants can be identified according to their method of going abroad and their emigration status: the semi-slave laborers; the contract laborers; and free immigrants (Wu 1983:21-22). The semi-slave laborers (called coolies or piglets at the time) were mainly solicited or

kidnapped by foreigners and their Chinese agents and sent to Latin America (mainly Cuba and Peru) and Southeast Asia (Daniels 1990:240). Their travel costs and first months's wages were paid by their agents, and they were not free until they fulfilled their contracts in five to ten years. Many of them died during the journey or before the end of their contract terms. From 1845 to the late 1870s, the heyday of the notorious coolie-trade, about 500,000 coolies were shipped out of China (Wu 1983:42). In 1870, the Portuguese authorities in Macao, the center of the coolie-trade, banned the trade under pressure from China and the international community. Voluntary laborers then became the major source of emigration. Although very often the travel costs of voluntary laborers were also paid by travel companies and other intermediaries, the consent of laborers was usually obtained before hand. By and large, Chinese immigrants to the United States were voluntary laborers and free immigrants (including merchants and other types). In the 1850s American consular officials in China explained to Washington the differences between immigrants and coolies:

the "Chinese coolie trade" [is]...a servitude in no respect practically different from...the...African slave trade [and the flow to] California, a Chinese emigration which has been voluntary and profitable to the contracting parties (cited in Daniels 1990:240-1).

However, Chinese emigration to the United States was inseparably part of this third wave resulting from both internal pressure and external attraction. Yang et al. (1989:19) have

studied Taishan county, Guangdong, the origin of sixty percent of the Chinese immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Table 3 shows the percentage of Taishan immigrants throughout the world in the mid-twentieth century, when immigration patterns had changed much from earlier (nineteenth century) times.

Taishan was located in the southwestern part of the Pearl River delta area where hilly plateau constituted two-thirds of the entire land area. As early as the Jiaqing period (1522-1565) of the Ming Dynasty, the population/land ratio had already become seriously unfavorable. Annual food production could only feed the entire population of the county for four months. Traditionally, therefore, the Taishan people "often engaged in overseas trade" (Yang et al. 1989:18). In the 1850s, the Taishan area saw bloodshed between Hakkas and the earlier settlers which forced

Table 3

Percentage of Taishan Immigrants to Various Countries

The United States	51%	Canada	40.5%	Cuba	23.5%
Peru	15.6%	Brazil	37.9%		

Total in the Americas	35.5%				
The Malay Peninsula	10%	The Philippines	4.4%	Burma	1.9%

Total in Asia:	0.57%				
Australia	4.36%	New Zealand	7.3%	Nauru	6%

Total in Pacific area	1.9%				
Total in Africa	2.2%				

Source: *Taishan xianzhi* (Taishan County Gazetteer) 1962 no.3

in Yang et al. 1989:19-20.

many to seek refuge abroad. At exactly the same time, the news of the gold rush in California reached the area. Consequently, tens of thousands people in Taishan and surrounding counties sailed to the United States from Hong Kong. In 1876 there were about 80,000 immigrants in America from Taishan alone (Yang et al. 1989:19).

The large-scale emigration necessarily eased the population pressure internally and helped economic development of the receiving countries. However, the social, racial, and political problems caused by the emigration soon reached such a scale in the second half of the nineteenth century that the Qing government was forced to deal with the issue for the first time in its history. It established new offices, regulations and laws and as a consequence its authority began to be felt, even appreciated, by overseas Chinese in general, and by Chinese-Americans in particular.

2. Evolution of A Protective Policy toward Overseas Chinese: 1860-1875

Despite the great exodus of Chinese nationals since the nineteenth century, the Qing government did not develop a vigorous regulatory policy toward emigration and failed to take necessary measures to protect overseas Chinese until the

1870s. The callous indifference toward the overseas Chinese was typically reflected in a conversation between the American captain Samuel F. Dupont and the Qing high official Tan Tingxiang in 1858 regarding China's establishment of a consulate in the United State to take care of the affairs of Chinese nationals:

Tan. It is not our custom to send officials beyond our own borders.

Dupont. But your people on the farther shore of the Pacific are very numerous, numbering several tens of thousands.

Tan. When the emperor rules over so many millions, what does he care for the few waifs that have drifted away to a foreign land?

Dupont. Those people are, many of them, rich, having gathered gold in our mines. They might be worth looking after on that account.

Tan. The emperor's wealth is beyond computation; why should he care for those of his subjects who have left their home, or for the sands they have scraped together?

"Such was the sublime indifference at that time manifested by China toward her emigrant offspring!" commented W.A.P. Martin, who recorded the conversation (Martin 1897:60).

Partially because of the Qing government's indifference and partially because of the illegality of their going abroad, the overseas Chinese initially did not appeal to their own government for help when they were seriously abused in foreign countries. In 1868, when some Chinese in Peru could no longer bear the inhuman treatment as laborers in the country, they

sent a petition to the American Minister in Peru for help (HGCGSL 1/3:965-6). It reads:

We humbly think that only when principles become universal can business be conducted. No matter whether it involves Chinese or foreigners, to manage a country is first of all to take care of the people, regardless of whether they come from nearby or far way.

We were born and raised in China, a country of rites. Forced by cold and hunger, we came to a foreign country, far away from home. It was in 1851 when bandits were rampant and business was bad. Right at the time, recruiters came looking for workers. We came aboard with a contract, without worrying about [their] breaking it. Twenty years [sic] have passed. There are tens of thousands Chinese here now. Since we first arrived, we have done everything from herding cattle and horses to tilling the land and digging wells, as we were told. We worked from morning till night, no matter whether it was winter or summer.... However, these vicious foreigners...who have no conscience treated the contract like scrap papers and took human life as grass.... The landlords were cruel and the officials were unsympathetic. When we complained, we were castigated. As a result [Chinese] often died under mistreatment or committed suicide. It is not that we are not grateful for our lives which were given by the emperor and our father. Our lives are just unbearable.... We cannot tell anybody of our misery and therefore beg for your help.... (HGCGSL 1/3:965-66).

There is no record that these Chinese laborers ever tried to seek help from their home country. At any rate, they apparently first appealed to Peruvian officials when they were abused by their employers, as the petition indicates. When this failed, they appealed to the next authority accessible. Their own government was physically and, perhaps emotionally as well, too far away. More importantly, the letter showed that these Chinese laborers had a very general idea of authority which should uphold principles regardless of nationalities. It probably did not occur to them that the

American minister could not even find anybody to translate the letter, let alone come to their aid. However, the American minister did show concern and sympathy, although he could do nothing other than forward the petition to the Zongli Yamen of the Qing government along with an explanatory letter (HGCGSL 1/3:966).

The petition thus arrived in the hands of Qing officials despite the fact that it was not the initial intention of the petitioners (HGCGSL 1/3:966). About five months after the Chinese laborers sent out their petition, the Zongli Yamen finally notified the American minister to China that it could not do anything because China did not have a treaty with Peru. The Zongli Yamen, however, expressed its "deep appreciation" for the concern and sympathy shown by the American diplomats toward Chinese nationals and asked the American Minister to Peru to "find out what really happened and extend a helping hand" (HGCGSL 1/3:966).

Before the legal problems could be straightened out so that the American minister could protect Chinese nationals on China's behalf, another petition by Chinese laborers in Peru was sent to the minister (HGCGSL 1/3974-5). American diplomats in China again notified China and suggested that China should sign a treaty with Peru and send officials to take care of Chinese nationals in that country. Otherwise China should give American diplomats in Peru authorization to take charge of affairs involving Chinese nationals. But this arrangement

could only be a temporary solution (HGCGSL 1/3:3974-5).

Apparently, even if the Qing government was willing to establish legations abroad, it was not prepared to (Yang 1989:325). Besides, the Peru incident was not enough of an impetus to prompt such an important policy decision. Therefore it took the easier solution: leave the matter to the American minister in Lima so long as it was possible. The incident did, however, put pressure on the Qing government to deal with the problem, somehow. Instead of extending its authority abroad, it decided to assert its rights more vigorously within--to prevent more Chinese from going to such countries as Peru. In July 1869, two months after notifying Americans of its decision regarding Chinese nationals in Peru, the Zongli Yamen sent a note to Great Britain, France, Russia, the United States, and Japan saying that China had decided to ban labor recruiting by countries without treaties with China (HGCGSL 1/3:968-69). The irony was, however, that this decision would force Peru to seek a treaty with China instead of ceasing to recruit more Chinese laborers. As I shall show later, China's treaty with Peru, among other things, forced China to take more direct responsibility to protect Chinese nationals in Peru and would eventually lead to the establishment of a Chinese legation in the United States in 1878. This chain of events was set off by another incident.

In 1872, three years after the ban on laborer

recruitment, an incident involving labor smuggling occurred which forced the Qing government to take responsibility for taking care of Chinese nationals outside of Chinese territory. One day in October 1872, a Peruvian ship which departed from Macao with about 200 Chinese nationals, some of whom were children, was forced to anchor in a Japanese port with a smashed mast. A Chinese passenger, Huang Muqing, who could not bear the hardship on the ship and was not sure of his fate in a foreign country, jumped into the water and swam to a British ship. He was probably not able to explain his action and intention very well to the British sailors, and thus was sent back to the Peruvian ship. He was then beaten up and had his pigtail cut off in a effort to disguise his true nationality. Further convinced of his doom if he remained on the ship, he escaped again. This time, the British offered to pay 100 tael [sic] for Huang's freedom. The owner of the Peruvian ship made a mistake--he refused to let Huang go. The Japanese police were promptly notified, the ship was searched, and all 230 Chinese nationals were brought to shore. The owner of the Peruvian ship was tried and convicted of illegal smuggling of Chinese laborers (HGCGSL 1/3 976-999).

Japanese officials in Shanghai quickly informed the intendant of Su-Song-Tai prefecture, Sheng Bingcheng. Sheng dared not make decisions by himself, and therefore wrote the Ministers of Beiyang and Nanyang suggesting that China could not possibly ignore the incident and should send officials to

Japan to deal with the case because it was too expensive and troublesome to take all the people involved back to China for hearings (HGCGSL 1/3:976). Both ministers advised the Zongli Yamen to appreciate Japan's good will and take immediate actions so that the Qing would not be despised by foreign countries for indifference to its own people. Both suggested sending officials to Japan for the first time in Chinese history to solve the problem (HGCGSL 1/3 976; 979-980; 981). Less than two weeks after China was notified of the incident, the Qing government unprecedentedly sent Chinese officials, along with an American interpreter, to Japan. The mission lasted about a month and all the Chinese nationals were safely brought back to China. The Qing government thanked the Japanese government for its hospitality and cooperation and insisted on paying all the expenses incurred by Chinese nationals in Japan (HGCGSL 1/3:986-87).

Presumably, both cases helped to shape a new sense of nationality in Chinese official and folk minds. A new kind of relationship between the Qing government and overseas Chinese was bound to develop. While the two incidents forced the Qing regime to take responsibilities it traditionally did not acknowledge, they also confirmed the legitimacy of the Qing's authority over its nationals, overseas Chinese included, at least theoretically. More specifically, these incidents, among other factors, directly contributed to the Qing's decision to

establish legations in foreign countries, including the United States. With the establishment of consulates in foreign countries in the mid-1870s, the Qing gradually developed a protective policy towards overseas Chinese.

As early as 1868 in the Burlingame Treaty with the United States, China was granted the right to establish consulate in the United States. In the same year China sent its first official mission to visit Western countries, including the United states. The mission provided the first opportunity for Qing officials to have direct contact with Chinese-Americans. A Qing official entered in his diary a conversation with a Chinese *huiguan*^{*} leader in the United States. According to the *huiguan* leader, Chinese merchants had harmonious relations with Americans, but Chinese gold miners were treated unfairly by militant Americans. In addition, Americans charged a poll tax of \$2 only on Chinese and if disputes occurred Chinese could not act as witnesses in court. These practices were obviously unfair, the *huiguan* leader said, and he hoped the Qing government could interfere on behalf of Chinese-Americans. The Qing official replied that the Qing government could not do anything at the moment because there were no government representatives in America yet (HGCGSL 4:560). This

^{*}*Huiguan* literary means "the meeting hall." In the late Qing, a *huiguan* was either a native-place organization or a trade association. Most Chinese *huiguan* in the United States in the period under discussion were native-place organizations controlled by wealthy Chinese merchants (see also Chapter Four).

was probably the first time that Chinese merchants in the United States expressed their intention of seeking protection from the Qing. But the Qing was slow to feel the compelling necessity to send diplomats to the United States. One of the reasons was probably that the United States at the time had the most generous immigration policy and Americans treated Chinese much better than Cubans and Peruvians did (HGCGSL 4:560-61).

It was not until the mid-1870s that the Qing government finally decided to establish China's first legations in Great Britain, the United States, and Japan (Zhuang 1989:148-49). Historians have pointed out that general economic and political considerations played important roles in the Qing's policy change from indifference to protection toward overseas Chinese (Zhuang 1989:chapter Four; Yang et al. 1989:321-324). As early as 1866, the governor of Guangdong suggested that China should follow the example of the Western countries by sending state officials to protect commercial interests abroad (cited in Zhuang 1989:138). In the early 1870s the governor of Fujian and the treasurer of Jiangsu more specifically argued that the Qing should capitalize on overseas Chinese's financial and technical strength by stationing officials in foreign ports with Chinese immigrants (Zhuang 1989:129). Politically, some Qing officials believed that legations in foreign countries could serve not only to protect Chinese laborers but also to control them (Yang et al. 1989:324).

While these general considerations were evident, they contributed to the gradual change of the Qing's policy toward overseas Chinese only in a specific historical context. These abstract considerations themselves were not sufficient to cause policy changes. To link general economic and political considerations directly to the decision of establishing legations abroad is to overestimate the conscious planning by the Qing government. At the highest level of decision-making, only Li Hongzhang the Nanyang Minister showed any understanding of overseas Chinese's potential role in China's future (Zhuang 1989:129). In addition to humanitarian concern, Li also thought that overseas Chinese might play a positive role in China's maritime security (*Haifang*, WJSL 2/17). Thus, Li needed occasions to convince the Qing government to send diplomats to foreign countries.

In the early and mid-1870s several incidents occurred which not only created a general atmosphere in which Li could possibly make specific suggestions to establish Chinese legations abroad but also occasions which directly led to the founding of the first Chinese legations in foreign countries, the United States included.

In 1874, Japan's invasion of Taiwan met with strong resistance by the Taiwanese. The invasion failed miserably but caught the Qing court by surprise. It triggered a great debate by Qing high officials on China's oceanic defense (Qian 1990:49-60). During the debate Li Hongzhang made proposals for

importing and manufacturing modern weaponry, opening mines, and establishing schools of foreign learning (Qian 1990:52-3). Although his suggestions met with tough resistance from diehard conservatives such as privy counsel (*tong zheng shi*) Yu Lincheng and minister of Grand Court (*da li si qing*) Wang Jiabi, Li won support from Prince Gong, who was in charge of the Zongli Yamen. On 26 April 1875, Prince Gong memorialized the Empress Dowager Ci Xi with a oceanic defense plan which included purchasing foreign battleships, opening mines, and letting Li Hongzhang and Shen Baozheng take charge of Beiyang and Nanyang maritime defence, respectively. The Empress Dowager approved his plan (Qian 1990:56).

The role overseas Chinese might play was certainly not a central issue in this debate, but the issue was clearly part of the discussion. In August 1875, when Li Hongzhang suggested sending resident diplomats in order to protect Chinese laborers in Peru, he argued:

There are more than a hundred thousand Chinese in Peru who are terribly abused by their employers... and Chinese in islands of the West, East, and South oceans are no less than a million. Last spring, minister Wang [Jiabi] and others suggested using overseas Chinese to help our maritime defense. But how can we ask for their help in crisis if we do not care about them in peaceful days? We should send officials to Peru, Cuba, and other islands to rescue overseas Chinese from their crisis now. Thus the overseas Chinese will know that the imperial court cares about every Chinese, even those in the isolated islands and deserted areas. Naturally they will be loyal to [the Qing] and their loyalty is very important to our grand strategy (WJSL 2/17).

If the debate on oceanic defense created a general atmosphere

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favorable to more active contacts with foreign countries in general and to the establishment of legations abroad in particular, the foundation of the first legations was still less of a carefully laid-out plan than an expedient measure for dealing with unexpected events. The priority and agenda was largely decided by incidents and personnel available rather than by the innate importance of overseas Chinese in particular areas.

The Qing's first minister to a foreign country, Guo Songtao, was sent to Great Britain in 1875 initially to fulfill a mission of apology for the murder of British vice-consul Augustus Margary in Yunnan, China (WJSL 4/17). The Qing did not send its first minister to the United States, Chen Lanbin, until 1878 and his mission largely grew out of treaty negotiations between China and Peru and a Chinese official investigation of laborers' conditions in Peru and Cuba. Only to a lesser extent was the legation established to deal with problems and growing concerns the Chinese-Americans had in the United States (Tsai 1983:29-30).

In December 1875, the Zongli Yamen memorialized the throne:

Currently we have diplomatic issues to deal with the United States and other countries. Prince Gong and others of the Zongli Yamen suggest sending officials to these priority countries first...[Since there are Chinese nationals in both Cuba and Peru] who are badly abused, officials have to be sent to protect them. Otherwise we cannot face these abused Chinese and we will be despised by other countries.... According to customs observed by countries, China has to establish consulates in foreign countries involved in order to protect Chinese laborers. In order to establish consulates, ministers have to be dispatched to countries first. Both Cuba and Peru are located near the United States. In recent years, Americans

have relayed petitions to us by abused Chinese laborers in Peru. In addition, Americans' views on labor recruitment by Peru are also fair. In recent years, Chinese students are gone to Hartford to study Western learning; Hartford is in the United States. Therefore, there are also issues to deal with in America. We have to send officials to Peru, Spain (which rules Cuba), and the United States. But it is not easy to find qualified personnel for all three countries. We suggest therefore sending officials to [the United States] who will take charge of affairs concerning all three countries (WJSL 4/17-18).

On the same day, the throne accepted the memorial and handed down the edict:

Chen Lanbin, a third grade expectant Director of one of the Four Minor Courts, a Secretary of the Grand Council, a concurrent Secretary of the Board of Punishment, and wearer of the button of the second rank, and Yung Wing, a brevet third grade Sub-prefect, shall be imperial commissioners to go to the United States, Spain, and Peru as envoys. Yung Wing shall be promoted to an Intendantship and shall receive the button of the second rank (WJSL 9/19-20; Chinese translation by Tsai, 1983:39).

On 22 June 1878, accompanied by an entourage of thirty-four, Chen left Hong Kong for America (Tsai 1983:41).

Upon Chen's arrival in San Francisco, Chinese in the area were already waiting to see the "dignified bearing of the Han officials." About one hundred Chinese representatives and agents of the Six Companies* came to the ship. Among them a dozen wore long gowns and the rest shorts; they all lined up,

*Six Companies was the registered name of the Chinese regional/clan associations of mutual aid in the United States. Among Chinese themselves they were called Huiguan. The Six Companies were formed in 1862 (Li and Yang 1990:177-83; Tsai 1983:31-38).

giving Chen a spectacular welcome (Zhuang 1989:169; Tsai 1983:41). Unlike China's legations to other countries, which focused on other issues, the establishment of a Chinese legation and later consulates in the United States signified the change of the Qing's policy toward overseas Chinese from utter indifference to protection. However, the change was less a constituent part of a new foreign policy than a slow and defensive response to the problems caused by Chinese nationals abroad. Despite the gradual change to the more favorable and sympathetic views of overseas Chinese by Qing high officials, especially those of open-minded and pragmatic figures like Li Hongzhang and Prince Gong, the fate of overseas Chinese and their dubious potential for helping China weighed very little in overall Chinese domestic and foreign policy considerations.

The change of China's policy toward overseas Chinese was largely caused by the overall problems of the huge wave of emigration since the mid-nineteenth century. The problems were most acute not in the United States but in such countries as Peru and Cuba, where Chinese nationals were terribly abused. The Qing decided to send officials to protect Chinese nationals in these countries mainly out of concern about its own image as a caring and responsible regime, not out of economic and political considerations per se. A few Qing officials such as Li Hongzhang did have some vague long-term considerations for national security, as I have pointed out earlier. However, the overseas Chinese were basically more a

problem than an asset for the Qing. Li would rather have Peru return all the Chinese laborers in that country than send Qing officials to protect them, if he had a choice. It is important to note that the Qing's policy change toward overseas Chinese was mainly made because the emigration posed serious responsibility and legitimacy problems to the Qing rather than as part of a positive and aggressive new policy of strengthening and enriching the country. Even after the mid-1870s when the Qing began to "modernize" segments of the Chinese military and industry, overseas Chinese were by no means crucial to the Qing's survival. In other words, the Qing would sacrifice the interests of overseas Chinese for other policy considerations, as I shall show in the last section of this chapter.

On the other hand, however, the establishment of Chinese legations in foreign countries in the mid- and late 1870s marked a new era of the Qing's policy toward overseas Chinese, Chinese in the United States in particular. Probably in no other period in Chinese history had the relationship between overseas Chinese and a Chinese government been closer than that of overseas Chinese with the Qing regime (see details below).

This close relationship made possible a better understanding of the overseas Chinese's real needs and a policy more realistic in promoting and protecting these needs by the Qing government. Since the late 1870s the Qing

government had begun to work hard to assert Chinese rights to live and work in foreign countries instead of preventing them from migration and having them come back whenever there was a problem. Some Qing officials, the local officials of Guangdong in particular, also realized that not only did many overseas Chinese not want to come back to China permanently, but also that their return would cause serious problems of unemployment and overpopulation (HGCGSL 1/41376-1378).

Ironically, the change in the Qing's policy toward and its perception of overseas Chinese occurred when the world labor market had begun to change. Chinese laborers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not appreciated as much as they were in earlier years. This change was most clear in the United States. The Qing's battle to protect overseas Chinese was made much harder by many Chinese's unwillingness or inability to settle down permanently in a foreign country. The sojourning nature of Chinese immigrants was again most clearly seen in the case of Chinese-Americans, who quickly replaced Chinese in Peru and Cuba as the Qing's major concern and the symbol of Chinese sufferings in foreign countries.

3. "Freezing Conditions are on the Way"

It is hard to judge based on available materials to what extent China's decision to dispatch its first envoys to the United States in the late 1870s was because of discrimination

against Chinese nationals in that country. There is no question, however, that the Chinese minister in America began to deal with the discrimination against Chinese in the United States as soon as he arrived in 1878 (Zhuang 1989:169). The immigration issue became a serious problem between the two countries in the late 1870s.

As late as 1875, the U.S. minister at Beijing, Benjamin P. Avery, assured the Zongli Yamen that:

The laws make no distinction between the people of China and any other country, and no tax or charge is allowed to be imposed or enforced upon any person emigrating from a foreign country which is not equally imposed and enforced upon every person emigrating from any other foreign country. Formerly it was the custom in California to collect a special monthly tax from Chinese for the privilege of extracting gold from the mines...but that tax has been abolished.... The laws of the United States aim to be impartial and just, to protect the immigrant on his voyage and on his arrival and to insure that he comes as a free man for lawful objects (Avery to Prince Gong in Tsai 1983:30)*.

The Zongli Yamen was pleased with American immigration policy, at least pleased with its principle of impartiality. Prince Gong wrote the U.S. Secretary of State praising America for its "excellent purpose and efficient methods" for managing the immigrants (Prince Gong to Seward, 29 June 1876, *USFR China*, 1876 in Tsai 1983:31).

Although discrimination against Chinese immigrants in the United States can be dated back as early as 1850 with the

*Avery did not mention that since 1870 the Chinese had been denied naturalization. Therefore it is not exactly true that "The laws make no distinction between the people of China and any other country." (Tsai 1983:30).

passage of the Foreign Miners' License Tax Law, prior to the late 1870s the discrimination was confined to occasional attacks and local legislation, almost all of which were later declared unconstitutional by state or federal courts (Tsai 1983:43-44). In the late 1870s when California was in depression, however, an anti-Chinese movement by workers, especially Irish workers, began to take shape (Yang et al. 1989:176-77). The increasing violence against Chinese immigrants in the United States caused a temporary decline of Chinese immigration to America in the last few years of the 1870s (see Table 4).

In 1876, Li Gui, a Chinese official from Nanjing, on his way to the United States to attend the Philadelphia Exposition, recorded in his diary:

I went to see the Chinese passengers in the first class cabin,.... All of them were Cantonese. I asked them how many were going to America as manual laborers. They said no more than 80. When asked why go to America, they replied that it was easier to make a living there. I asked them how come this time not many people were going. They said that a telegram had been sent to Hong Kong saying that Chinese in the United States were hated by the Irish union and anything could happen; that's why. I then asked them why they were going anyway regardless of what they had heard. All of them said that they were forced by hunger to take chances.... I felt so sorry for them (HGCGSL 4:561)*.

The violence against Chinese in San Francisco prompted Chen Lanbin to memorialize the throne requesting the establishment

*The figures by the Immigration Commission and Bureau of Immigration in Table 3 indicate that more Chinese entered the United States in 1876 than in 1875, contrary to what was said in the diary. But if we look at the numbers for several years in the late 1870s, they were in accordance with Li's account.

of a consulate in San Francisco in 1878, the same year he arrived in the United States as China's first minister to the country. He wrote:

Table 4 Chinese Arrivals in the United States, 1852-1884

Year	Immigration Commission	Bureau of Immigration	San Francisco Customs House*
1852	0	0	20,026
1853	42	42	4,207
1854	13,100	13,100	16,084
1855	3,526	3,526	3,329
1856	4,733	4,733	4,807
1857	5,944	2,580	5,924
1858	5,128	7,183	5,427
1859	3,457	3,215	3,175
1860	5,467	6,117	7,341
1861	7,518	6,094	8,430
1862	3,633	4,174	8,175
1863	7,214	5,280	6,432
1864	2,975	5,240	2,682
1865	2,942	3,702	3,095
1866	2,385	1,872	2,242
1867	3,863	3,519	4,290
1868	5,157	6,707	11,081
1869	12,874	12,874	14,990
1870	15,740	15,740	10,870
1871	7,135	7,135	5,540
1872	7,788	7,788	9,770
1873	20,292	20,291	17,075
1874	13,776	13,776	16,085
1875	16,437	16,437	18,021
1876	22,781	22,781	15,481
1877	10,594	10,594	9,468
1878	8,992	8,992	6,675
1879	9,604	9,604	6,969
1880	5,802	5,802	5,050
1881	11,890	11,890	18,561
1882	39,579	39,579	26,902
1883	8,031	8,031	***
1884	279	4,009	***

*Chinese passengers who landed in San Francisco included many who were actually en route to Cuba, Jamaica, Peru, and other Latin American countries via San Francisco. Source: Tsai

1983:19.*

According to our estimate, there are about 140,000 Chinese residing in various states in the United States. In the Golden Mountain [San Francisco] area alone there are as many as 60,000. In recent years, however, the natives and foreigners have not been able to get along. There are more than two hundred cases [involving the Chinese] which are not yet settled and about three hundred Chinese are being detained in jail. [We] have to deal with disputes almost every day. ...A consulate should be established in order to protect Chinese nationals (HGCGSL 1/4:1330).

The throne accepted the suggestion and on 8 November 1878, Chen nominated his relative Chen Shutang to be Chinese consul-general in San Francisco (Tsai 1983:42).

The anti-Chinese violence also prompted the American government to take action. On 27 July 1880, an American government delegation headed by James B. Angell, the president of the University of Michigan and the new minister to China, arrived in China to negotiate a new treaty which would supplement the obsolete Burlingame Treaty of 1868.

The Zongli Yamen, however, felt that the Burlingame Treaty had served the Chinese in America well and was very reluctant to revise the Treaty substantially. It memorialized the throne that:

The Treaty has played an important role in protecting Chinese

*The decline in the number of Chinese who entered the United States in the last three years of the 1870s can be explained by riots against Chinese prior to and during these years. Chinese population in America continued to decline dramatically in the 1880s (see Table 4). However, the violence did not stop those who were either desperate or willing to take chances. The sharp increase in the number of Chinese entering the United States in 1881 and 1882 was probably because many heard news of the Exclusion Act of 1882.

in the United States. Last year, the former minister [George F.] Seward had discussed the revision of the Treaty prohibiting four groups of people: the smuggled, the criminals, prostitutes, and the sick from entering the United States. We have not come to an agreement yet. Now we have heard that American legislators feel that to ban the four types of the people is not enough and the President of the United States has yielded to the popular pressure and sent envoys to negotiate a new treaty. Although we do not know their requests yet, we are afraid that they intend to revise and abrogate the Burlingame Treaty (HGCGSL 1/4:1323-24).

The Zongli Yamen suggested that Bao Yun and Li Hongshao be named to take charge of the new treaty negotiation (Ibid). By agreeing to negotiate a new treaty, the Qing was bound to give up certain rights provided by the Burlingame Treaty to Chinese immigrants. But to refuse a treaty revision between the two friendly countries was almost impossible, since the Qing needed the good will of the United States on other issues more important to the regime.

During a visit to China by ex-President Ulysses Grant in June the previous year, Li Hongzhang allegedly had been told by Grant that if he and his government could help China to force Japan to withdraw from the Ryukyus, China would make a concession on immigration (Tsai 1983:53). On two other foreign relations issues in the late 1870s, China needed support, or at least a friendly gesture, from the United States as well. One was China's dispute with Russia over Ili, Xinjiang, and the other was the opium trade. On the latter issue, Prince Gong argued: "The foreign drug was a big drain on Chinese currency.... China has prohibited the sale but cannot stop it, because huge interests are involved. The United States is a

country of fair play and a country widely respected. If she stops the transportation and sale first, other countries will follow the example" (WJSL 24, cited in Zhuang 1989:225).

While it is almost certain that these considerations had some impact on the Qing's decision to be cooperative with the United States on the immigration issue,^{*} it is probably more accurate to say, however, that these issues made the Qing more sympathetic to the internal problems caused by Chinese immigration to the United States rather than that the Qing made a deal with a powerful country at the expense of Chinese immigrants. A memorial to the throne by the Zongli Yamen indicated that the Qing government did not intend to change the spirit of the Burlingame Treaty but decided to make necessary revisions to alleviate the instability in the United States caused by unrestricted Chinese immigration and to protect more effectively those Chinese who were already in America. It says:

The relationship between Chinese laborers and the natives [sic] of the United States was already like that of ice and fire. The United States government tried very hard to mediate the disputes. But this is not a long-term solution. According to the Burlingame Treaty, the two people can come and go at their own will to the other country to travel, trade, and reside permanently. But the treaty did not specify "Chinese laborers" [could go, too]. Recently, Angell and others handed in a summary of the treaty revision. It says that there are more than a hundred thousand Chinese laborers in various parts of the United States now who indeed have caused problems to America's stability. They proposed three ways to deal with the

^{*}The Angell Treaty of 1880 which provided the legal base for exclusion acts by the U.S. Congress in following years had a supplemental article which prohibited opium sales in either country. (WJSL 24/11; Zhuang 1989:225).

problem: regulation, restriction, and prohibition. Restriction and prohibition are applicable only to laborers, not to any others. We argue that prohibition is contrary to the existing treaty [the Burlingame Treaty], therefore China cannot agree. But we can discuss the ways to restrict immigration in the hope that it will only benefit not harm [the two peoples]. Angell says that the specific regulations have to be made by the American Congress and they are here only to obtain word from China that it allows the United States to regulate at its discretion.

We consider that the conditions of Chinese laborers in the United States are different from those of Chinese laborers in Cuba and Peru. The United States has provided some protection towards Chinese laborers there according to the Treaty. However, it is true that the Chinese laborers indeed cause some inconvenience in that country because there are too many of them. If we insist on not making any adjustment, something serious will occur as the number of Chinese increases every day, which will not only cause problems to Chinese laborers already there but also to Chinese of other classes. Thus the real meaning of protecting Chinese nationals will be lost. It seems to be better that we make new clauses to restrict those Chinese who are going to work in the United States. The new clauses will supplement the existing Treaty in order to benefit both countries (HGCGSL 1/4:1324-1326).

Of course, it is ridiculous to say that the Burlingame Treaty did not specify the rights of Chinese laborers to go to the United States at their own will, and therefore that restriction was not contrary to the Treaty. The point is that the Zongli Yamen persuaded itself to sign a brand new treaty because it could not see other alternatives. But the Zongli Yamen wanted to give in to America's demands as little as possible. Finally, China was successful in giving the United States only the right of limiting and suspending rather than prohibiting Chinese laborers from entering America. (Tsai 1983:57-58). The United States, on the other hand, obtained the right to restrict Chinese immigration to the United States at its own discretion. The new treaty, which was signed on 17

November 1880, contained the following important articles:

Article I. Whenever in the opinion of the Government of the United States, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States, or their residence therein, affects or threatens to affect the interests of that country, or to endanger the good order of the said country or of any locality within the territory thereof, the Government of China agrees that the Government of the United States may regulate, limit, or suspend such coming or residence, but may not absolutely prohibit it. The limitation or suspension shall be reasonable and shall apply only to Chinese who may go to the United States as laborers, other classes not being included in the limitations. Legislation taken in regard to Chinese laborers will be of such a character only as is necessary to enforce the regulation, limitation or suspension of immigration, and immigrants shall not be subject to personal mistreatment or abuse.

Article II. Chinese subjects, whether proceeding to the United States as teachers, students, merchants or from curiosity, together with their body and household servants, and Chinese laborers who are now in the United States shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord, and shall be accorded all the rights, privileges, immunities and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation (WJSL 24/12-14; Tsai 1983:58-59).

Article III provided that the United States would do its best to protect the Chinese permanently or temporarily residing in the territory of the United States (WJSL 24/13).

To the Qing, this treaty meant only mild and temporary adjustment of immigration management. On the U.S. side, however, this treaty provided the legal base for the United States to exclude Chinese immigrants on much harsher terms. As John F. Swift, a delegate of the Angell mission from California, put it, the treaty had "untied the hands of Congress and the matter of Chinese immigration is in the control of our government." (Tsai 1983:59). While the treaty

was not to blame for all the much-hated exclusion acts later, it certainly pointed the way for how the immigration issue was to be solved when more violence against Chinese immigrants occurred--by prohibiting more Chinese from entering the United States. Neither the United States nor the Qing wanted to be bothered to solve the very complicated problem in a more delicate and graceful manner.

No records, however, show that Chinese immigrants responded strongly to the treaty which was to have such significant consequences to them. After all, until the late 1880s Chinese immigrants in America hardly paid any attention to any treaties between China and the United States because treaties seemed never to affect their lives in dramatic and direct ways. Even the law of the Qing was made to break and thousands of Chinese were crossing the Pacific to America long before the Burlingame Treaty. This is not to say that the Chinese immigrants did not have a strong sense of law, but only that they were more accustomed to follow or break laws but not consciously to try to affect law-making. Less than a decade after the Angell Treaty was signed, however, Chinese immigrants in the United States began to take political actions to protect their own interests for the first time.

In November 1880, less than two years after the Angell Treaty was signed by both countries, American President

Chester A. Arthur signed the first Chinese Exclusion Act on 6 May 1882, which suspended the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States for ten years. But the act did not apply to Chinese laborers already in the United States on 17 November 1880, or to those who might come within ninety days after the approval of the act (U.S., Statutes 1881-83, in Tsai 1983:67). The act also provided the right to leave and come back to the United States to those Chinese who were in the United States before 17 November 1880 (Ibid). Later, in December 1882, the U.S. Attorney General B.H. Brewster, at the strong suggestion of then-Chinese minister to the United States Zheng Zaoru, ruled that "A Chinese laborer coming to this country merely to pass through it cannot be considered as within the prohibition of the [exclusion] law..." However, this privilege was soon abrogated by a 1884 act which forbade admission to the United States of Chinese laborers from any foreign place (Tsai 1983:70).

The Exclusion Act of 1882, which signified the beginning of the infamous Chinese exclusion history, was in fact a very lenient law. The ninety-day grace period was apparently noticed by shrewd Chinese immigrants. Since the voyage from Hong Kong to San Francisco took about thirty to fifty days at the time (Li and Yang 1990:82), many Chinese apparently rushed to America before its doors closed. In 1882, the number of Chinese immigrating to the United States reached a record high of 39,579 according to the figure by U.S. Immigration

Commission (Tsai 1983:19). Furthermore, while the act caused some inconvenience to exempt Chinese laborers, who had to obtain legal certificates in order to leave and come back to the United States, it did not shut the door entirely to those Chinese who found ways to enter America illegally, largely because it left it up to Chinese officials to issue the reentrance certificates. There were numerous charges of evasion of the law by the Chinese laborers, and Chinese officials were accused of issuing large numbers of certificates which stated that laborers were "traders," "students," and "teachers." (HGCGSL 1/4:1400).

What really prevented more Chinese from entering the United States in the 1880s and made Qing diplomats angry at American treatment of Chinese immigrants was probably the numerous riots against Chinese and the federal government's lack of power or will to protect them.* The most violent of all were the Denver riot of October 1880; the Rock Springs (Wyoming Territory) massacre on 2 September 1885; several riots against Chinese in Washington Territory in October and November 1885; and the Snake River massacre in June 1887. In the Rock Springs massacre alone twenty-eight Chinese miners were killed and fifteen were wounded. The property loss was estimated at more than \$147,000 (Tsai 1983:60-80).

*In 1886 the *Zhonghua huiguan* of San Francisco sent telegraphs to Hong Kong reporting Chinese losses of lives and property in the United States and warning Chinese not to go to the United States until the situation had changed (HGCGSL 1/4:1345).

During and immediately after these riots Qing diplomats vigorously demanded that the United States government provide adequate protection to Chinese in America and compensate the victims. Their arguments were irrefutable: China was responsible for Americans' security in China and compensated losses to Americans as stipulated in treaties with the United States. It was only fair for the United States to do the same (HGCGSL 1/4:1345-1349). Having regretted and condemned the violence against innocent Chinese, the United States government insisted that it was the local governments' responsibility to maintain order and that the U.S. government was not legally liable for the Chinese losses. Secretary of State Thomas Bayard nevertheless responded favorably to the Chinese minister's compensation request, saying the president might recommend to the Congress some measures of compensation. The catch was it should not be "as under obligation of treaty or principle of international law, but solely from a sentiment of generosity and pity to an innocent and unfortunate body of men." (cited in Tsai 1983:76).

The Zongli Yamen might not entirely agree with the interpretation. But when the United States government turned \$147,748.74 over to Zhang Yinhuan, the new Chinese minister to the United States, the Zongli Yamen authorized Zhang to accept the payment (HGCGSL 1/4:1357-58). Zhang was apparently satisfied with the settlement. He memorialized the throne stressing the significance of the indemnity: "Since China and

foreign countries began to trade, this is the first time that a foreign country has paid China such a large sum of indemnity." (HGCGSL 1/4:1358). He also reported that: "America is a country administered by the people. Every state has its own laws, with some of which the American government cannot interfere." Thus, while still insisting on the American government's responsibility to protect Chinese immigrants in the United States, Zhang believed that the best way to avoid further tragedy was for the Chinese government itself to prohibit Chinese laborers from going to the United States (HGCGSL 1/4:1374). In fact, the idea of self-prohibition had first been proposed informally by Zhang's predecessors, Ouyang Ming the Chinese consul-general in New York and Zheng Zaoru the Chinese minister to the United States, who decided, after numerous futile efforts to seek adequate protection for the Chinese in the United States, that it would be much easier to control prospective Chinese immigrants than to change the American judicial and political system (Tsai 1983:83-84).

The suggestion of self-prohibition in 1886 and a new treaty negotiation with the United States based upon the idea in 1888, however, sparked the first major protest from the Chinese community in the United States to the Qing's weak foreign policy, and led to serious policy disputes between Qing diplomats and Qing local officials in Guangdong, from where most Chinese immigrants came.

As I have pointed out earlier, when the Qing established its first legation and consulate in the United States in 1878, the Chinese community had given a warm welcome to the Qing officials. Since then the relationship between Qing diplomats and the Chinese community in the United States had been very close. As Shih-shan Henry Tsai puts it: "After the Ch'ing [Qing] emperor had sent diplomatic agents to the United States, the Six Companies and the Chinese legation worked hand in glove to dominate the internal affairs of Chinatown." (Tsai 1983:37).

While the degree of the Qing's control over the Chinese community in the United States cannot be exactly determined, it is safe to say that the control had been fairly strong compared with the Qing's control over Chinese communities in other areas, countries in Southeast Asia in particular (Zhuang 1989:158,169-70). In Singapore, for example, the Qing could only confirm locally selected merchants as consuls and was not able to send its own diplomatic representatives due to Singapore's colonial position (Zhuang 1989:158). In the United States, however, Qing officials not only acted as the sole representatives of Chinese nationals there, but also directly interfered with the selection of chairmen and board members of all the influential *huiguan*. The first Chinese minister to the United States, Cheng Lanbin, changed the Chinese name of the association of seven *huiguan* into "*Zonghuiguan*" ("General *huigan*"). Later Zheng Zaoru, the second minister, officially

entitled the association as "*Zhonghua zonghuiguan*" (General Association of the Middle Kingdom).^{*} The position of chairman (*zongdong*) of the *Zonghuiguan* was held by leaders of branch *huiguan* in turn, and the chairman had to be confirmed by the Qing government (Zhuang 1989:174). In 1885, several *huiguan* in San Francisco further decided that the selection of a new chairman should be reported to the minister, and the minister would then inform the governor of the candidate's native province in order to make sure of his good background (Zhuang 1983:174).

There is no question that the Qing tried to control the overseas Chinese communities, and the Chinese community in the United States in particular.^{**} However, the intimate relationship between Qing diplomatic agents and Chinese community leaders in the United States was also because the latter needed help from the Qing as well, not only in their disputes with Americans but also in their control over the Chinese populace in the United States. The Qing's recognition provided them with prestige and legitimacy. Thus while in the early years the leaders of *huiguan* were often prominent and wealthy merchants, after the 1880s many chairpersons of

^{*}Its English name remained Six Companies.

^{**}One way to control overseas Chinese communities was to hold overseas Chinese' relatives in China as hostage. By so doing, the Qing was able to restrain violence (*tangdou*) in Chinatown and to prevent the majority of Chinese-Americans from helping the revolutionaries (Zhuang 1983:176-78).

huiguan were directly brought from China and held high-prestige degrees from the Civil Service Examination. For example, of the fourteen chairmen of the *San-i huiguan* from 1881 to 1972, thirteen were *jinshi*, nine *juren*, and one *gongsheng* (Li and Yang 1990:179).*

Having said all of this, it is important to stress that Chinese immigrants in the United States, Chinese merchants in particular, had a very clear sense of their own interests which they themselves had to promote and defend. As I shall show shortly, they tried to do so by putting popular pressure upon the Qing central government and thus shaping the Qing's policy toward emigration and immigrants rather than by directly challenging the Qing's authority. They found their allies from Chinese merchants and elites of other social groups in Hong Kong and Guangdong, and they also appealed directly to local officials of Guangdong and Fujian, from which provinces most immigrants came. In the late 1880s, they adamantly opposed the idea of self-prohibition and the treaty draft based on the idea.

But the idea of self-prohibition was suggested by virtually all the diplomats who had served and were serving as ministers and consul-generals in the United States (Tsai

*Tsai (1983:35 note 38) provides slightly different statistics. According to him: "Of the fourteen presidents of the Six Companies from 1881 to 1927, three had the *Chin-shih* [*jinshi*] degree and nine had the *Chu-jen* [*juren*] degree."

1983:83-84). The idea eventually became an announced government policy when the Zongli Yamen sent a note to American minister Charles Denby in August 1886. It said:

According to the Treaty, Chinese laborers who were living in the United States should be able to leave and return at their own will.... However, recently serious cases of [Chinese] being expelled and killed have occurred one after another. The local officials [of the United States] have not tried to prevent [the violence] in advance. Neither do they punish the guilty persons afterward.... Thus your country's protection is only in name not in reality.... Now China is to consider a law of self-prohibition: those who have never been to the United States will be strictly forbidden to go. Those who have returned from the United States to their native place will also be prohibited from going back, if they do not have family members and properties in America. Chinese laborers who are currently still in the United States and those who have treaty rights to leave and go to the United States freely should be protected in their treaty rights forever (HGCGSL 1/4:1370-71).

This self-prohibition policy led to the negotiation of a new treaty concerning the immigration issue in 1887 and 1888. The new treaty, which was signed on 12 March 1888 by Secretary of State Bayard and Zhang Yinhuan, the Chinese minister (1885-89) to the United States, prohibited the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States for a period of twenty years. But the prohibition did not apply to the return of any Chinese laborer who had a "lawful wife, child, or parent in the United States, or property therein of the value of one thousand dollars, or debt of like amount due him." (Tsai 1983:89).

The treaty signified that the Qing would rather control its own people more tightly than to confront the United States on the thorny immigration issue (HGCGSL 1/4:1356). The treaty thus gave a new twist to the triangular relationship among the Chinese immigrants, the Qing, and the United States by

giving more prominence to international cooperation against unlawful activities and to state power over individual rights than to international confrontation over different national interests. This subtle change was made more perceptible by the Qing's demand from Great Britain for cooperation in preventing Chinese laborers from entering the United States through Hong Kong and other British territories (HGCGSL 1/4:1400-1401,1404). From the perspective of the Chinese community in the United States and Chinese in Hong Kong and Guangdong who had crucial commercial interests with Chinese immigrants, this treaty and the policy of self-prohibition meant the evasion by the Qing of the state's responsibility for defending the legitimate rights and interests of its people.

As soon as the Chinese merchants in the United States heard news of the treaty they decided to bypass the conventional channel through the Chinese minister, who had negotiated the treaty himself, and to appeal to higher authorities in the Qing governmental hierarchy. They did so by first sending letters to merchants in Hong Kong informing them of the details of the treaty (HGCGSL 1/4:1377). In July 1888, several Hong Kong and Guangdong merchants who engaged in grocery sales to Chinese communities in the United States petitioned the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, Zhang Zhidong, asking him to exert his influence on the imperial court not to ratify the treaty (HGCGSL 1/4:1376-1378).

The petition argued that the livelihood of Chinese merchants and laborers was intimately related and mutually dependent. Only when Chinese, most of whom were laborers, could leave and enter the United States freely could the grocery business flourish, because virtually every single item Chinese laborers used in their every day life was imported from China through Hong Kong, where Golden Mountain Grocery stores were located. If new Chinese laborers could not enter and old laborers were not allowed to reenter the United States, according to the new treaty, in twenty years no Chinese would be left in America because each year there were about 3,000 Chinese who died in America. Naturally, business would perish as a result. Thus, although the treaty was allegedly aimed only at laborers not merchants, Chinese merchants would disappear without banning if Chinese laborers were banned from entering the United States. Furthermore, if countries in Nanyang followed the example of the United States, it would be disastrous not only to the grocery business but also to the local people of Guangdong and Fujian, where emigration provided a way of living (HGCGSL 1/4:1377). The petition therefore asked the Governor-General:

As we understand it there is a one-year period for the imperial court to decide whether or not to ratify the treaty even after it had been signed by the court's envoy. Since the treaty is not ratified yet, we earnestly appeal to you to understand our situation and to persuade the Zongli Yamen not to ratify the treaty. We thousands of merchants from Guangdong, Hong Kong, and San Francisco and tens of thousands of people [in the United States] would be extremely grateful... (HGCGSL 1/4:1378).

Personal ego and local perspective prompted Zhang Zhidong to memorialize the throne directly instead of discussing the issue with the Zongli Yamen. He wrote:

There are too many people in Guangdong who cause problems. Those unemployed depend on going overseas to make a living. In the United States, there are more than one hundred thousand Chinese who rely on China for their daily necessities. The same is true for the Chinese in the Nanyang islands. Thus, the more places that Chinese can make their living, the more Chinese goods can be sold. While the Chinese laborers make their living by using their manual labor, Chinese merchants make profits by transporting and selling goods to them. The matter is that of cause and effect and the money comes from and goes to no others than Chinese themselves. Therefore, to ban Chinese laborers necessarily affects Chinese merchants. Furthermore, if the United States takes the lead, the Nanyang islands will follow suit. In March the British New Gold Mountain [*Xin jingshan*, Australia] proposed to prohibit Chinese from entering. Although the proposal was vetoed by the British court, [the Australians] have increased taxes that [Chinese nationals] have to pay. It intends to drive out Chinese without even banning them.... Since the petition involves Chinese merchants' livelihoods, I dare not hide it from the throne's knowledge. It is up to the Holy Wisdom [i.e.--the emperor] to order the Zongli Yamen to carefully weigh the pros and cons of the matter and to do whatever possible (HGCGSL 1/4:1378).

The emperor noted in vermilion: "I am aware of the matter." (HGCGSL 1/4:1378).

To a lesser extent, Li Hongzhang, the *Beiyang* minister, shared Zhang Zhidong's concern. He sent a telegram to the Zongli Yamen four days after Zhang's memorial complaining that the new treaty was contrary to the 1880 treaty, which did not "prohibit" Chinese laborers from going to the United States (HGCGSL 1/4:1379). In the meantime in Guangdong, popular discontent took the form of numerous posters (HGCGSL 1/4:1379). Some laborers returned from America went so far as

to mob Zhang Yinhuan's home in Guangdong because as the Chinese minister he had failed to represent the interests of Chinese immigrants in the United States (Tsai 1983:90).

In addition to appealing to the local officials in Guangdong, Chinese merchants in the United States and Hong Kong also began to express their opinion to the general public by publishing a pamphlet (probably in early 1888) entitled *Humble Opinions on Commercial Matters* (*Shangwu shuyan*), which systematically criticized the idea of self-prohibition and the treaty based upon it (HGCGSL 1/4:1392-99). Later in the same year the merchants sent the booklet, along with a long letter called "More on Commercial Matters" (*Shangwu xuyan*), to the Zongli Yamen (HGCGSL 1/4:1386-99).

The merchants argued that the treaty was not only devastating to the interests of Chinese merchants but also detrimental to China's economy in general. Furthermore, the new treaty was also an insult to the Chinese state (*guoti*), for no other nationals were excluded (HGCGSL 1/4:1394). On the other hand, Chinese emigration to the United States and other areas in the world would greatly ease the population pressure in China (HGCGSL 1/4:1397). If the Chinese government did not reject the treaty entirely, the merchants warned, other countries would follow the example of the United States, and soon there would be no place in the world for the overpopulated Chinese to go. The letter quoted the *Yi Jing*, a Confucian classic, "Walking on newly formed frost" "Freezing

conditions are on the way" (*Lushuang jianbing zhi*; HGCGSL 1/4:1391).

Under pressure both from Qing local officials and concerned merchants, the Zongli Yamen hesitated to memorialize the throne in favor of ratifying the treaty, although the treaty was obviously endorsed by the office. Instead the Zongli Yamen promptly sent a telegram to Zhang Yinhua, the minister, which read: "Secret. The new treaty prohibits Chinese laborers from going to the United States for twenty years which is incompatible with the 1880 treaty. ...posters are everywhere. The office cannot memorialize the throne to ratify the treaty at the moment." (HGCGSL 1/4:1379).

The significance of the decision did not escape Zeng Jize, son of Zeng Guofan and Chinese minister to Great Britain. When asked by Denby, the U.S. minister to China at the time, why the treaty was not duly ratified, Zeng allegedly said: "For the first time in the history of treaties, the people had protested, and that protests had been sent by the Cantonese against the ratification of the treaty." (WJSL 76:23; 77:3; Tsai 1983:90).

As far as the United States was concerned, however, whether or not the Qing ratified the treaty did not matter, for the 1880 treaty had already authorized the United States government to regulate Chinese immigration to the United States as American interests required. On 18 September 1888, the Scott Act passed Congress, stipulating that Chinese

laborers who left the United States should not be permitted to return except for those who had property and direct relatives in the United States, and that all certificates of identity issued to Chinese laborers who were visiting China were void. At least six hundred Chinese laborers with such certificates were denied entry at American ports (HGCGSL 1/4:1382-83; Tsai 1983:91).

The Scott Act showed clearly that with or without a treaty, the United States would exclude Chinese laborers anyway. Chinese merchants in Hong Kong and in the United States decided to push the Qing government a little further in defending their rights. After the Scott bill became law and many Chinese were denied entry to the United States, merchants in Hong Kong and Guangdong sent a telegram to Li Hongzhang, who forwarded it to the Zongli Yamen. The telegram thanked the imperial court for not ratifying the treaty and condemned the Scott Act, which had been made regardless of the existing treaty between China and the United States. The merchants warned that if China let the United States exclude Chinese without doing anything, the Cantonese would have no way of making a living. "We request the imperial court to be determined not to sign the treaty and not to allow the United States to enforce its own act," the telegram concluded, and "the tens of thousands of people in Guangdong and Fujian will be extremely grateful." (HGCGSL 1/4:1382-83).

The Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi Zhang

Zhidong strongly supported the merchants. He suggested that the Zongli Yamen should consider recalling the Chinese minister to the United States, dismissing Americans employed by the Qing government, and forbidding American missionaries from traveling in China's interior (HGCGSL 1/4:1383-85). In the meantime, he directly contacted the Chinese minister in the United States, Zhang Yinhuan, denouncing the idea of self-prohibition as "extremely absurd" and suggesting some sort of "boycott" to "retaliate." (HGCGSL 1/4:1385-86).

Zhang Yinhuan, on the other hand, looked at the matter from an entirely different perspective. He sent a long memorial to the throne in early 1889 defending the self-prohibition policy. In the memorial he argued that the self-prohibition policy was designed to save Chinese laborers from further unemployment and violence against them in the United States, and that the policy only harmed the interests of those who made huge profits by smuggling Chinese laborers overseas. According to Zhang, Hong Kong contract (*baolan*) companies made a profit of \$120 for every Chinese sent to the United States. Every year more than \$500,000 was made. The huge profits were then divided by the *baolan* merchants in Hong Kong and the Chinese secret societies in the United States. But these *baolan* merchants did not care in the least about the future lives and work of the laborers in the United States. In recent years, Zhang asserted, there were only two types of people who went to the United States: the most stupid and the

most sly. They heard more money could be made in foreign countries, and they therefore managed to gather enough money and give it to the *baolan* merchants, who provided them documents and told them what to say at American ports. The situation was made worse by officials in Guangdong such as the interpreter of the Governor-General, who instigated popular discontent to make profit himself. Zhang argued that it was absurd to say that China was overpopulated and that the unemployed, if they did not go abroad, would cause trouble in their native places. Even if this was true, which it was not, he argued, "we probably couldn't say it is reasonable to send the vagrants and rascals to other countries" (HGCGSL 1/4:1399-1403).

What Zhang Yihuan said was not totally groundless. But he made the complicated immigration problem and the popular discontent a matter of a few people's conspiracy. Among all the Chinese ministers to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Zhang was the most irresponsible and extravagant (Tsai 1983:82). He wanted to have the thorny problem solved the easy way--to maintain the status quo and to let the immigration issue gradually disappear as new immigrants ceased coming to the United States. Although the self-prohibition was not originally his idea and virtually all Chinese diplomats supported it as a realistic policy, Zhang's handling of the immigration issue from 1885 to 1889 greatly alienated the Chinese community in

the United States.

Unfortunately, however, the more competent Chinese diplomats never accomplished much more than Zhang did, and the rejection of the treaty negotiated by Zhang probably made China's position on the immigration issue even worse, because without a treaty the United States simply did whatever it pleased unilaterally and left the Qing government in a very awkward position. After the Scott Act was implemented, Zhang Yinhua sent the Zongli Yamen a terse telegram: "The United States repealed the new treaty and refused further discussion.... Chinese [laborers'] entry and transition through the United States are both denied now." (HGCGSL 1/4:1426).

While the Zongli Yamen was protesting the Scott Act of 1888, another exclusion act, the Geary Act, passed the U.S. Congress and was signed into law by the president in 1892. The Geary Act replaced the first Chinese restriction act of 1882, which was about to expire. The new exclusion act stipulated that the suspension of immigration by Chinese laborers be extended for another ten years and, more importantly, it required that all Chinese in the United States apply for a certificate of residence within one year. Those Chinese found without certificates were to be deported (Tsai 1983:96; McKee 1977:48-49;55-56).

The Geary Act more than any other exclusion act triggered furious protests from the Chinese community in the United

States. The reason was simply that the act forced the Chinese immigrants fundamentally to change their migrant way of life: they had either to stay or leave the United States forever, because residence registration would indicate their status. Once Chinese laborers without more than \$1,000 of property left the United States, they would not be able to come back again. Y.K. Chu, who interviewed many Chinese who were immigrants at the time, describes the awkward situation Chinese laborers were in after the Geary Act:

If a Chinese laborer wanted to return to China to visit his relatives there, he had to apply for the return-to-America certificate. The U.S. government would check his registration card. If the applicant was in laborer status, his application would be denied immediately and he would never obtain the return certificate. Under such circumstance, he could of course leave the United States no matter what. But once he left he could not come back again. If he did not leave, he was as if trapped here without much human joy for the rest of his life (Chu 1975:39).

Table 5 shows that most Chinese immigrants in the United States lived a migrant life instead of a life of permanent residency before 1892.

The only solutions to the dilemma faced by the Chinese laborers were to have the Geary Act repealed, or to break the law. Disappointed with the Qing government, the Chinese immigrants in the United States defied the advice of the new minister Cui Guoyin (1889-93), who asked them to comply with the registration order. An emergency meeting was held by the *Zhonghua zong huiguan* in San Francisco to discuss actions to be taken (Chu 1975:40). At the meeting, Chen Taichao,

Table 5. Chinese Arriving in, and Departing from, the United States 1882-1892

Year	Chinese Arrived	Chinese departed
1882	39,579	10,366
1883	10,182	12,159
1884	3,473	14,145
1885	5,352	19,655
1886	4,849	17,591
1887	3,764	12,155
1888	2,777	12,839
1889	2,063	10,226
1890	1,870	8,056
1891	3,007	8,924
1892	3,190	6,696

Adapted from Tsai 1983:98.

the chairman of *Sanyi huiguan*, made a passionate speech advocating a boycott against the registration order. He also made the suggestion to hire lawyers to challenge the constitutionality of the registration requirement (Chu 1975:40). Both of his ideas were accepted by the meeting and \$200,000 was quickly collected to pay the legal expenses (Chu 1975:40).

The boycott decision was faithfully followed by majority of Chinese in the United States. When the registration deadline had passed, only about 10,000, or less than ten percent of the entire Chinese population in the United States, obeyed the law and registered (Chu 1975:41). However, the merchant leadership and the advisability of the boycott was seriously shaken by the federal court ruling that the registration order was constitutional (Chu 1975:41). Posters

appeared everywhere in Chinatown which blamed Chen for the ill-conceived idea of a boycott. Someone even put up \$300 rewards for Chen's assassination (Chu 1975:41).

The total failure of the boycott against the registration and against the advice of the Chinese minister forced the Chinese in the United States once again to turn toward the Qing government for any help they could possibly get. The Qing government, on the other hand, decided that even an imperfect treaty was better than no treaty at all because the Qing did not and could not leave the matter entirely to the United States. As the Zongli Yamen's note to the American minister pointed out, "Although the Chinese laborers are in foreign countries, they are nonetheless Chinese descendants (*chizi*). China cannot leave them unattended." (HGCGSL 1/4:1425).

The problem for the Qing government was, however, how to get the best protection possible. A realistic view was expressed by Cui Guoying, who succeeded Zhang Yinhua as the Chinese minister to the United States. He composed a memorial summarizing his three-year experience in the United States with much insight:

The treaties between the Western countries and the Asian countries have always been unequal. The situation is the result of long development. It is not something which happened in one day or two. Although it is hard to change the entire situation, we have to be careful in planning every step in advance (HGCGSL 1/4:1426-28).

He suggested that China should take full advantage of the most

favoured nation status to demand Chinese nationals' rights of naturalization in the United States and a clause in the new treaty which would stipulate mutual exchange of fugitives (HGCGSL 1/4:1427).

Cui's suggestion indicated that some Qing officials, especially those with extensive diplomatic experience, had begun to realize the limits of diplomacy on the issue of immigration and to see that the final solution of the problem lay in American domestic politics, in which Chinese immigrants had to participate as American citizens. Cui also believed that the Qing should have more control over Chinese nationals abroad who were supposedly under Qing protection (HGCGSL 1/4:1427).

Although there is no evidence showing that the imperial court was very interested in the naturalization idea, Cui's other suggestions were apparently accepted by the Qing court. In a new treaty negotiation which was based on the abortive treaty of 1888 and was conducted by the new Chinese minister Yan Ru (1893-1896), the Qing court insisted that 1) the suspension of Chinese laborers to the United States should continue for ten years instead of twenty years; 2) Chinese travelling via America to other countries should be allowed to enter the United States; 3) the two countries should exchange fugitives; 4) American citizens in China should register if the United States insisted on registration of Chinese laborers in its territory (HGCGSL 1/4:1429-1431). Yan Ru memorialized

the throne in early 1894 that:

The clause on fugitive exchange is especially important because once Chinese nationals have arrived in the United States they often invoke American law and enjoy the right of self governing. If they have broken Chinese law or they are wanted criminals, the Chinese consuls can do nothing to them, although the consuls know their whereabouts. In the past treaties there was no such clause....Now that Yang Ru and the United States are negotiating a treaty with a clause on fugitive exchange, Chinese nationals will have something to be afraid of. Thus Chinese law can be applied overseas and not only protection but also restraint can be accomplished (HGCGSL 1/4:1430).

On 17 March 1894 a treaty was signed and nine months later exchanged between China and the United States which stipulated that 1) "The Chinese laborers shall be absolutely prohibited from coming to the United States for a period of ten years;" 2) Article one did not apply to Chinese laborers who had parents, wife, children, or one thousand dollars' property or credit in the United States; 3) The prohibition did not apply to Chinese other than Chinese laborers and to those who were on their way to other countries via the United States; 4) the Chinese in the United States were given the privileges of citizens of a most favored nation, "excepting the right to become naturalized citizens," and the United States had the right of *necessary regulation*, to which the Chinese had pledged not to object; 5) Chinese laborers residing in the United States should register. The Chinese government could set up a similar requirement for Americans residing in China; 6) The treaty was to be renewed automatically for another ten

years if neither country notified the other in six months in advance (HGCGSL 1/4:1431-1432; Tsai 1983:100). The fugitive exchange was stipulated in a separate treaty (HGCGSL 1/4:1436-37).

The Zongli Yamen memorialized the throne for the treaty's ratification, saying: "From now on the Chinese residing in the United States will be immune from mistreatment." (HGCGSL 1/4:1437-38). However, the treaty was in fact a major defeat for Chinese merchants and laborers in the United States because, as I have pointed out earlier, the flourishing of the Chinese community in the United States relied heavily on the free migration of Chinese laborers. After the 1894 treaty and the registration of Chinese laborers in the United States, it was nearly impossible for most Chinese to migrate between the two countries legally. As a result, after the mid-1890s many Chinese began to adopt new means to evade the new regulations in order to enter or reenter the United States (Chu 1975:40-46).

One way to avoid future problems was to claim the native-born status which would entitle anyone to citizenship. If Chinese-Americans had little ambition or interest in participating in American politics and therefore had little interest in naturalization for that purpose, they wanted the citizenship for very practical reasons: to migrate between the two countries and to bring their relatives--presumably their own children--to the United States (Chu 1975:43). In order to

bring more people to the United States, many claimed more than ten sons.*

Another way was to claim business shareholder (more than \$1,000) status. A Chinese laborer or farmer who wanted to visit his family in China temporarily would go to San Francisco or other big cities to find a willing Chinese merchant or a merchant relative. He needed to pay a small fee for being accepted as a "business partner." The money was of course well spent because not only could the laborer come back to the States himself, but he could also "get married" in China and later bring children to the "gold mountain country" (*jinsha guo*; Chu 1975:45). According to some old Chinese immigrants' recollection, there was a business firm called *Xinguanghe* which had more than one hundred "partners" investing and withdrawing their shares over about ten years. The real shareholders, it was believed, were only three (Chu 1975:45). As time went on, many merchants made false partnership a sideline business (Chu 1975:45).

For those people who could not find a helpful merchant to accept them as "shareholders," they might ask a buddy or a relative to acknowledge a \$1,000 debt, which would give them the right to come back to the United States again (Chu 1975:45-46). Many others simply entered and stayed in the United States while "on their way to other countries" such as

*Most Chinese did not want to bring their daughters to the United States. Therefore they reported their daughters as sons (Chu 1975:44).

Cuba and Mexico. In 1905 for example, 320 Chinese laborers on their way to Mexico "disappeared" in the United States (Yang et al. 1989:443).

It should be pointed out, however, that the scale of illegal immigration must have been very limited, because the statistics of Chinese in America since the late nineteenth century showed declines instead of increases. In 1890, there were 107,488 Chinese immigrants in the United States; in 1900, 89,863; and in 1910, the number was only 71,531 (Yang et al. 1989:441).

At any rate, the 1894 treaty did not solve the immigration issue between China and the United States once and for all as the Qing government hoped. It led to continued law evasions on the part of Chinese immigrants and it failed to check the increasing hostility toward Chinese of all classes by U.S. legislative and law enforcement agencies (McKee 1977:29, *passim* in chapt 2). The 1894 treaty in fact gradually introduced the immigration issue between the two countries into a new phase, in which the United States legislative and other governmental agencies, the Bureau of Immigration (established in 1892) in particular, "worked consciously and actively for total exclusion" of Chinese within as well as outside of America (McKee 1977:29). In this new phase the Chinese community in the United States and its territories began to struggle not so much to bring new immigrants to the United States as not to be totally driven

out of the country, a country which Chinese-Americans had finally decided to choose as their permanent home (HGCGSL 1/4:1444-59).

A series of new developments in the exclusion policy in the late 1890s and early 1900s made the mistreatment of Chinese beyond the immediate concern of Chinese immigrants themselves and forced the Chinese-Americans to appeal to the general public in China not just to the Qing court. In 1898 when the United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands, the exclusion policy was extended to Hawaii; one year later Major General Elwell S. Otis introduced the exclusion policy into the Philippines (McKee 1977:35; Tsai 1983:101). In 1902 an exclusion act further confirmed that the exclusion law was applicable to these new areas possessed by America or under the U.S. control, and Chinese residents there could not enter the American mainland (McKee 1977:64). The extension of the exclusion to these new territories, especially to Hawaii, was significant not only because the fear of exclusion of Chinese from places other than America proper was confirmed, but also because Chinese commercial and other economic interests in Hawaii and Philippines were much greater than in the U.S.

Chinese immigration to Hawaii began in 1850s and, unlike Chinese in America proper, many Chinese contract laborers and merchants brought their families with them and stayed in Hawaii as permanent residents there (Yang et al. 1989:361).

In the mid-1880s, there were 25,000 Chinese in the Hawaiian Islands, constituting one-fourth of the entire population there; there were 219 Chinese stores, about one-third of the total stores in Hawaii (Li and Yang 1990:144-46). It was therefore not just coincidence that the idea of boycotting American goods was first advocated by Chinese immigrants in Hawaii (see Chapter Two).

The new Chinese minister, Wu Tingfang (1897-1902), the most competent minister of all,* protested the extension most vigorously for an additional reason: only Chinese were excluded in Hawaii, despite the fact that there were Japanese, Koreans, and other Asians in the Hawaiian Islands (Yang et al. 1989:362).

Chinese pride was also seriously hurt by new regulations and practices against not only Chinese laborers but also Chinese merchants, students, and even Qing officials. Merchants were frequently denied entry because of insufficient information on their certificates (McKee 1977:35). A former immigration official was allegedly instructed that if any Chinese merchants arrived at New Orleans and he had no time to examine them, the merchants were to be deported without examination (McKee 1977:75). Students were denied entry on

*According to Tsai (1983:100), Wu, a British-trained scholar and a prominent international lawyer, "was one of the ablest proponents of the Chinese view and an influential critic of America's exclusion policy."... "Wu did more than any other single individual to present China's case to the American public."

grounds of insufficient knowledge of English, poorly defined purpose of study, insufficient documents, and even eye infections (McKee 1977:42,69-70,96; HGCGSL 1/4:1452). The most well known case of mistreatment of Chinese officials was that of Tom Kim Yung, a military attache of the Chinese legation, who was beaten, thrown into prison by the police in San Francisco, and then committed suicide in 1903 (A Ying 1962:102; McKee 1977:81).

Those Chinese who eventually managed to get into the United States experienced various humiliating treatment by American immigration officials. They were put into shabby detention sheds for weeks while waiting for proper authorization or documents.* Worse still was to be examined with the Bertillon system of identification, which was introduced in 1903 with funds authorized by the U.S. Congress ((HGCGSL 1/4:1453; McKee 1977:67-68). The system was allegedly "a scientific method of identifying criminals by the accurate measurement and inspection of the naked body" (McKee 1977:74).

If these practices hurt personal and national pride, they also seriously threatened the very livelihood of Chinese-Americans. In 1903, Chinese merchants in the United States sent a petition to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wai wu bu, founded in 1902) condemning the exclusion acts and asking for a better treaty with the United States when the

*For detailed discussion of the "shed" and Chinese response to it see Chapter Three.

1894 treaty expired in 1904 or for the abolition of the exclusion treaty in its entirety (HGCGSL 1/4:1444-1459).^{*} While it is hard to say that the petition played a decisive role in influencing the Qing's decision to have a new treaty with the United States, the fact was that Liang Cheng, who succeeded Wu Tingfang as Chinese minister (1903-07), informed the U.S. Department of State in December 1903 that China intended to terminate the 1894 treaty and negotiate a new immigration treaty with the United States. In the meantime, Chinese-Americans realized that the Qing government was too weak to help the cause of Chinese immigrants substantially, even if the Qing government was willing to do so, and in early 1905 when the new treaty negotiation between China and the United States came to a stalemate and was to be continued in China, they appealed to merchants and the general public in China for help. Their Chinese compatriots, much to the surprise of the United States and other foreign powers, responded with a nationwide boycott against American goods in 1905.

^{*}The details of the petition are discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two

The Making of Anti-Exclusion Public Opinion

The news of American discrimination against Chinese immigrants, travelers, and students in the United States had begun to appear in Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong, Guangzhou (Canton), Shanghai, and other large Chinese cities in the late nineteenth century.* When the Chinese-Americans directly appealed to the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce for help in early May 1905, the Chinese urbanites' response was almost instant and surprisingly strong.** A strategy of national boycott against American goods was quickly decided on 10 May 1905*** and the boycotters set loose a deluge of anti-exclusion protests in a variety of publications and public speeches.

The boycott movement against American mistreatment of Chinese immigrants was not just another example of the mass anti-foreign agitation which had been so common since the second half of the nineteenth century in China. It impressed

*In such newspapers as *Shenbao*, *Shibao*, *Hangzhou Vernacular*, *China Daily* (*Huazi ribao*).

**Apparently surprising to American policy-makers (Cohen 1990:57).

***On 10 May 1905, the recently founded Shanghai Chamber of Commerce held a meeting in which a national boycott against American goods was decided. The meeting also decided that the boycott was to begin in two months (later changed to 20 July 1905) if the immigration policy of the United States did not change (*Shibao*, 11 May 1905).

historians by its scope and the sophisticated manner in which Chinese urbanites confronted a great foreign power.* As Akira Iriye points out, the boycotters were not blind xenophobes. Neither were they revolutionary conspirators. They were common urbanites--the gentry, merchants, journalists, students, and other urban dwellers--who employed "civilized words and acts" in order to unite and regain national rights (Iriye 1967:223-224). In its wide range of participants and sympathizers, the boycott was truly a movement of the public.

To understand why a relatively isolated diplomatic issue had sparked such a large popular upheaval and why the movement was so rational and peaceful, it is crucial to understand the social and institutional changes in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China which transformed the nature of late Qing politics. The question is what changes are really necessary and relevant to put the boycott into a broader perspective.

Akira Iriye has insightfully related the boycott to an emerging public opinion in late Qing China which was rational and progressive (Iriye 1967). Like many other diplomatic historians, however, his main concern is quite narrow. In his case, he focuses on public opinion's impact upon Qing foreign

*Historians are also impressed by the rational and peaceful manner of the popular movement. As Akira Iriye points out: "What distinguished the years after the Boxer incident was the public's self-consciously disciplined and 'civilized' way of confronting the foreign powers." (Iriye 1967:223).

Policy, and he therefore has little to say about the making and the nature of public opinion in general and the boycott ideology in particular. I shall broaden his study by examining the way in which the new political discourse was formed and its nature. These questions are important because the boycotters not only contributed to the emerging public opinion but also were guided by it. More importantly, what was new in the political realm at the turn of the century was first of all the fresh way politics was discussed.

In the nineteenth century, influential political ideas were often written in forms such as memorials, private letters and books rather than newspaper essays. In other words, in nineteenth century China, modern media, most notably daily newspapers, did not provide means for serious political discourse and politics was not something to be discussed in public and by the public. Lin Zexu, one of the first Chinese who recognized Western military superiority, disclosed his ideas in memorials and private letters. Wei Yuan published his sea defense ideas and elaborated his idea of "using barbarians to control barbarians" in the famous book, *Haiguo tuzhi* (Treatise on maritime kingdoms) of 1842. For all its popularity later, *Haiguo tuzhi* was initially more an intellectual exercise of the author than a policy suggestion or an essay for public consumption. It circulated only among Wei Yuan's friends and scholar-officials like himself. Although it was commented on and criticized by other scholar-

Officials such as Feng Guifen, Guo Songtao, and Liang Qichao, it was not until 1858, sixteen years after its original Printing and one year after Wei's death, that *Haiguo tuzhi* was recommended to high ranking officials (Wang 1963:145-6).

Feng Guifen (1809-1874), also a scholar-official, was probably the first man to apply to China's modern problems the term *zhiqiang* (self-strengthening). His ideas also anticipated the famous phrase *zhongxue weiti xixue weiyong* (Chinese learning for the fundamental principles, Western learning for practical application), a slogan to be made famous a generation later by Zhang Zhidong in the 1890s. His famous *Jiaobinlu kangyi* (Protests from the study of Jiaobin), four essays dealing with governmental, financial, educational, and other aspects of China's modernization, was not intended for publication. Feng showed the essays to Zeng Guofan, who suggested publication. The author declined, although he allowed his friends to read them or make copies (Teng and Fairbank 1966:50).

Clearly in nineteenth century China political discourse was formed by a very small group of elites in rather a different manner than that of the early twentieth century. All the above-mentioned scholar-officials were *jinshi* degree holders and well versed in literary classics. Their readers were definitely very limited, not just because their books were not published but also because they were exclusively written in classical Chinese. Although people of other social

classes were also politically vocal occasionally in various forms--poetry, posters, petitions, prose--there was little linguistic and content relationship among these relatively independent political discourses.* Thus antiforeign religion movements tended to be locally-important. Other than general hostility toward foreigners there was no consensus on issues facing Chinese and China as a whole and on the strategies and tactics to deal with them.

The significant developments since the late nineteenth century involved not just the many new concepts introduced into China at this time, but also changes in a number of related areas: the use of telegraph services for news reports and other communications; the rise of a commercial daily press which provided forums for political discussions; the commercialization and politicization of urban entertainment; the emergence of a new linguistic style which had enormous intellectual and political significance; and, finally, the growth of a new type of intellectuals--professional writers, educators, and social critics. Together these structural changes helped to shape the boycott movement and its ideology. Since virtually all the structural and institutional changes in mass communication, which I shall describe shortly, occurred outside of direct state control or with tacit state recognition, they were part of expanding public sphere. As a

*For a collection of anti-foreign literature in the late nineteenth century see Wang Minglun (1984).

result, as the 1905 boycott movement demonstrated, politics in China began to become *mediated public event*.*

1. Media

One of the factors that made it possible for the 1905 boycott to be a nationwide movement was a shared national language. By a shared national language, I mean two things. First of all, the development of modern technology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided for the first time in Chinese history the means of modern communication. The telegraph and modern newspapers greatly speeded up the process of information exchange so that the same political issues could be *simultaneously* addressed nationwide. Secondly, a shared national language also meant that linguistically the protest rhetoric was to a great degree trans-regional and cut across various social classes in its vocabularies, syntactic patterns, and idiomatic expressions.

This new national language was not in the strict classic form (wenyan) which conveniently expressed both Confucian cosmopolitan and provincial ideologies. It was also different from vernacular forms which were closer to spoken languages

*Expounding on Habermas, John B. Thompson has pointed out: "...the development of mass communication has reconstituted the boundaries between public and private life.... Power was rendered more visible and decision-making processes became more public,.... [Publicized political events become] mediated public events..." (Thompson 1990:241. Italics in original).

but lacked the sophistication and profoundness of wenyan. It was a language adopted by wide spectrum of the traditional elites - imperial degree holders - and new school students. I will have much more to say about this emerging national language later. Let us first look at the means of verbal communication of the boycott discourses.

When the treaty negotiation between the United States and China on the Chinese immigration issue was transferred to Beijing in early 1905, due to the alleged refusal of Liang Cheng (then China's minister to the United States) to endorse the treaty, Chinese in America had a great sense of crisis. Around 10 a.m. (about 11-p.m. Shanghai time) on 4 May 1905, a special telegram from Washington reached Shanghai which read: "Liang Cheng, the minister to the United States, has been negotiating a Chinese immigration treaty with the United States for months. The government of the United States insists on [exclusion] and refuses to compromise." The next morning the ominous news was in Shanghai Shibao (JDSZL 1956:13).

In desperation and fear of betrayal, overseas Chinese sent telegrams to various departments of the Qing regime and to the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. According to one source, at least twenty-one telegrams from the overseas Chinese in the United States were received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wai Wu Bu) and other departments and high ranking

officials of the Qing government between 9 May and 13 May 1905 (Chang 1973:116). Another source confirmed this flood of telegrams, saying: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been receiving telegrams almost every day from provinces and overseas Chinese since early this month [May]. On the single day of 13 May alone it received four wires from Chinese in America." (JDSZL 1956:13). Likewise, after the meeting of 10 May 1905 which discussed possible actions against American exclusion laws, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce publicized their decisions nationwide by sending telegrams to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and twenty-one cities throughout China (Zhang 1966:45).*

The 1905 anti-American boycott is the first political event in modern China which used the telegraph extensively in mobilizing and organizing a popular movement. As early as the 1880s Li Hongzhang developed a national telegraph system by linking the international cables, which had previously terminated at Shanghai, first to Tianjin and then to Beijing; branch wires were then extended to many large inland cities. Since then memorials had flashed by telegraph from the provinces to the Grand Council (Spence 1990:219). Among the earliest users of the telegraph were newspapermen. In 1882

*The twenty-one cities were Hankou, Yichang, Shashi (Hubei); Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Suzhou, (Jiangsu); Tianjin (Hebei); Chongqing (Sichuan); Yantai (Shandong); Jiujiang (Jiangxi); Wuhu, Anqing, Chizhou (Anhui); Guangzhou, Shantou (Guangdong); Fuzhou, Xiamen (Fujian); Wuzhou (Guangxi); Changsha (Hunan); Hangzhou (Zhejiang); and Hong Kong (Zhang 1966:43).

Shenbao made use of the new Tianjin-Shanghai telegraph line to publish the first telegraphic dispatch in Chinese journalism (Lee and Nathan 1987:363). Guangdong, another center of the boycott, also saw the rapid development of telegraphy in 1880s. In 1884 lines were strung between Guangzhou and Shanghai and between Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Later, the system was extended to all parts of the province. By the end of 1908 there were 1,200 miles of telegraph lines in Guangdong. A telegraph school in Guangzhou was established in 1887 to train operators for the system (Rhoads 1975:20). As of 1895, Shanghai had telegraph connections with Nagasaki, Vladivostok (Haisen wei), Singapore, London, and San Francisco. Domestically, Shanghai could reach Beijing, Tianjin, Shanhaiguan, Baoding, Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Nanning, Nanjing, Hankou, and Hong Kong (Zhang 1990:930-931). By 1910 there were 560 telegraph offices in China, and about 28,000 miles of overhead line. (Elvin and Skinner 1974:10).

Before the twentieth century, by comparison, the telegraph did not play a noteworthy role in connecting Chinese in any popular uprising. For the 1905 boycott movement, however, the telegram became an organizational necessity. In the telegram to the twenty-one cities, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce suggested allowing a two-month grace period for the United States to change its course. Accordingly, chambers of commerce of all the twenty-one cities would wait for further notice of the next step from Shanghai. This carefully

designed tactic required timely exchange of information. Only the telegraph could circulate the information promptly.

The telegraph is politically significant when we consider the fact that in many later political movements--the May Fourth movement of 1919, the May Thirtieth movement of 1925, the 1931 movement against Japanese aggression of China, and so forth--telegrams were sent, usually from large cities such as Shanghai, to cities nationwide. It is hard to imagine that any national political agitation could have been quickly orchestrated without the telegraph.

The telegraph was also linguistically significant, which in turn tremendously enhanced its political role. Telegrams were normally written in short set phrases for brevity and lower cost. The set phrases of the telegraphic language adopted many expressions which were quickly and widely used by newspapers. In fact, it was telegraphic phrases, with their conciseness, rhythm and profound meanings, that standardized many popular expressions of the boycott. The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce's telegram of 10 May 1905 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may serve as an example. It read: "American laws and regulations maltreat Chinese, extending from workers to merchants. ...This is a serious matter influencing the national polity and people's life (*guoti minsheng*). [We] plead [with you] to refuse to sign the treaty so as to assert national rights (*guoquan*) and protect commercial interests...." (Zhang 1966:44). In this particular telegram,

Such fairly new concepts as *guoti minsheng* and *guoquan* were adopted.

More importantly, such expressions as *meilie* (American Exclusion Act), *you gong ji shang* (extending from workers to merchants) and *xiangjie buyong meihuo* (mutually exhort not to use American goods) became standard expressions of the movement. Later disputes on the specific methods of boycott did not question any of these expressions; rather, all parties tried to justify their approaches by citing principles embodied in the telegraphic language.* The four-word phrase *buyong meihuo* (do not use American goods) was repeatedly articulated in various public speeches. And in a newspaper announcement of 1 September 1905, the Speech Society of Public Loyalty (*Gongzhong yanshuo hui*) accused the merchants who sold American goods of violating "nonuse-ism" (*buyong zhuyi*, JDSZL 1956:70).

The wording of the telegram was the result of serious discussions of merchants and official observers at the 10 May meeting. Originally someone proposed the idea of "prohibition" of using American goods (*jinyong meihuo*) during the meeting. Yang Shiqi, a Qing official of the Commerce Department who was sitting in on the meeting as an official observer, questioned the word prohibition, asking prohibition "by whom?" Since nobody could come up with an answer, the meeting

*For details of the boycott politics, please see Chapter Five.

was stuck with the issue for more than a hour until another government official, Shi Ziying, suggested changing "prohibition" (*jinyong*) into "mutually exhort not to use" (*xiangjie buyong*, He Zuo 1956:57-58).

The linguistic forms of telegrams also clearly revealed the power relationship between the sender and the receiver. On 10 May 1905, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce sent out two other telegrams. One was to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commerce Department (*Shang Bu*) and the other to the Nanyang and Beiyang Ministers. In these telegrams, the proper authorities were addressed with all due respect. It should also be pointed out that the telegraph was nationalized in 1904 (Liu 1985:116). Therefore, from the very beginning, the anti-American rhetoric was not totally out of the Qing government's control.*

Compared with the telegraph, newspapers played an even more pivotal role in publicizing the issue and in diffusing anti-exclusion ideas, since the content of telegrams was

*Even after its nationalization in 1904, telegraph service did not immediately fall under total state control because the service was still open to the general public, and certainly open to various voluntary associations in 1905. The first newspaper and publishing law in China (*Daqing baozhang lu*) was not promulgated until 1907.

On the other hand, however, some sort of censorship did occur where state power was particularly strong. For instance, in June 1905 when Zhili Governor General Yuan Shikai was not happy about Tianjin *Dagong bao*'s favorable reports on the boycott, he ordered the local telegraph offices not to serve the paper and the local post offices not to deliver the paper.

known to the public only through newspapers. Newspapers also had the advantage of being able to run long essays. Newspaper essays often helped standardize the linguistic patterns and the patterns of anti-American rhetoric.* As early as 1873 Shanghai *Shenbao* published an editorial addressing the issue of "piglet trade"--the coolie traffic (A Ying 1962:575-577). One of the most influential essays condemning the exclusion laws was published in Shanghai *Shibao* (*The Eastern Times*) in 1903 (A Ying 1962:588-597).** In the essay, the author of the paper for the first time stated the legitimacy and necessity of the boycott. The essay started with a discussion of American exclusion acts (lie) since 1894 which, according to the author, were getting harsher every year, to the extent that only animals could bear them without rebellion. No other nationals were treated in this humiliating way. The essay continued,

A Western proverb says 'better die than not to be free' and Dong Zhongshu says 'better die than to be greatly humiliated.' Being excluded is the worst case of not being free. Nothing could be more humiliating than being bodily measured by immigration officers at the entry ports of America. In this world of competition, universal principles have no ruling, words are impotent. [The only solution, according to the author,] is to unite into a big group and to boycott American

*For a detailed analysis of the boycott discourse please see Chapter Three.

**The essay was originally published in *Xin Zhongguo* (New China daily) of Honolulu--a city in Hawaii, and later rerun in *Shibao* of Shanghai, one of the most progressive newspapers in China in that decade.

goods since the Chinese government is weak. The boycott will work because the exclusionists belong to the Labor Party. If we boycott American goods it would eventually hurt those who produce them-the Labor Party. Thus, American would be forced to abolish the Exclusion Act. Furthermore, boycotting American goods could also help our national industry. The boycott is also the best and safest approach to the issue, for it is within people's right to choose what goods to buy. The Chinese government would not interfere and Americans would have no excuse to exercise their power (qiangquan) (A Ying 1962:588-95).

The importance of the essay lies in the fact that it made several crucial points in plain and persuasive language. Later on, many propagandist writings and speeches were more or less elaborations of these points. The essay pointed out that American racism against Chinese was against both Western principles of liberty and Chinese morality. It advocated a boycott by Chinese people in spite of the government, since it was people's right to choose what to buy. The essay also attributed the discrimination to the American Labor Party (Gongdang, A Ying 1962:592). These themes were echoed time and again in numerous ways.*

Equally if not more important was the more routine role played by the newspapers - reporting the progress of the movement. During the boycott movement of 1905-1906, *Shenbao* and *Xinwen bao* were the two most widely circulated newspapers, yet their major role was basically confined to reporting events instead of shaping the boycott discourse by

*See Chapter Three.

publishing agitational essays. In addition to reporting what was happening, the newspapers also published anti-American advertisements, which were often announcements of boycott meetings; open letters to individuals and the public by such prominent figures as Zeng Shaoqing and Lin Shu; public speeches, and so on. Zeng Shaoqing constantly exchanged letters with anti-American activists of other cities in *Shenbao* and his famous "Farewell letter to the world" (*Gaobie tianxia shu*) was published in *Shibao* and other newspapers (Zhang 1966:158). It is hard to imagine that Zeng Shaoqing could have been the spiritual leader of the movement without newspapers.

Newspapers of different cities often quoted each other. *Shibao*, for example, had a special section publishing boycott articles from other newspapers. Newspapers had the advantage of both speed and large circulations. As early as the late nineteenth century, residents of Suzhou could read Shanghai *Shenbao* the next afternoon (Bao 1971:105-6). According to one estimate, in the early twentieth century there were about 300,000 people in Shanghai who read newspapers (Zhang 1990:931). It has to be pointed out that even in the early twentieth century the regular readers of the newspaper consisted of only a tiny fraction of Chinese urban dwellers. In 1906 when Bao Tianxiao took the job as a major writer for *Shibao*, many of his relatives in Suzhou had objections (Bao 1971:322). His father-in-law, among others, warned him that

the writers for the newspaper were a notorious breed, for they did nothing but expose other people's privacy (Bao 1971:322). However, it is beyond any doubt that in the early twentieth century newspapers were the most important medium shaping Chinese language in general and boycott rhetoric in particular. Newspapers' influence certainly went beyond their readers. Many more people were exposed to newspapers through attending public speeches, which were often oral versions of written essays in newspapers (XWZL 1990\50:103-122).

What, then, were the political positions and status of leading newspapers during the boycott movement? There have been many studies on the rise of the modern press in China (Lee and Nathan 1985:360-395; Link 1981). There is no need to repeat all their findings here. Suffice it to point out that in the nineteenth century Chinese newspapers' function was primarily commercial, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Chinese press began to politicize in its content and language. The turning points were the defeat of the Chinese navy by Japan in 1895 and the 1898 reforms. After the abortive reform attempt in 1898, however, the Qing government began to see newspapers as a dangerous threat in publicizing subversive ideas. The Subao case of 1903 was the best example to show the limitations of the imperial court's tolerance of the criticism of the press, and its capability to inflict punishment upon subversive newspapers (Link

1981:102-104).

Subao, the most famous of all the revolutionary newspapers, was founded in 1896 in the Shanghai International Settlement, where it received Japanese financial aid and was officially registered with the Japanese consulate as a foreign property under the name of the Japanese wife of its first manager, Hu Chang. The paper was initially a humble establishment, but it became famous overnight in 1903 when six of its editors and contributors were arrested for publishing inflammatory essays against the Manchu rulers in China. Although the arrest and trial was a time-consuming process, the accused were eventually put into prison and the paper shut down. Several other revolutionary newspapers took over the cause of Subao, but none lasted (Ge 1964:153,171-76).

The crackdown on Subao, however, only suppressed the revolutionary press. Newspapers of various other types were still emerging and newspapermen gradually adjusted their press to political reality. When the 1905 boycott began most newspapers appeared to be more information centers than sources of political agitation. The more successful newspapers were progressive but very moderate, some even conservative in their political positions. Shenbao was not radical most of the time. During the 1905 boycott, it confined its role primarily to reporting instead of publishing agitational essays. Zhongwai ribao took a conciliatory position throughout the movement and became the voice of big

merchants who tried to end the boycott quickly and peacefully (Fang 1982:345-346). *Shibao* was the most progressive of the decade and the most active and nationally influential newspaper during the movement. Therefore a more detailed account of its political background is necessary.

Founded by Di Chuqing in 1904 in Shanghai, *Shibao* had used several stylistic innovations to become a modern newspaper with a progressive flavor (Ge 1964:141-145). The paper was definitely not as polemical as the subversive *Subao*, yet it promised political comments which "will deal with important topics concerning the entire nation" (Ge 1964:149). It advocated reform instead of revolution. Its moderate stance reflected the changing political view of Liang Qichao, for it was he who funded the paper and wrote the introductory essay for the first issue. In the introductory essay he wrote:

Why should we publish *Shibao*? The classics say that "a gentleman can maintain the Mean [zhong] at any time" . . . Therefore, nothing is more important than time (shi) in order to rule the country and lead people. To be aware of the trend of the times [and to make the right choice at the right moment] is not just a Chinese axiom. In the West, Darwin invented the universal law of "things compete with each other and the superior will win and the inferior will lose" (wujin tianze yousheng luebai). Later on Spencer changed the

*The quotation "junzi er shi zhong" is from Book of Rites-the Doctrine of the Mean. Zhong means not to go extremes in emotion and in action. (For the full text of The Doctrine of the Mean in English see Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and compiler, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. pp.97-114. The quotation is on p.99).

principle into survival of the fittest. Those who are not fit, even if they are superior will turn into inferior, and those who fit, on the other hand, will change from inferior to superior. The truth of winning and losing lies right here.... In today's China, neither those who hold high offices nor those who live in remote mountain valleys know the world's grand trend, believing that they can cling to thousand-year-old learning to deal with today's changes. But the inadequateness of their old learnings shows, and they cannot just get by for very long.

Thus, the wise and the ignorant from all corners of the country debate passionately about the way in which the West came out of turmoil and what they did to become strong. They are running around, proselytizing and crying that we should be like the West! While nobody would deny that the West is in good order and strong, it is not clear that what they do really suits our times. Confucius said: "Excess is as bad as deficiency". If we cannot catch up with the times, we will degenerate day by day and the country will not be saved. If we go too far ahead of the times, yelling wildly without accomplishing anything, we will have other thorny problems arise and the country will not be saved either....It is a critical moment now! We, who share the same concerns, are afraid of this and therefore found this newspaper, naming it *Shibao* (The Times). As for our national essence, while paying due respect, we will put aside whatever is obsolete. As for the Western culture, while useful, we will put off whatever is not suitable for today's China. We will do our best to discuss major issues pertinent to our country and to the world impartially and fairly from both positive and negative perspectives. Thus we will provide national salvation strategies for government advice, and for people to discuss....

Thus, our comments will be those which are suitable and applicable. If not applicable to today's China even holy doctrine and fancy rhetoric are impotent and instead cause problems. Therefore we will encourage each other and articulate only what is applicable (Ge 1964:149-150).

This restrained editorial policy deserves special attention because of the important role the paper played in the movement. It is progressive but not agitating. It is open-minded yet critical of Western social and political theories and reality. It stressed the utility of Western learning. On the other hand, it did not dismiss the Chinese

cultural essence (*guocui*); far from it. Liang Qichao was never a wholesale Westernizer (Chang 1971), and the owner of the paper, Di Chuqing, was even more fond of the Chinese national essence. He was a collector of Chinese paintings and calligraphy who in 1900 had participated in Tang Caichang's abortive uprising in Hubei against the Manchu rulers and later fled to Japan. Disappointed with conspiratorial revolution, he returned to China in 1904 to be a constitutional reformer instead of a revolutionary (Ge 1964:141). As the introductory editorial claimed, the purpose of his paper was to advise the government. The successfulness of the *Shibao* lay in the fact that it skillfully struck a balance between politics, commercial publishing, and modern journalism.

There were, of course, more radical newspapers published during the boycott movement (Fang 1982:330-353). But none of them went so far as to openly and explicitly question the Qing government's legitimacy in representing China internationally. Besides, none of the radical newspapers founded during the movement had more than local influence or lasted long (Fang 1982:330-353).*

*Because of the crackdown of radical/revolutionary newspapers in early 1900s, notably the *Subao* incident of 1903, revolutionaries did not have newspapers in Shanghai in 1905. The most vocal radical newspapers were published in Hong Kong. They were *Zhongguo ribao*, *Shijie gongyi bao*, *Guangdong ribao*, and *Yousowei bao*. During the boycott movement, at least two newspapers were founded to propagate the cause. They were *Baogong bao* (Shanghai, by Man-Mirror Study Society) and *Meijing huagong juyue bao* (Guangzhou). However, neither paper lasted long. *Baogong bao*, for example, existed for only one month (Fang 1991:338-39).

With the rise of the modern press, more traditional media of political discourse did not cease to be important in mobilizing the boycott. One obvious example is books published prior to and during the boycott period. In 1904, Liang Qichao's *Notes on the Exclusion Law Against Chinese Laborers* (*Ji huagong jingyue*) was published in book form (A Ying 1962:487-521). Also available now were *The Mistreatment of Honolulu Chinese* (*Tanxiangsha huaren shounue ji*), and *The Mistreatment of Brethren* (*tongbao shounue ji*; A Ying 1962:553-559; 522-552). It is significant that these books were important and influential during the movement largely because they were one way or another related to the newspapers. Liang's *Notes on the Exclusion Law Against Chinese Laborers* was serialized first in the famous *Journal of the New People* (*Xingmin congbao*) in 1904. *The Mistreatment of Honolulu Chinese* was published by *Hangzhou Vernacular* (*Hangzhou baihua bao*) in 1903. And *The Mistreatment of Brethren* was given free of charge to the buyers and subscribers of newspapers (A Ying 1962:25-26). The close relationship between newspapers and book publishers during the period lay also in the fact that in early twentieth century China, newspaper offices and publishing institutions often shared the same buildings and were run by the same kind of people - intellectual merchants. Many people worked for both newspapers and book publishers

simultaneously (Bao 1971:245,250).

According to one study, in the early twentieth century there were at least forty-four publishing houses in Shanghai alone, only some of which, such as Shanghai Commercial Press (*Shangwu yinshu guan*), published both books and periodicals (Zhang 1990:1029). The increasing connections between newspapers and book publishing in the early twentieth century was obvious, though. Books were often advertised in the newspapers, and newspapers also ran review articles on the important books either to help their sales or spread their ideas. The famous *Subao* case showed clearly that newspapers played a very important role in publicizing a book, at least from the Qing government's point of view (Ge 1964:153). We are very familiar with the story of how the Qing government persecuted the publisher of *Subao*, which ran articles introducing the subversive book, *The Revolutionary Army*, but we do not know anything about what happened to *Tatong shuju*, the publishing office of the famous book. One possible explanation is that small book publishing offices were often established on a temporary basis.

By comparison, newspapers were politically more important than books. In the early twentieth century, the most important political debates were carried in periodicals. One of the most obvious examples is the debate between revolutionaries and reformers in *Minbao* and *Xinmin congbao* (Zhang and Wang 1963 2/1:4-10). Before Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-

san) founded *Minbao* in 1905, revolutionary ideas were barely heard by the general public. Another indicator of how newspapers replaced books as forums of political debate is that the majority of influential political comments (*shilun*) were published in newspapers and periodicals (Zhang and Wang 1962). The four-volume anthology of commentary on current affairs covering the ten-year period before the 1911 Revolution is revealing. For the five years from 1901 to 1905, only seven books, about 200 pages out of 1,600 pages of the total anthology, were politically significant, and among the seven two were collections of periodical articles (Zhang and Wang 1962).

More detailed studies are needed to find out if the rise of press media in early twentieth century China increased the superficiality of political discussion. The fact is, however, that newspaper essays were produced with much more speed, regularity, and popularity than books, and newspapers more than books increasingly set the standard for the linguistic patterns of political discourse. As far as the anti-American movement is concerned, although it is hard to assert that books echoed newspapers, there is little doubt that books did not constitute a separate discourse whose content or language was distinct from that of newspapers. It is significant intellectually that the anti-American movement produced few high quality or thoughtful pamphlets and books.*

*See Chapter Three.

Among those who had written books on American discrimination issues, only Liang Qichao was well known. Even Liang's book was by no means intellectually significant.

Aside from more formal publications, posters and handbills also appeared during the movement (A Ying 1962). In Guangzhou, people even made kites with anti-American slogans on them (JDSZL 1956/1:1-2). However, unlike earlier anti-foreign religious movements (Wang 1984), anonymous posters did not comprise an important part of the written discourse of the anti-American boycott. Some of the posters got attention beyond their locale only through major newspapers. *Shenbao*, for example, published handbills from Songjiang county. (*Shenbao* 23 June 1905).

More important in popularizing anti-American ideas were public speeches. Unfortunately there are few written records left of public speeches. However, several observations can be made based on various sources.* As I pointed out earlier, newspapers regularly published the news of public gatherings. In these meetings, it was almost routine practice that public speeches were given. According to one source, after 20 July 1905, when the movement reached its apex, there were meetings held almost every day (JDSZL 1956/1:29). In Shanghai a public speech society - Speech Society of Public Loyalty (*Gongzhong*

*The most important sources are newspapers and A Ying's collection of anti-American literatures (A Ying 1962).

yanshu hui) - was organized with Ge Zhong, a small merchant with an intellectual background, as its leader. Speakers ranged from the merchant leaders of the movement to a thirteen-year-old student. On 20 July 1905, for example, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce held a meeting to discuss the specific ways of boycotting American goods. Participants in the meeting included Shanghai merchants of various provincial origins and journalists. At the meeting speakers included almost all the most important figures of the boycott movement, such as Zeng Shaoqing, Ge Zhong, Ye Haowo, and Wang Kangnian (JDSZL 1956.1:29-30). Women had meetings of their own. On 17 July 1905, Shi Lanying chaired a meeting with a hundred participants. Shi and a female student, among others, spoke at the meeting. In Suzhou, women's meetings were organized by the Unbound Feet Society (*Fangzu hui*; JDSZL 1956/1:31, 35). In Guangzhou, the Humanitarian Voice Society (*Rensheng yanshe*) organized numerous meetings after the beginning of the movement in May 1905. Originally it was planned to hold meetings once a week, but later it was changed to one meeting every other day, with seven to eight speakers and about seven to eight hundred in the audience each time (JDSZL 1958:14).

Public meetings were not only held in large cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou, but were also reported in counties and small towns such as Jianping (in Rehe), Taicang and Changshu (in Jiangsu), and Jiaxing (in Zhejiang).

In several ways oral and written discourse were

different. Since speakers varied in their social status and speeches were strongly localistic in their dialects and verbal expressions, there might be substantial variations in these speeches either in their content or their linguistic patterns. For instance, speeches often related anti-American themes to specific concerns of the speakers and the audience. Thus, for example, women's speeches stressed women's changing status in China and their role in national salvation (JDSZL 1956/1:31). Speeches often debated specific boycott tactics. Because speeches could create a special sense of intimacy between speakers and listeners, they tended to be more sentimental and emotional. There was one report to the effect that someone smashed his American-made watch in a public gathering (*Shenbao*, 23 July 1905). It was almost a routine practice to sign names to petitions or pledges at the end of public meetings. Since public speeches could easily get out of control, the Qing government banned public meetings and speeches first when it felt the necessity to end the boycott (HGCGSL 1/4:1643-44).

Even given the fact that speeches tended to be variable in their content and linguistic expressions, however, available evidence strongly suggests that public speeches did not differ substantially from written publications in terms of content. And there were definite overlappings between written and oral materials in vocabulary use and idiomatic expressions. It is very significant that oral and

written discourses echoed each other, with written discourse generally formalizing the expressions. In other words, public speeches primarily played an intermediary role in translating written discourse into intimate and easily understandable form. Here again newspapers played a crucial role in bridging the gap between oral and written discourse. Public speeches often drew substantially from newspapers. On the other hand, speeches were polished and edited (often just adding some new vocabulary) only to be published in newspapers again, as described vividly in Li Baojia's satiric novel, *A Short History of Civilization* (Li 1962). For instance, news of women's meetings and speeches was published in *The World of Women* (*Nuzi shijie*). And there were even cases in which public "speeches" were not made in oral form at all, but simply presented in written form in the newspaper, because of the speaker's dialect barrier (*Shenbao*, 23 May 1905).

2. Language

I have discussed the role various media played during the boycott movement. It is clear that various media did not advocate the anti-American cause independently; rather, they fed on each other, with newspapers playing the central role of connecting and publicizing various writing and speaking forms. The linguistic forms - literary classical (*wenyan*) or vernacular (*baihua*) - used in boycott propaganda were also

important because language carried with it certain persuasive powers for specific social groups due to its specific format in addition to the message it delivered. Yan Fu's elegant literary classic-style translation of Western books had enormous appeal to Tongcheng school scholars such as Wu Rurun (Wang 1957:36-37). On the other hand, vernacular writings in the early twentieth century were clearly aimed at the social classes who had limited education (Johnson in Johnson et al. eds. 1987:34-72).

The important works during the anti-American boycott were written neither in purely classical nor in vernacular style. They were written in a language which combined the classical, vernacular, and imported vocabulary. Again taking the 1903 *Xinzhongguo bao* essay as an example, the potency of the arguments made in the essay lay primarily in the way they were presented linguistically, since the writer himself did not have any authority otherwise. The essay was written in a new linguistic style popularized by Liang Qichao in Japan which was characterized by liberal use of new vocabulary and sentence structures, and by clear and straightforward presentation of political points of view (Nathan 1986:140-41). There were few archaic allusions, but when it seemed to be necessary, the author did not hesitate to blend Confucian wisdom with Western axioms (A Ying 1962:588). The two were not only not contradictory, but also complemented each other naturally. The article distinguished itself from classical

eight-legged essays by its extensive use of such neologisms as *zhuquan* (sovereignty), *shangzhan* (commercial warfare), *hequn* (grouping), *gongli* (universal principle), *jingzheng* (competition), *dizhi* (boycott), and also by its use of tables of trade figures between China and the United States to illustrate its point (A Ying 1962:588-596).

At almost the same time when Chinese newspapers began to politicize in the last years of the nineteenth century, a fresh political writing style was beginning to take shape. There is little question that Liang Qichao played a very important role in the first change of modern Chinese political writing. His "new style prose", as Andrew J. Nathan points out, "was a response to the needs of propaganda journalism for a style that could reach a larger audience" (Nathan 1986:140). The change in prose style began to be apparent in Liang's writings in Japan, where he founded *Journal of the New People* (*Xinmin congbao*) in 1898. Classical references, which were common in his essays before the 1898 reforms, were reduced and blended with foreign terms and allusions. He was one of the first Chinese writers to make extensive use of Japanese terms. Liang also began to free himself from classical grammar. His sentences became longer and more complex (Nathan 1986:140-41). The influence of his style was acknowledged by many, especially those who had little vested interest in classical learning. It is obvious that the 1903 essay in *Shibao* exhibited all the characteristics of Liang's political writing.

The importance of Liang's writing lay in the very fact he created a new linguistic style. At the turn of the century, there existed several kinds of linguistic discourses: literary classical, semi-classical, and plain vernacular (*baihua*, based largely on Beijing spoken vernacular). It is not that others had to learn from Liang Qichao to add neologisms into their writings. Rather, by adopting the new semi-classical prose style, Liang Qichao gave the new writing a prestigious status and legitimized its use in political discussions, since as a provincial graduate degree holder (*juren*) he might have easily used literary classical in his political writing. The fact that he chose to write in semi-classical form gave the new linguistic form an authoritative and erudite tone which was only associated with literary classical style before. The subtle psychological impact on its readers is comparable to that of the mayor who was capable of speaking official French but chose to address the local audience in their own dialect (Bourdieu 1991:68). Spoken by a person who was well respected because of his official status, the language carried an authoritative weight it did not otherwise have.

It should be pointed out that even the new style writing was familiar to only a limited number of city dwellers in early twentieth century China (Johnson in Johnson et al. eds, 1987:34-72). The newspaper essay style (*baozhang wenti*), as

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the new writing was called, necessarily distanced itself from people's daily and personal (idiosyncratic) experience since it was still different from colloquial speech. As a medium it was useful to express abstract ideas and ideals with profoundness and subtlety. But it lacked the effect of intimacy of the spoken language. Practically, it was much easier for the majority to understand if the newspaper was in *baihua* vernacular. Actually, in early twentieth century China there were almost no newspaper publications, with the notable exception of *Guocui* (National Essence, founded in 1904), that used pure *wenyan*. Most newspapers used a linguistic style closer to colloquial in their commercial and local news reporting.

Not surprisingly, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the first *baihua* movement in modern China, though it had only limited success (Zeng in Gong ed. 1988:958-61).^{*} Language reform was advocated by many

^{*}The degree of relative popularity of *baihua* versus *wenyan* can be estimated by the publication and circulation of religious materials compiled and published by Western missionaries, who were particularly interested in mass evangelizing. At first they tried romanization in local dialects. In the fifteen-year period between 1851 and 1866, for example, some thirty-seven missionaries, more than one-tenth of all the Protestant missionaries who had worked in China, published Chinese materials in some form of phonetic script (De Francis 1950:22). Yet the romanized works formed only a small portion of the total volume of materials produced by the missionaries. And it should be noted that in this period not a single romanized item was published in the Mandarin dialect which was spoken by seventy percent of the population of China (De Francis 1950:23). To reach a larger audience, the missionaries felt that their chances were greater of persuading the Chinese to

reform-minded Chinese intellectuals, who believed that low literacy was responsible for the backwardness of China and that low literacy was in turn accounted for by the difficulty of Chinese ideographic characters (Zhao and Zeng in Gong 1988:998-1031). In the first few years of the twentieth century, several *baihua* newspapers were founded (Fang 1982). The most well known were *Hangzhou baihua bao* (1901-1904), *Suzhou baihua bao* (1901), *Xin baihua* (1903, in Japan), *Anhui suhua bao* (1904), *Baihua* (1904, in Japan), *Yangzijiang baihua bao* (1904), *Zhongguo baihua bao* (1904), and *Zhili baihua bao* (1905; Ding 1982).

The purpose of *baihua* newspapers was of course the presumed accessibility to larger audiences. *Yangzijiang baihua bao*, for instance, was originally founded in Shanghai in June 1904. After four issues, the editor decided that "people's knowledge was elementary and they could not fully understand *wenyan*," and he therefore changed the paper to *baihua* (Ding 1982:210). Few statistics exist on the sales of

accept the milder reform of writing the Mandarin colloquial in the transitional ideographic script. They were therefore more interested in replacing the classical by the vernacular style than they were in abandoning the ideographs for an alphabetic form of writing. According to John De Francis, in the three years from 1900 to 1902 the total output of Bibles or Bible portions in all forms amounted to 4.1 million volumes. But only 47,000 of these, or about one percent, were in romanized form. Of the overwhelming majority of volumes published in Chinese characters, 1.3 million were in classical or semi-classical style and 2.8 million volumes in character colloquial; of the latter only 67,600 were in non-Mandarin dialects (De Francis 1950:24).

baihua newspapers. Fortunately we have some rough ideas on the sale of *Zhili baihua bao*, which was one of the few *baihua* newspapers active during the anti-American boycott (Fang 1982:330-353). *Zhili baihua bao* had distribution offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Anhui, Tianjing, Nanjing, Fengtian, and Tokyo. 3,000 copies of the first two issues were quickly sold out, and 2,000 more were therefore printed (Ding 1982:286). While we do not know how many were actually sold, the fact that few of the *baihua* newspapers published in the early twentieth century can be located nowadays seems to indicate their limited circulation. Their sales were nowhere near those of *Shenbao** and their importance was local rather than national. At any rate, few of the *baihua* newspapers survived more than two or three years. *Zhili baihuabao* existed less than a year. *Hangzhou baiha bao* probably lasted the longest - from June 1901 to January 1904, less than three years (Ding 1982:63-87).

There are several reasons for the short life of various *baihua* newspapers. Most importantly, these papers were usually founded by people of little political, financial, and intellectual substance. *Anhui suhua bao*, for example, was founded by Chen Duxiu when he was only twenty-four. And the manager of *Hangzhou baihua bao* was a school teacher (Ding 1982:163, 63). *Suzhou baihua bao* was founded by Bao Tianxiao,

*As early as 1890, *Shenbao* had a daily circulation of 20,000 (Zhang 1990:931).

a *shengyuan* and school teacher (Bao 1971:168). Since modern printing machines were not available in Suzhou, the paper used woodblock printing instead. The paper could not continue simply because, according to Bao, after less than three years of publication there was no place to store those woodblocks (Bao 1971:170).

Clearly, *baihua* newspapers did not have the substance and prestige to survive the transitional period. In the early twentieth century, newspapers depended on and found their readers primarily among people who could both understand and afford such newspapers as *Shenbao* and *Shibao*. The transitional nature of the period in so far as language was concerned was made more apparent with the publication of *Guocui bao* in Shanghai in 1905. The monthly journal was entirely in *wenyan* and aimed at preserving Chinese culture. Among its contributors were Deng Shi, Liu Shipei, Zhang Taiyan, Wang Guowei, and other so-called masters of national learning (Zhang and Wang 1963 2/1:16-18). *Wenyan* was still associated with power, money and prestige. On the other hand, *baihua*, while easier to understand, carried little persuasive and authoritative weight with it.

Apparently the most influential, though by no means exclusive, mode of address during the boycott was neither *baihua* nor *wenyan*. The semi-classical language seemed to provide a unique medium which could combine the traditional

morality with imported ideas and connected the upper and lower classes. The semi-classical language also had both some of the symbolic prestige of *wenyan* and some of the popularity of *baihua*.

The real significance of this new language was probably its *publicness*. It was a language of publicity. The choice of terms and sentence structure was not for their accuracy or aesthetic value but for simplicity and clarity.* In terms of conveying messages and introducing ideas, the new language overwhelmed classical Chinese by its quantity not its quality.** It was a public language which was out of state

*For comparison purposes, we may recall the way Yan Fu did his translation, which was not for publicity. Yan Fu emphasized *xing* (accuracy) and *ya* (elegance) in translation. He would "ponder for a month over one term." He also refused to adopt neologisms from Japan and often coined new expressions based upon classical Chinese (Reynolds 1993:124).

**One of the most important reasons for the new language to develop so fast at the turn of the century is because of the large quantity of translations (Zhang ed., 1990:907-24). The language style, once adopted by many, began to develop beyond anybody's control. Liang Qichao, whose writing was the example for many, deplored later the bad influence sloppy translation had had upon writing style: "During the period 1902-1903 translation work especially flourished, and there were more than several dozen periodicals with fixed publication schedules. For each new book that appeared in Japan, there were often several translations [into Chinese]. New ideas swept in like wildfire, but they were all introduced in the so-called 'Liang Qichao style'--disorganized, unselected, incomplete, ignorant of conflicting interpretations, concerned solely with quantity. Still, Chinese society welcomed these, the way that people in a disaster area gulp down grass roots and tree bark, frozen birds and dead rats, ravenously and indiscriminately without asking whether these things are digestible much less whether they might make you sick. In point of fact, no safe substitutes were available." (Quoted

control and elite monopoly mainly because this newly-developed mode of address was anchored on the modern commercial press. Since newspapers and new-style writing had played crucial roles in constructing anti-American discourse, the intellectual leaders of the movement should be found primarily among those who were associated with the modern press.*

3. Intellectual Leadership

The intellectual leadership of the movement were basically petty intellectuals (including intellectual merchants). It is striking that the politically and intellectually most eminent figures of the period, such as Yan Fu and Zhang Taiyan, were conspicuously silent on the issue.** After all, Yan Fu was one of the best scholars of Western learning at the time, and he was in Shanghai in 1905 to help in the establishment of the Fudan Public School (*Fudan gongxue*, later Fudan University). There are several possible reasons for Yan Fu's silence. He was never as politically active as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Sun Zhongshan. His

in Reynolds 1993:124).

*For detailed analysis of both linguistic style and content of the boycott discourse, please see Chapter Three.

**On 6 July 1905, Yan Fu, among others, was invited by Shanghai's leading merchants to make a speech at an anti-exclusion gathering (Zhang 1966:150). This is the only occasion, however, on which his name was associated with the boycott movement.

famous translations of Western learning were all in elegant *wenyan* full of classical allusions and never intended for the public. According to Wang Shi, after 1898 he became even more conservative politically. In 1904, he allegedly told Sun Zhongshan, while visiting London, that the character of the Chinese populace was so evil and the Chinese masses were so ignorant even reform could not be very useful. Only through education could the situation be changed gradually (Wang 1957:64). It is understandable that he was not interested in popular movements such as the anti-American boycott. Zhang Taiyan, like Sun Zhongshan, was a revolutionary vigorously advocating the overthrow of the Manchu regime. It is significant that none of the well-known revolutionaries were active in the anti-American movement. This fact indicated that the movement was not in tune with the revolutionary agenda and was politically moderate enough to be tolerated by the Qing government.*

Eminent scholar-officials were also silent on American discrimination against Chinese. Huang Zunxian was probably the only ranking government official with substantial knowledge of the West and Japan who wrote anything on the discrimination issue (Tsai 1983:65,70). However, his contribution to boycott discourse was confined to a few poems which were more for self-expression and for a small group of intellectual elites

*For a detailed discussion of the politics of the boycott, please see Chapter Five.

than for public consumption. Besides, he died in 1905 (Zheng 1959).

Liang Qichao did much more than Huang in contributing to the discourse. He published *Xindalu youji* (The travel notes of the new continent) in 1904. The travel notes pondered many aspects of American social and political systems. In the same year he published in book form *Notes on the American Treaty Excluding Chinese Laborers* (*Meiguo huagong jinyue ji*) which was originally part of the *Youji* (A Ying 1962:487-521). His influence was also felt through *Shibao*, to which he made editorial contributions from time to time. However, it is very important to note that in 1905 Liang Qichao was much less a demon for the Manchu rulers in China than he had been earlier. While less sanguine on American political system in 1905, he was taking a more conciliatory attitude toward the Manchu regime in China. He wanted reform from above rather than revolution (Chang 1971). It is more accurate to say that his voice was heard at all because of his changed political position than that he set the tone for the boycott discourse (Fang 1991:275).

It should be pointed out that historians (McKee 1977, Chang 1971, Bergere 1989, Pusey 1983) tend to focus on such intellectual and political giants as Yan Fu and Liang Qichao when talking about intellectual revolution in late imperial China, and the boycott movement in particular. While these people's influence is undeniable, their role during the

boycott movement in particular was definitely marginal. In a new study on the *Xinzheng* (1901-1911) intellectual and institutional revolution, Douglas R. Reynolds rejects "the Great Man theory of history, whereby one or two Promethean intellectuals or leaders are presumed somehow to have changed an entire age." I share his view that: "What changed China were numerous people." (Reynolds 1993:39). Just as "concrete [reform] programs [were] pushed energetically and simultaneously at multiple levels on multiple fronts by local, regional, and national elites" (Reynolds 1993:40), the boycott movement was championed and led by multiple levels of intellectuals.*

Among the advocates of the boycott were national elites such as Zhang Jian and Ma Xiangbo; regional elites such as the merchant-intellectuals Zeng Shaoqing and Gong Ziyong; and lower-level intellectual-professionals such as Wu Woyao, Ge Zhong, and numerous others--novelists, playwrights, actors, translators, newspapermen, book dealers, teachers, and students (see Appendix). It was this last group of lower-level intellectuals, however, who were the largest in number and politically most significant during the boycott. When the merchant and gentry elites began to back up from their earlier boycott position, the lower-level intellectuals, along with other social groups, who carried the movement forward.

Socially and politically this was definitely a new group

*About merchant leadership see Chapter Four.

emerging from big cities in late Qing China. In early-1900s Shanghai, according to one estimate, there were at least 3,000 of the new intellectuals who were from provinces throughout China (Zhang ed., 1990:1026). The emergence of this new social group was mainly because of the expansion of public media, daily press and publishing houses in particular. Another source of the new intellectuals were newly established Western-style schools.

At least as far as the boycott movement is concerned, it can be shown that the expanding public sphere in China was partly because of this growing group of petty intellectuals who were politically active, rather than because of a small group of social elites who were famous community leaders. The interesting thing about the intellectual leadership of the boycott ideology is that one can hardly associate it with any particular name or names. Most authors (and speakers) were not identifiable because they used pen names. That these nameless lower-level intellectuals could have tremendous popular appeal is because of the ideas they represented. In the boycott movement it was the ideas and ideals, not one or two charismatic personalities, that moved the urbanites. That is probably why virtually all the pen names, such as *Aihua* (deploring China), or *Zhichun* (group of lofty aspirations), indicated certain meaningful themes. The practice reflected a particular view of authorship and text. What mattered was the words being said, not who said them. Language was to express

universal truth, whereas the writer served only as an intermediary, not the creator of the text. During the anti-American boycott, pen names served as part of the texts expressing feelings and ideas, since the writers did not matter anyway. The notion of author as intermediary fits the fact that many writings and speeches during the movement were just repeating and echoing each other, as I have pointed out earlier. The whole anti-American discourse was created as the lowest common denominator of the Chinese urban multitude, and many people were simply repeating what everybody else could not possibly refute or even question, at least *in public*. There seemed no need for an intellectual leader in this movement. When a thirteen-year-old student made an anti-American speech, nobody would assume that he was expressing his own ideas. Rather, he was making public in verbal form thoughts that were presumably shared by everybody in the audience. He did not have to have any important social status to make what he said persuasive; he did not even have to have a name.

The case of this thirteen-year-old boy could be interpreted as an individual playing a *public* role. His action definitely had public meanings and consequences because the action took place in what Habermas has called the public sphere. But what he was participating in was definitely not the kind of rational debate which Habermas associates with an open and unrestrained public sphere. It is more accurate to

say that the boy was *acting** in a public sphere which was dominated by certain favored ideas and ideals.** As far as the exact role the young boy, and presumably many other young female as well as male students, played, various interpretations of (political) culture are definitely more useful than the idea of a public sphere (Geertz 1973; Hunt 1984; Esherick and Wasserstrom 1992). The cultural interpretations stress the rhetorical and playful aspects of communicative action, and the notion of public festivals, all of which Habermas neglects (Garnham 1993:360; see Chapter Five). The use of young speaker(s) was as much symbolic as the adoption of rhymed words was playful in boycott meetings (for detailed analysis and specific examples see Chapters Four and Five).

This is not to say, however, that the boycott movement did not have an intellectual leadership. The authors and the speakers of the boycott discourse were definitely minorities among the large mass of less articulate participants. Therefore a collective biographical analysis of the

*For the symbolic meaning of young men, please see Introduction.

**In this regard, Antonio Gramsci's view on civil society is historically more accurate. For Gramsci, the public sphere was not a neutral ground for the emergence of rational political discourse in the ideal and abstract sense. It was an arena of contested meanings where a hegemonic relationship among contending ideas and ideals was kept and continuously redefined (Gramsci, in Alexander and Seidman eds., 1990:47-54; Eley 1993:325-26).

intellectuals who played pivotal roles in shaping the boycott discourse is illuminating. I have selected ten petty intellectuals for this analysis (see Appendix). I have selected them mainly because they were associated with the boycott movement in two ways: they created boycott literature and they led and participated in the boycott movement. The question is do they share some common characteristics other than their lower social and intellectual status? In other words, do they fit in a certain category?

Historians have categorized late Qing intellectuals in various ways according to their particular emphasis and purposes of study. For example, Paul A. Cohen (1974:Chapter 9) has divided late Qing reformer-intellectuals into two groups: those of the littoral and those of the hinterland. According to Cohen, the culture of the littoral area was more commercially than agriculturally rooted and was more modern than traditional. As a result, the littoral intellectuals were characteristically more open and therefore pioneers in introducing new ideas to China (Cohen 1974:241-43). While this might be true, the geographical division of intellectuals has its limits. For instance, most intellectuals that I analyze in this study fit into the category of what Cohen calls littoral reformers because the boycott movement was most visible in Chinese coastal cities. However, many of them were also migrants from various provinces throughout China (see below). The relationship between their social values and their

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geographical status is hard to decide.

In addition, Cohen mostly analyzes high-level intellectuals such as Yung Wing, Wu Tingfang (Wu T'ing-fang), Zheng Guanying (Cheng Kuan-ying), Ma Jianzhong (Ma Chien-chung), and Ma Xiangbo (Ma Hsiang-po). The people I have examined, on the other hand, were mostly disseminators not innovators of ideas--professional writers, newspapermen, novelists, translators, and even actors. Since theirs were relatively new professions in major cities, they had neither a secure social position nor any invested interests to protect. Most of them had what Marie-claire Bergere (1989:41-42) has called relatively "marginal social position"--they were employed on temporary contracts. This type of intelligentsia, as Bergere points out:

found it more difficult than the other groups that had emerged in the treaty ports to establish its position in between the two worlds between which it mediated. It had turned its back on traditional society, which did not recognize it anyway, or hardly, but could not yet find its place in the newly emerging order. It was thus a non-integrated intelligentsia, receptive to all kinds of counter-ideologies and open to the influence of any movement advocating reform or revolution (Bergere 1989:42).

Virtually all ten intellectuals in my analysis somewhat fit these descriptions. They were in marginal positions because many of them were at once intellectuals, educators, cultural merchants (book dealers for example), and entertainers (such as novelists; see my analysis in the following pages). But

Bergere basically treats the urban intelligentsia as a whole and fails to point out that it was the lower-level intellectuals in particular that were in marginal positions.

Hao Chang (1980) divides late Qing intellectuals into two different groups: the gentry-literati and the modern intelligentsia. Like Bergere, Chang refers to the new intelligentsia as "free-floating intellectuals" (Chang 1980:337). According to Chang, the new intelligentsia "tended to congregate in the urban centres and had little relationship with the local areas from which many of them or their families had originally come....[t]he modern intelligentsia's political-organizational activities took place largely outside the contexts of bureaucracy or local society. In the cities their activities centred around schools, newspapers and voluntary associations, and so set the pattern for later generations" (Chang 1980:337). The ten intellectuals that I select for this study fit these general descriptions in all but one respect. While Chang stresses the new intelligentsia's dual identity as troublesome and causing emotional agony, I emphasize that the dual identity was not a problem yet in the early 1900s. As my analysis of the boycott discourse shows in the next chapter, the boycott intellectuals did not perceive traditional Chinese ideas as fundamentally at odds with imported concepts, though contradictions and confusion caused by new concepts did exist in their writings.

My analysis of the boycott intellectuals is different

from previous studies and categorizations of new urban intellectuals in one important way. I stress that these intellectuals subscribed to and advocated new values more out of necessity than choice, although the two was not always distinguishable. For many lower-level intellectuals in the early 1900s, I argue, to propagate new ideas by writing political novels, translating Western (including Japanese) books, and publishing newspaper essays, was as much a way of making a living as a conscious political action. The fact that professional writers began to be paid during this period (Link 1980:51-51;152-55) is more important a factor than the political ideals which motivated people to write. This is particularly true for many boycott intellectuals who were closely associated with major newspapers and publishing houses, which were above all commercial enterprises. The fact that the most important boycott novel *The Bitter Society* (ref. Chapters Three and Five), was sold to the general public and given only to people who subscribed to *Shenbao* should be understood in the context of the commercialization of the publishing and urban entertainment business. This is by no means to say that boycott journalists, essayists and novelists were not sincere. They were. My point is that we should not examine them from a single political perspective. Rather, we should understand them as writers and entertainers as well as political activists. The periodic fusion of their professional life, which depended upon growing cultural consumers in the

cities, with political movements is important for us to understand why a political cause would take such a public and popular form.

The boycott movement was blessed by a unique intellectual leadership which could not be adequately understood by simple geographical, social, and political categories. Given the low social and intellectual status of the boycott intellectuals, their political significance could be better explained as a result of commercialization of urban culture and entertainment. In early twentieth century China, urban culture and entertainment in turn developed around public media. It is probably not just a coincidence that almost all the ten intellectuals included in this analysis were associated with some sort of public media. A collective biography of the intellectual leadership of the boycott show some patterns in their education, careers, social ties, and values to which they subscribed.

Education

By the traditional standard of Chinese education, all ten were "lower quasi-intellectuals."* Among the ten, only two

*Antonio Gramsci used this term to designate teachers, and journalists, actors who played a pivotal role in carrying sophisticated intellectual ideas to the masses (Alexander in Alexander and Seidman ed. 1990:7; Boggs 1984:175-76,220-21). I borrow the term because the lower intellectuals--lower degree or non-degree intellectuals--in the late Qing period played a similar role.

had the *juren* degree; the rest either had *xiucaï* degrees or no degree at all. This can be partially explained by the fact that only one of them, the novelist Zeng Pu, was from a wealthy landlord family. The rest of them were either from families of petty officials or small merchants.

While they were not qualified or did not want to be officials in the late Qing period, they were all well versed in classical Chinese. The novelist Bao Tianxiao's case is instructive in this regard. Born into a small merchant family in Suzhou and physically fragile in his childhood, Bao did not get his *xiucaï* degree (the only degree he ever had) until 1894, when he was nineteen years old (Bao 1971:134). His literary talent was, however, first appreciated by the examiner and later by his readers. On his scroll the examiner commented, "your writing has an easy-going air" (*wen you yiqi*, Bao 1971:137). Also illuminating was Wu Woyao's case. Despite having had little formal schooling and no degree, Wu became one of the greatest novelists of the time (Chen 1982).

Among the ten only one, Zeng Pu, had some formal training in any foreign language. Lack of foreign language training, however, did not prevent some of them from translating foreign books. Lin Shu became one of the greatest translators of the time with the help of those who knew foreign languages. Again, Bao Tianxiao's case provides us the most useful information. He recalled how he constantly consulted dictionaries while translating a Japanese book

into Chinese and how economically rewarding it was to do so. Occasionally, he recollected, he could get along for months with the royalties from one translation (Bao 1971:250).

The education of these lower quasi-intellectuals showed that while they could not make a decent living by entering officialdom, they were quite able to make a career of selling their writings and translations if there was a market for their cultural products. Also important to note is the fact that writing in classical or semi-classical Chinese and translating foreign books would very likely be part of many lower level-intellectuals' normal lives, if they had to sell their writings for a living.

Career

Being quite literate yet without higher degrees, all of these lower quasi-intellectuals had many jobs before becoming newspapermen, educators, or professional writers. For instance, Peng Yizhong, who failed the civil service examination seven times, worked as a low-ranking official clerk, sold flour and fruits, and finally became a newspaperman (XWZL 46:92-93). Wu Woyao left his home town in Guangdong to make a living on his own at seventeen when his father died. He supported his mother while serving as secretary to a county official. In his twenties he went to Shanghai and earned his living by working as a clerk in an arsenal, and by making occasional contributions to daily

newspapers. Between 1902 and 1905 he became the editor of the American-owned journal *Chubao* (also called *Hankou ribao*) in Hankou. In 1906, Wu established a literary journal *Yue yue xiaoshuo* (Monthly Fiction) in Shanghai. He died in 1910 as a established novelist and school principal in the treaty port city (Chen 1982). Bao Tianxiao was a private tutor, editor of his own vernacular *Suzhou baihua bao*, and a school teacher before he finally became one the most popular novelists of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies school (*yuanyang hudie pai*) in Shanghai (Link 1981; Bao 1971).

Their career trajectories testify that the commercialization of popular culture and the rise of the daily press attracted many otherwise unemployed or poorly employed lower-level intellectuals to more glittering opportunities in large cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The careers of these intellectuals are especially illuminating when compared with that of the equally talented writer and story teller Pu Songling (1640-1715) of the early Qing. Pu failed the civil service examination many times and did not get his *gongsheng* degree until he was seventy-one. Unlike unsuccessful intellectuals in late Qing, however, he was a private tutor almost all his life, despite his remarkable talent as a novelist (Ci hai 1979:606).

Of course not all the writers and speakers of the boycott movement were intellectuals. Some of them were merchants, among whom the most famous were Zeng Shaoqing and Ge Zhong.

However, the role of the leaders of merchant backgrounds was more one of organizing the movement than of providing and spreading its ideas.

Social ties

The versatile life experiences of the petty intellectuals led to broad social ties both in spatial and social terms. Almost all of them had been to many cities throughout China, some even abroad. In this respect Wu Woyao's case was typical. He had been to many cities in at least six provinces, from Guangdong in the south to Shandong in the north (Chen 1982:6-8). His mobile life is reflected in the spatial setting of his novels. *Abnormal Social Phenomena Witnessed in the Past Twenty Years* (*Ershi nian mudu zhi guaixianzhuang*), his most celebrated novel, while centered around Shanghai and Nanjing, two metropolitan cities, told stories set in Feshang, Guangzhou (Guangdong), Suzhou, Yangzhou (Jiangsu), Hangzhou (Zhejiang), Hankou, Wuchang (Hubei), Hong Kong, Tianjing, Laomidian (Hebei), Beijing, Yichang, Jiujiang (Jiangxi), Wenhe county, and Mengying county (Shandong) (Wu 1959). The broad spatial experiences would certainly help to shape a more open-minded and more balanced world view, as I shall show shortly.

The broad social connections of these intellectuals are equally striking. Again taking Wu Woyao as an example, his broad social connections can be inferred from his intimate

description of various social groups. In *Abnormal Social Phenomena Witnessed in the Past Twenty Years*, Wu described in vivid language social groups ranging from scholar-officials and merchants to students, prostitutes, intellectuals, soldiers, petty urbanites, actors, philanthropists, and so on (Wu 1959). However, like many other lower-level intellectuals, the closest social ties Wu had were with other culture agents - teachers, entertainers, and newspapermen. According to Chen Shin-Hwei (1982:15), Wu's best friends were two writers, Zhou Guishen and Li Huaishuang, and three stage actors. For a novelist trained in Chinese classics and educated with traditional social values, Wu's friendship with Zhou Guishen was very suggestive. According to Ma Bing (1955:40), Zhou knew both French and English and was the first to introduce foreign literature into China. Influenced by Social Darwinism, he asserted that Chinese literature had to develop in competition (*jingzheng*) with foreign literatures (Ma 1955:40).

Bao Tianxiao's social life in the early twentieth century was perhaps a little narrower. His friends were mainly, but by no means exclusively, from the literary world, who would meet to share one another's company in teahouses, banquet halls, wineshops, and theaters (Link 1981:164). However, it was major publishing organs that brought them together (Link 1981:164). Although Bao did not come to *Shibao* until 1906 when the boycott movement came to its end, his account of the

social life surrounding the publishing organ is relevant. According to Bao, at Shibao's guest house (xilou) he befriended people ranging from educators (some of them founders of new-type schools in Shanghai) and merchants to returned students, and, of course, writers. In terms of educational background, his friends included both juren degree holders and those trained abroad. (Bao 1971:328-33).

If we consider social ties in broader terms including intellectual and psychological relationships and thus including relationships with their readers, the lower-level intellectuals' social connections were certainly among the widest in urban China. According to Perry Link's estimate, the readers of the most popular novels in the 1910s and 1920s were between four hundred thousand to a million people in Shanghai when that city's population was estimated to have grown from around 1.4 million to around 3.2 million (Link 1981:16). We do not have much information on the first decade of the century, but the literary scholar A Ying believed that the first decade of the twentieth century was the most flourishing period in the novel-publishing business. According to him, there were at least 1,000 novels published in book form during the period (A Ying 1991:1-2). Little information is available on the readership of the anti-exclusion novels. According to A Ying (1962:14), the novel *The Bitter Society* was one of the most popular novels in this genre, with a first printing which sold 3,000 copies. The actual number of

readers could easily have been five to ten times more because one copy was often circulated among several readers (Link 1981:16). At any rate, the readers of the popular fiction by lower-level intellectuals included school students, clerks, shopkeepers, wealthy merchants, and even respected intellectuals (Link 1981:189-91).

Values

To understand the values to which lower-level intellectuals subscribed we have to understand the dual roles they played both as observers of the social and political events and as individuals living in the period. As observers their writings often expressed values presumably shared by their readers.* However, as individuals they did leave their own value imprint on their works. Although individuals might subscribe to different values, some generalizations can be made about the ten chosen for this analysis. First of all, most of them were middle-aged. The youngest of them, Bao Tianxiao (born in 1875), was thirty years old when the anti-American boycott started, but he became influential in the literary realm only after the movement was long over. The symbolic leader of the movement, Zeng Shaoqing, was, suggestively, the oldest of all, in his sixties. The most

*For instance, the works by Li Baojia and Wu Woyao, the two outstanding writers and novelists of the time, were often criticized as catering to the taste of petty urbanites (A Ying 1991:134; Wang in Wu 1959:1).

vocal of all during the movement was Wu Woyao, who was thirty-nine in 1905. Lin Shu, the famous translator and also a vocal protester of American discrimination was in his early fifties. Linguistically, intellectually, and morally they had intimate relationships with traditional China.

On the other hand, most of them were young enough to learn something new or put their traditional training into new use. After all, they were all involved in the new business--the daily press and new schools--at the time. If they were not the most enthusiastic advocates of foreign ideas, they were open enough to accept them selectively. Besides, if introducing new ideas made good business, as Bao Tianxiao's case showed, why not? As I have pointed out earlier, we should understand them as professional writers and entertainers as well as social critics. They formed a distinguishable group not so much because of their political views as because of their common role in the embryonic mass communication and print entertainment business. They turned to political activism, as they did in the 1905 boycott movement, incidentally, that is, not by calculated plan but by dutifully carrying out their responsibility as social critics. That is why they could be critical without being ideologically rigid.

As I have pointed out in this chapter, the anti-American discourse was urban and public, thanks to the rise of the modern press. Newspapers and periodicals provided an axis

around which the boycott discourse was centered, and from which the discourse radiated to the public. Spatially, the newspapers took advantage of the telegraph, which connected distant places in a very short time. Newspapers also reported national as well as local events, and quoted newspapers of different locales. Socially, newspapers addressed a variety of different audiences by using various forms of linguistic presentations but delivering striking messages in all of them. Even illiterates could be familiar with the newspaper jargon during the movement since public speeches often echoed newspapers. Thus newspapers provided linguistic patterns - vocabularies and expressions - shared by an unparalleled multitude. While opposing views and different opinions were inevitable, the uniformity in linguistic presentation and shared images of America, however, were much more fundamental. In the next chapter I will analyze in detail the anti-American discourse itself and the patterns of perceptions of American discrimination.

Chapter Three

Might Vs. Right--The Ideology of the Anti-American Boycott

In Chapter Two I have given an account of the nature of the media in early twentieth century China, Shanghai in particular, and a collective biography of the intellectual leadership of the boycott. I have argued that due to the emerging mass media in early twentieth century China the boycott ideas spread rapidly and widely among Chinese urbanites. This chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the boycott discourse. This analysis is essential to understanding the nature of the boycott ideology, which in turn is crucial to understanding the movement itself."

The boycott ideology should be understood in the context of the general intellectual trends of the time. In early

*I here follow Clifford Geertz (1973:216-7) in defining ideology as a cultural system. Ideology, according to Geertz (1973:216), is a program. It, along with other cultural patterns, provides "a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide such a template for the organization of organic processes..." Geertz (1973:217), also provides a persuasive explanation of why ideology as a cultural system should be studied in order to understand human behavior. As he points out (1973:217)"...human behavior is inherently extremely plastic. Not strictly but only very broadly controlled by genetic programs or models - intrinsic sources of information - such behavior must, if it is to have any effective form at all, be controlled to a significant extent by extrinsic ones [that is, by ideology]."

twentieth century China such new concepts as nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*), populism (*minquan*), and evolution (*jinghua*), among many others, began to be popular among ordinary Chinese urbanites, although the traditional Confucian ideas were far from thoroughly discredited (Wu et al. 1990). Nationalism in early twentieth century China was clearly different from earlier Confucian gentry-scholar anti-foreignism expressed in such phrases as "Chinese-foreign distinction" (*huayi zhi bian*) and from spontaneous peasant xenophobia. It was a reform-oriented response to imperialism and associated with the ideas of evolution and populism (Wu et al. 1990:8). The advocates of the new nationalism believed that imperialism was a result of historical evolution and China was weak in the competition among nations mainly because its polity was too authoritarian. Thus, China could survive the imperialist era only by establishing a new polity--a constitutional monarchy for the reformers; a republic for the revolutionaries (Zhang and Wang eds., 1962 vol. 1 part 1:11).*

The new ideas became popular not just because of several intellectual giants' efforts, no matter how influential their writings were, but also because of a variety of developments which occurred around the turn of the century in China and in

*This is of course just a very brief summary of the general trend of intellectual development at the time. The new type of Chinese intellectuals vigorously debated what nationalism, populism, and evolution meant (Pusey 1983:Chapter 6). For more detailed analysis on these new ideas as manifested in the boycott ideology, see below.

Chinese communities abroad. I have described some of these developments in the introduction. Here I shall confine my discussion to those that directly contributed to the new intellectual trend.

Although the new ideas developed largely independent of the Qing official sphere, their flourishing definitely benefited from, if it was not a direct result of, the New Policies (*Xinzheng*) promulgated by the Qing court after the Boxer debacle in 1901.* After China's humiliating defeat in the Boxer War (1900), even the conservative Qing court began to advocate and initiate changes. The New Policies were a series of reform measures in education, finance, commerce, military, and administration. A new study on *Xinzheng* concludes that the reforms were so sweeping and fundamental

**Xinzheng* was launched by a reform edict of the Empress Dowager, issued on 29 January 1901. Included in this edict are the following statements:

We therefore call upon the members of the Grand Council, the Grand Secretaries, the Six Boards and Nine Ministries, our Ministers abroad, and the Governors General and Governores of provinces to reflect carefully on our present sad state of affairs, and to scrutinize Chinese and Western governmental systems with regard to all dynastic regulations, national administration, official affairs, matters related to people's livelihood, modern schools, systems of examination, military organization, and financial administration. Duly weigh what should be kept and what abolished, what new methods should be adopted and what old ones retained. By every available means of knowledge and observation, seek out how to renew our national strength, how to produce men of real talent, how to expand state revenues, and how to revitalize the military. For our reference, report detailed proposals within two months (cited in Reynolds 1993:13).

that they initiated a "quiet revolution" in China (Reynolds 1993:12-13). The reform policies from above, combined with long-existing local, non-official initiatives in the public sphere described by Rankin (1986), led to new institutions and social organizations (see Introduction) which in turn became the center of new ideas.

New schools in major cities were definitely a center of new ideas, but in terms of new intellectual trends more significant was the fact that many students began to study in Japan and they became the carriers of the new ideas. In 1905 there were about 8,000 Chinese students in Japan, where they published their own newspapers and magazines advocating new concepts (Reynolds 1993:48, Chapter 4). Many of their publications were circulated in treaty port cities and even in the interior of China (Zhang and Wang eds. 1962, vol. 1, part 1:introduction).*

*The Japanese factor contributing to new ideas and concepts in China can partially be seen in China's borrowing of Japanese vocabulary. The following are some of the examples:

Japanese

aikoku (love of country)
chiho jichi (local self-government)
chousho (abstract)
domei (alliance)
honyaku (translation)
horitsu (law)
hoshin (course, policy)
ishin (reform, transformation)
jitsugyo (industry, business)
jiyu (freedom)
kagaku (science)
kannen (concept)

Chinese

aiguo
difang zizhi
chouxiang
tongmeng
fanyi
falü
fangzheng
weixing
shiye
ziyou
kexue
guannian

Although the study abroad (*youxue*) was initially encouraged by the Qing government, Chinese students in Japan became increasingly radical, more radical than the Qing government would allow, partially because of the revolutionary activities of Sun Zhongshan there. In 1905, Chinese reformers and revolutionaries in Japan began to debate whether or not China should have a revolution. The reform-versus-revolution debates were also carried out among Chinese students and overseas Chinese in Europe and America.

<i>keizai</i> (economy)	<i>jingji</i>
<i>kokka</i> (country)	<i>guojia</i>
<i>kokutai</i> (state system)	<i>guoti</i>
<i>kyoiku</i> (education)	<i>jiaoyu</i>
<i>ronsetsu</i> (commentary)	<i>lunshuo</i>
<i>ryugaku</i> (study abroad)	<i>youxue</i>
<i>seifu</i> (government)	<i>zhengfu</i>
<i>shakai</i> (society)	<i>shehui</i>
<i>shakai shugi</i> (socialism)	<i>shehui zhuyi</i>
<i>shinka</i> (evolution)	<i>jinhua</i>
<i>shiso</i> (thought)	<i>sixiang</i>
<i>shogyo</i> (commerce, trade)	<i>shangye</i>
<i>zaisei</i> (financial administration)	<i>caizheng</i>

Sources: Liu et al. eds. 1984; Reynolds (1993:279-308).

Note: Caution has to be used in using linguistic examples to show the Japanese influence. First of all, it is hard to determine exactly when Chinese borrowed these words from Japan. Secondly, all the borrowed characters were originally Chinese, therefore the influence was not always one way and therefore not always decisive. However, the fact is still that these expressions were new for the Chinese in the late Qing both in their linguistic forms and in their meanings. In term of linguistic forms, all these concepts were compound words (two or more Chinese characters used together), whereas traditionally key concepts were more often expressed in single characters such as *si* (think, new expression--*sixiang*), *shang* (commerce, new expression--*shangye*), and *bian* (evolution, new expression--*bianhua*, or *jinhua*). About the changing meaning of some of concepts, see my discussion of the boycott discourse below.

While the central issue of the debate was on whether the Manchu regime should be reformed or overthrown, reformers and revolutionaries explored a variety of "isms"--socialism, anarchism, state socialism, constitutionalism, and even Marxism (Zhang and Wang eds. 1963, vol.2, part 1:5). In China, the rising urban entertainment forms (plays and novels in particular), a large quantity of translations, newspapers, and new schools collectively popularized these new ideas.

It was in this fresh intellectual atmosphere that the boycott discourse emerged. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, boycott ideology was expressed in various media and linguistic forms--newspaper articles, pamphlets, novels, popular songs, operas, etc.--with various emphases and degrees of intellectual sophistication. Nevertheless, several themes (or motifs) repeated themselves in remarkable patterns of similarity which suggest shared concerns and a high degree of consensus among urban Chinese on how the controversies between China and the United States concerning immigration issues should be interpreted and acted upon. Agitational materials for popular consumption showed no substantial deviations from those aimed at more sophisticated readers. Or, to put it another way, there was not an independent body of ideas which belonged to a given social class.

This is not to say that there were no controversies among boycotters concerning goals of the movement (see Chapter

Five). Nor is this to say that there were no confusions and contradictions in their speeches and writings. On the contrary, as I shall show presently, there was a fundamental dilemma sensed by the boycott activists in the changing world, namely the irreconcilable confrontation between physical power (*qiangquan*) and universal principles (*gongli*) or, to put it more simply, the confrontation between Might and Right. The United States and its immigration policy, as perceived by boycotters, seemed to epitomize the problem. "How come the most civilized nation does the most brutal things to our Chinese?," as one boycott activist demanded in a public speech (A Ying 1962:614). Boycott discourse also showed ambiguous feelings and attitudes toward many key ideas and ideals such as civilization (*wenming*), evolution (*jinhua*), democracy (*minzu*), and nation (*guojia*).

But the boycotters seemed not to be concerned with theoretical sophistication or even consistency. No serious attempt was made by anybody during the movement to be theoretically creative or even consistent, for they seemed to be content with the higher truth--the justice of their cause. The boycott rhetoric was first and foremost to serve that cause.

Despite the highly uniform and ritualistic nature of the boycott language, it is still possible to trace different social and economic interests underneath layers of boycott

rhetoric.* But clearly more useful than class analysis is to treat boycott discourse as a cultural phenomenon or a symbol** system in its entirety. "Talk," Edelman (1985:114) points out, "involves a competitive exchange of symbols, referential and evocative, through which values are shared and assigned...." He continues, "In subtle and obvious ways cultures shape vocabulary and meaning, and men respond to verbal cues. People who share the same role learn to respond in common fashion to particular signs [symbols]." (1985:15).

For his study of language use in American politics, however, Edelman (1985:115) stresses the unique value system and the response of unique group interest. My purpose is a

*For a lucid discussion of the Marxist view of language see Hunt (1984:21-4). While it is impossible to identify certain concepts which were championed exclusively by one social class, merchant interests did interpret some boycott rhetoric differently and put more emphasis on certain concepts. For instance, toward the end of the boycott movement, Shanghai wholesale merchants tended to stress the right to trade, as opposed to not to trade, with Americans (see Chapter Five). There is no question that economic interests played a much more important role in deciding the ways different social classes acted during the boycott (see Chapter Four).

**Ithiel de Sola Pool thus defines the meanings of symbols: "A social scientist may define the meaning of a symbol to a given person as the sum of the contexts in which that person will use that symbol. The usages need not be consistent or 'proper', but insofar as the usages occur in predictable contexts the symbol has meaning for the man who uses it and that meaning is an important fact to the social scientist." Pool, "Symbols, Meanings, and Social Science," in Lyman Bryson and others (eds.), *Symbols and Values: An Initial Study* New York, 1954, chapter 23, cited in Edelman (1985:115).

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little different. I try to show how a predominantly merchant-intellectual world view was expressed verbally in such a way that it was shared by other social groups in urban China during the boycott movement. Boycotters constantly sought social solidarity by invoking traditional cultural symbols as well as fashionable new concepts. This fact explains why the Chinese urbanites, while accepting Western ideas, also had an ambivalent feeling toward such new concepts as evolution, civilization, and democracy. This tendency toward the idiomatic use of set phrases was not merely a conscious exercise of symbol manipulation. In many cases, especially in anti-American novels, it also functioned as "a symbolic outlet" (Geertz 1973:207). By looking at the boycott rhetoric as both instrumental and expressive, I argue that the boycott language served a cause without suggesting conspiracy.

All of my analysis of the boycott discourse is based on written materials or spoken items recorded in written form. Naturally, I can claim neither completeness nor definitiveness for my analysis, since not all the thoughts were articulated and recorded, and I cannot say that every piece of evidence necessarily reflects the real thought of the boycotters. Occasionally and privately the sophisticated urban people of the time expressed their doubts and cynicism about the

propaganda rhetoric (Bao 1907:36).^{*} In a very important way the publicized materials failed to reveal the real motives of

^{*}The degree of effectiveness of the boycott propaganda is, like other cases of the sort, hard to decide. In general, there is no question that Chinese urbanites were very responsive to the agitation, given the fact many actively participated the boycott. On the other hand, there is also little doubt that not all sophisticated urbanites took every propaganda gimmick seriously. The most often-heard complaint was leveled against public meetings where passionate speeches were often made. The major complaints were two. First of all, many in the audience could not hear what the speaker said in a meeting of several hundred people, partially because of the lack of such modern devices as loudspeakers, and partially because of the crowd noise. Secondly, people who could read often found that many speeches were nothing new, but rather the simple repetition of newspaper reports.

As a result, some urbanites did not take the boycott rhetoric seriously. They came to meetings mainly to "join the crowd" (*kan renao*). The realism and cynicism towards the popular movement were, however, only expressed in novels and plays, not in open discussions. Here is an except from Bao Tianxiao's novel *The Blue Blood Curtain* which described one of the boycott meetings at Zhangyuan park, Shanghai:

...such a big place is full of people without a single vacant inch. Tens of thousands of indistinguishable heads jostling around.... [The scene is] very much like [people] watching a new drama performance or listening to storytelling. All come to join in the crowd (*cou renao*).

The crowd applaud at the end of every sentence the speaker makes. Presently, the crowd begins to applaud half-way through the speaker's sentence. Thus, the second half is overwhelmed by the applause. People sitting in the back rows join in the applause without even hearing the speaker clearly. There are also people talking to each other while cheering the speaker along with others. It is as if to applaud is an obligation once you are at a meeting.

You, as a reader, might well be aware of the fact that at all the meetings with a huge crowd, hand clapping has a hypnotic effect. In the silence, if one person gives a hint by striking three fingers on his palm, people all around him would respond instantly with thundering applause.... If you do not believe me just go to the meeting to try this out for yourself (Bao 1907:23-25).

many who actively participated in the movement. For example, the rhetoric did not show the role parochialism (affection for native-place association) played. In public rhetoric we see a lot of appeals to nationalism but very little to native-place feelings. Clearly this is misleading, and the rhetoric expressed more hope than the reality. This type of problem can be solved partially by analysis of the organizations and politics of the movement (see Chapters Four and Five).

However, the available materials are considerable and some generalizations are possible. Moreover, a great degree of spontaneity and genuine expression of feelings can be assumed, for the boycotters did show remarkable solidarity, and at one time American diplomats in Shanghai were compelled to report that "Am[erican] trade has gone from bad to worse; boycott nearly attained full measure; agitation pervaded all places;..." (Consular Dispatch, Shanghai, 11 August 1905). This solidarity was achieved mainly by an extensive anti-exclusion acts campaign. For this reason, I shall begin my discussion of the boycott ideology by examining the boycotters' critique of the exclusion acts. Then I shall analyze their diagnosis of the problems facing China and their prescription for solution.

1. Perceived Injustice of the American Exclusion Acts against Chinese Immigrants

What made many Chinese angry about America's treatment of Chinese immigrants was first of all the inconsistency of American immigration law and the changing attitudes from warm welcome in the early years to severe restrictions later on. In almost all the anti-exclusion writings, Americans were characterized as selfish and ungrateful. When they needed Chinese laborers in earlier years for mining and railroad construction, Americans had welcomed Chinese; once they did not need Chinese laborers anymore they had expelled them relentlessly. As early as 1886 Zhang Yinhuan, the Chinese minister to the United States, complained that:

Under the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 Chinese enjoyed the benefit of being allowed to come or go at will in America. At that time America was intent on opening up the Western frontier and spared no pains to attract Chinese. In an instant railways were built in all directions. In the mountains, inexhaustible mines of coal, iron, and metals mines were developed. The barren area around San Francisco is now a metropolis. Wonderful structures reach the clouds; merchants and travelers fill [the city] to the brim. How could all this have been accomplished without the efforts of Chinese? And yet after a few years [the Americans] plotted to restrict immigration, and in a few more years they were plotting to expel the Chinese. (Arkush and Lee 1989:73).

After the boycott movement broke out in 1905, this theme was widely invoked in various forms. In a letter of 1905 to Zeng Shaoqing of the Shanghai Chambers of Commerce, a representative of the Guangxi gentry and merchants stated the theme bluntly and passionately: "America's [prosperity] today was achieved by employing Chinese laborers. American iron was

made of Chinese blood!" (A Ying 1962:668). A popular song presumably composed for illiterate and lower class consumption began with these lines:

Poor Chinese laborers/ Poor Chinese laborers/ In the heaven and the earth nowhere was their misery heard/ When virgin land was opened in former years, [they were] recruited as coolies/ Now that the forest road has been opened up [they are] thrown away as worn shoes/ Just as [people] put away bows when there is no bird to shoot, exclusion laws against Chinese laborers are extended to gentry and merchants (A Ying 1962:5).

A novel written during the movement illustrated the same motif in a conversation between a Chinese-American and a merchant on his way to America:

[The merchant:] Years before when I was little, I went to San Francisco with my uncle. Once we arrived, the local officials and gentry all rushed out to meet us when they heard Chinese were coming...[they said] 'we like Chinese to come here to do things very much...'. Their warm welcome was no less than that extended to their own folks. I wonder why all of that has changed today.

[The Chinese-American:] What you just told us is an old story. At that time, the Golden Mountain* was an uncultivated land dependent on Chinese to plant, build roads, open mines, etc. Of course we were well treated. Now the place is getting more bustling every day, with more and more people. Therefore, they begin to hate Chinese for competing with them for business...(The Bitter Society, in A Ying 1962:80).

This motif of the ungrateful Americans was succinctly and powerfully presented time and again with a familiar Chinese proverb in couplet format: "The good bow is put away when

*San Francisco.

there are no more birds to shoot in the high sky; the hunting dog is boiled [to be eaten] when the sly rabbit is dead." (A Ying 1960:5;535). The phrase dates back at least as early as Sima Qian's *Historical Records* (*Shi ji*, ca. 145 or 135 B.C.-?). The popularity and strength of this proverb lies in the fact that it has fluid meanings. On the one hand, it is certainly unjust, as the proverb implies, to be so conspicuously ungrateful to one's benefactor. On the other hand, however, the tragic outcome is almost inevitable in the real world due to the nature of things. Depending on circumstances and the purposes of the user, the proverb can serve either as a condemnation or a cynical statement of truth. While the proverb was used by the boycott activists primarily as a moral condemnation of American injustice to Chinese immigrants, the fluid meanings of the saying persisted. The phrase's expressive function did not entirely disappear. This function would subtly ease the pain of psychological adjustment when the boycott appeared to fail.

The perceived injustice of the American exclusion acts was enormously amplified by numerous accounts of the hardships Chinese immigrants had experienced on their voyage to America and their sojourning life in the United States. The anti-exclusion literature provided an image of innocent and hard-working Chinese pioneers in wild America which

contrasted sharply with the image of selfish and ungrateful Americans.

The horrendous experience of Chinese-Americans started with departure from their homeland. Since many Chinese were hoaxed, sometimes even kidnapped, to America* there were numerous graphic accounts of the horrendous coolie traffic. There were at least three novels published during 1905-8 which contained vivid accounts of the coolie traffic, as well as numerous brief newspaper reports. *Ashes After Catastrophes* (*Que yu hui*) was about a youth who was kidnapped to America (A Ying 1960:310-417). *The Golden World* (*Huangjin shijie*) had provided a detailed account of a voyage to Cuba (A Ying 1960:113-229). *The Bitter Society* (*Ku shehui*, A Ying 1960:15-112), which was published during the anti-American boycott by the Commercial Press, had the best account of a Chinese coolie's journey to Peru which was comparable to, if not worse than, the Atlantic voyage of African slaves described in *Roots* (Haley 1977: chapters 37-39). When the ship had arrived at a Peruvian port, the author wrote:

...the foreigner called up sailors to take off the coolies' shackles. The coolies felt the freedom of their feet immediately, only to find that they could not stand up. The foreigner lost his patience and brandished the whip on their head. Bearing the pain, the coolies managed to get up at last but could not move.... The sailors came forward and dragged the coolies one by one to the ladder. Some fell on the board

*A term used at the time to indicate Cuba and Peru, as well as the United States.

and were kicked. Some had broken heads, bleeding, but were not allowed to rest.... There were a group of coolies dragging behind, one fell on the top of another, tangling together.... The sailors wondered what had happened, and they sniffed a stinky smell which made them sick. They called the foreigner. Putting some liquid medicine on his nostrils, the foreigner came over. He ordered the sailors to pull away the people on the top. What they saw was so horrible that even men with iron and stone hearts could not hold back their tears. Underneath were seventy or eighty people lying dead, with blood all over their faces, flesh and clothes stuck together. (A Ying 1962:66).

Whether or not the voyage to the United States was as bad as that to Peru does not really matter, for most Chinese at the time did not have separate images of overseas Chinese who lived in different countries, and "America" was a term used to designate the United States as well as countries in South America.

For those Chinese immigrants who survived the voyage, the sojourners' lives in an alien country were portrayed as equally horrible. As Chinese consul-general at San Francisco from 1882 to 1885, Huang Zunxian (1848-1909) was an open-minded reformist official and a passionate poet. In one of his poems he described the hardship experienced by Chinese immigrants:

When the Chinese first crossed the ocean,/ they were the same as pioneers./ They lived in straw hovels, cramped as snail shells;/ For protection gradually [they] built bamboo fences./ Dressed in tatters, they cleared mountain forests;...(Arkush and Lee 1989:62).

Interestingly, the pioneer image of the Chinese immigrants was

also put neatly into a familiar phrase of eight characters when the boycott movement started: *bilu lanlu, yiqi shanlin* (riding on a firewood cart in ragged clothes; on the way to clear the forest (*The Bitter Society* chapter Twenty-three; A Ying 1960:5). The phrase is from the Confucian classic *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuo zhuan*) of about two thousand years ago.

Many more propagandistic materials were, however, aimed at the severity of the exclusion acts and the rough and arbitrary way in which they were implemented. Naturally the source materials on American mistreatment of Chinese were provided by overseas Chinese or by those who had been to the United States. In September 1903, Chinese-Americans sent a long petition to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Commerce and several high officials of the Qing government. In the petition, they systematically articulated their complaints toward the American exclusion acts and the inhuman way Americans handled legal as well as illegal Chinese immigrants. This petition was made public through newspapers in Shanghai and also published in Liang Qichao's *Notes on the Chinese Exclusion Act* (A Ying 1962:487-521). Since the petition was one of the major sources of the vast number of propagandistic materials produced during the movement, let's first summarize the major complaints listed in it:

1. The bar against Chinese immigrants had been constantly extended from laborers to immune classes such as students, merchants, and government officials. The problem, as perceived by Chinese merchants in the United States, partially arose from the rigid yet vague definition of merchants by Americans. For example, such people as owners of restaurants, tobacco factories and laundries, etc. were not considered merchants. The exclusion acts were also extended from the United States proper to its territories such as Hawaii and the Philippines.

2. Harsh implementation of the exclusion acts. Originally, those who had documents bearing the seal of an American consulate were admitted without questioning. In later years, however, more and more restrictive methods were adopted to prevent Chinese from entering the United States. "Sheds" were thrown up in various entry ports. Arriving Chinese, regardless of the type of documents they carried with them, were detained in the sheds as long as several weeks or even months before a hearing was granted. If even the slightest contradiction was found in one's testimony, one was immediately sent back, even if one had documents bearing the seal of an American consulate in China.

3. Humiliating treatment of Chinese immigrants. According to the earlier treaties, Chinese residents in the United States might depart and reenter America freely with proper documentation issued by customs officers. In later years, the

process became more and more complicated and time-consuming. Even if proper documents were obtained, reentry was a painful experience for Chinese, since they were invariably detained first in the shed. Furthermore, American officials constantly harassed Chinese residents by checking on their legal papers.

4. Chinese en route to other countries via the United States were often refused entry.

5. Immune classes were often refused entry on improper grounds, such as quarantine (A Ying 1960:509-520).

When the boycott movement started in 1905, these complaints were elaborated in detail and dramatized in various boycott materials. A large quantity of agitational materials were devoted to American mistreatment of Chinese immigrants or Chinese of other status. One of the most condemned practices of American immigration personnel was the detention of Chinese in the shed. The practice attracted so much criticism that the shed became a symbol of humiliation and mistreatment of Chinese by Americans.* *A Story of Ill-Treatment Inflicted upon Chinese Brethren* (Tongbao shounue ji), a popular pamphlet published in 1905, described what the shed was like:

The sheds are set up along the coast of San Francisco (other entry ports are building them now) with thick wood as a fence topped with thin planks. They are built exclusively for the arriving Chinese. The shed is dark, filthy, and smelly.

*Interestingly, the shed later also becomes one of the most evoked images of maltreatment of Chinese intellectuals and officials in the literature of the Cultural Revolution.

Along the four sides of the interior, several planks are set up as beds and tables. The [living] conditions in the shed are even worse than in a prison. When thirsty, one can only drink cold water; when hungry one can only eat black bread or hard rice which is never enough. One can not do laundry when clothes are dirty; no relatives and friends are allowed to visit. Everyday there are guards watching and no detainee is allowed to step outside. There are also a bunch of hooligans who are neither officials nor commoners. They burn some kind of medicine to fumigate the [detainees'] faces and heads for contagious disease. These people steal money whenever they have a chance. When [you] are in the shed, the situation is hopeless. Almost every Chinese who comes to the United States has had the experience (A Ying 1962:544).

The novel *Tears of Overseas Chinese* (Qiaoming lei) also provided detailed description of life in the shed:

[We] come to a courtyard surrounded by rows of small sheds which are so low that one can hardly stand up straight, and so narrow that one can barely sit down. The shed is built with wood and dirt.... The shape of the shed, as I see it, is like a soldier's lookout post with a hole to see outside. There is a small chunk of wood behind to sit on and there is another piece of plank to rest elbows on.... There are also people with their wives, about ten of them, who feel particularly humiliated. Once entering the shed, [they] begin to cry miserably. (A Ying 1962:429)

To associate the shed with the image of a physically weak and morally sensitive woman was apparently assumed to have special effect. In *The Golden World* a young women presumably told her own experience in the shed in a public speech. According to her "The most embarrassing thing [in the shed] is for a girl to mingle together with men, for there is no separate place to change and to sleep. The situation is even worse than on the ship. There is no door or piece of cloth to hide behind."

(A Ying 1962:181).

The most shocking account, however, was provided in a stage play entitled *The Adventures of Haiqiao Chun* (*Haiqiao chun chuanqi*). Act three of the play, "Imprisonment of Overseas Chinese", is presumably situated in a shed. According to the play, a young wife was joining her husband in the United States with legal documents. However, when questioned she was too shy and too nervous to speak clearly. The inquisitor therefore put her into a shed despite her legal documents. After a long wait the wife could not bear the humiliating situation any longer, and was also so anxious to see her husband that she could not sleep. Eventually, she went insane and just took every man as her husband (A Ying 1962:448).

By putting Chinese into the shed, Americans treated Chinese as either criminal suspects or non-humans. That is probably why the practice was so much hated. Since the sheds were built for Chinese of all social classes, not just for Chinese laborers, they served to strengthen the racial awareness of the Chinese.

Indeed, this racial sensibility was effectively capitalized on by the boycott activists. Time and again, the boycott writings and speeches emphasized that all Chinese and only Chinese were discriminated against as far as American immigration law was concerned. In a series of public speeches,

which were later published in *Shibao*, a speaker angrily asked:

Gentlemen, think about it! The Irish, whom we call "devils of cizi" (*cizi gui*), came to the United States and took over the American handicraft industry. Yet Americans do not ban them. The Italians and Portugese, who are penniless, entered the United States and seized the top positions in the American handicraft industry. Yet Americans do not ban them. These people are all whites, though. However, the Japanese and Koreans are of the same yellow race [as Chinese], and their salaries are even lower than those of us Chinese. Still, Americans do not ban them. Even African black people and the brown people from India and Australia all enter and depart America freely and they are not banned. This is clear evidence that Americans do not bully anyone but Chinese, Americans do not maltreat anyone but Chinese (A Ying 1962:614).

Although this was not exactly true, for American discrimination was also targeted against other peoples (Daniels 1990:Part 2, esp.Chapter Ten), the fact that the racial discrimination against Chinese immigrants was most outrageous and notorious during this period was keenly felt by the boycotters.

This anger toward racist American immigration policy was shared by those Chinese who were well aware of the shortcomings of overseas Chinese and of problems with Chinese culture. Liang Qichao had visited Chinatown in the United States and acknowledged that the Chinese were dirty, disorganized and backward people, as some Americans complained. Liang came to believe more strongly after travelling in North America that Chinese were backward in several ways. He concluded that Chinese character was that of

clansmen rather than citizens; Chinese had a village mentality and not a national mentality; Chinese could accept only despotism and could not enjoy freedom; Chinese lacked lofty objectives (Arkush and Lee 1989:92-93). Yet Liang Qichao did not think the American exclusion acts against Chinese were justified since, he argued (showing his own racial bias in the process), "Although Chinese are stubbornly backward, aren't they better than the black race?... If [America] expels nine million blacks according to such exclusion acts as those against Chinese, then I would not have anything to complain about." (A Ying 1962:508; see also Pusey 1983:96-100; 117-18).

An article published in the *Guangdong Daily* (*Guangdong ribao*) made the American exclusion acts appear to be even more absurd, though from a different line of argument. It reasoned that:

Let us assume that Chinese are indeed inferior. It is reasonable for Americans to expel Chinese from the United States in order to keep Americans from being infected by the malicious habits of Chinese. But why do Americans come to China then? If they are afraid of getting infected by Chinese even in their own country, why aren't they afraid of being contaminated in China while living among Chinese? Do not these Americans who come to China belong to the superior race? (A Ying 1962:608).

In many boycott speeches and writings it was stressed time and again that Chinese were discriminated against as a whole and as a race. The most publicized cases during the anti-American boycott were the mistreatment of Chinese

merchants, students, and officials, instead of laborers, who were presumably the only class targeted by the exclusion acts. *Fujian Daily News* (*Fujian riri xingwen*) thus pointed out: "The American exclusion acts do not just exclude laborers. Merchants, teachers, students, and travelers are all included in the exclusion acts. Only officials are immune from the acts. Yet when officials come to the United States, they are questioned and roughly handled worse than criminals. Thus officials are in fact also banned. In name they exclude laborers only, in reality they exclude all the 400 million Chinese." (A Ying 1962:605). This view of the exclusion acts was widely publicized during the boycott movement.

As I have shown above, the boycott writings portrayed the American exclusion acts as inhuman and unjustified. What seemed to anger Chinese the most was not so much the exclusion itself as the inconsistency of American immigration policy. It was simply wrong for the boycotters that the United States opened and closed its doors at will solely according to its own interests. And it was not only wrong but also absurd that the United States excluded the Chinese alone. However, the American exclusion acts were not just something to be condemned, but also something that forced interpretations. Much boycott literature offered to explain why Chinese were treated so badly in foreign countries, particularly in the United States.

2. Interpretative Frameworks of the Boycott

The boycotters perceived and described the problems facing China, as epitomized and exacerbated by the American exclusion acts, in profound terms. The exclusion acts were not simply interpreted as accidents or misunderstandings. The boycotters interpreted the confrontation between Americans and Chinese in alarming language. As many anti-American publications showed, the ideas of Social Darwinism had begun to provide a fresh interpretative scheme and vocabulary for urban Chinese. Within this scheme the contemporary world was characterized as a Hobbesian battleground with the strong preying on the weak. It was argued, therefore, that Chinese were unfairly treated because China was weak and weak races would become extinct in ruthless survival competitions.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries few ideas were more influential in popular thinking of Chinese urbanites than Social Darwinism (Zhang 1990:1034). Even before Yan Fu's famous translation of Thomas Henry Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* in the 1890s, the concept of evolution was introduced to Chinese urban audiences through newspapers and booklets. On 21 August 1873, *Shenbao* reported English naturalist Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, though the description was very sketchy and enigmatic. The report was written entirely in *wenyan* with such elusive terms as "*xingqing*" (temperament) and "*xueqi*" (sap) used to describe the essence of man. Between then and the late 1890s when Yan

Fu published his translation of Huxley, there were several books and translations that mentioned Darwin's theory of evolution (Zhang 1990:1034-35). In 1894, Yan Fu translated part of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* and entitled the translation *On Evolution* (*Tianyan lun*).

The popularity of Yan Fu's translation was initially limited to a few intellectuals well versed in classical Chinese, for Yan's translation was in *wenyan* and full of archaic allusions. According to Wang Shi, an expert on Yan Fu, the draft of the translation was initially circulated as early as 1894, four years before its official publication in 1898 (Wang 1957:33). Yan's translation had enormous appeal first to well-educated scholars such as Wu Rulun, the master of the famous Tongcheng school, which advocated the writing style of the ancient Chinese classics (Wang 1957:33-34). Among the first to read the manuscript and to advocate the theory of evolution was Liang Qichao. Later Kang Youwei got access to *On Evolution* through Liang and was apparently very impressed. Kang praised Yan Fu as the "first scholar of the Western learning in China." (Wang 1957:36-37).

Despite the abstruseness of the translation, the message delivered was irresistible for many Chinese after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5). The book later became popular among young students. Lu Xun recalled that he bought a copy of a lithographic print of *On Evolution* in Nanjing, and that whenever he had a chance, he would "eat pancakes, peanuts,

peppers, and read *Evolution*." (Wang 1957:37). Bao Tianxiao also reminisced that "As soon as *Evolution* came out, the new knowledge spread among intellectuals of the new learning. Almost everyone had a copy." (Bao 1971:219).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even some grade school and high school students were familiar with the phrase "*wujing tianze; shizhe shengcun*" (species which compete with each other are selected by nature; and the fittest will survive). The popularity of the idea was of course explained by the precarious situation China was in at that time. However, it should also be noted that linguistically the key idea of evolution was very well phrased by Yan Fu. The phrase had the advantage of economy and profoundness of classical Chinese, yet it was not at all as elusive as many *wenyan* phrases. The eight characters were neatly packed into a couplet (*duizi*), a form of proverb or paralleled aphorism commonly used by Chinese in both popular and elite literature. As is often the case, while few people read Yan Fu's book, many knew the phrase by heart. Thus the ironic situation became almost inevitable: while Chinese characters indicating ideas of evolution became popular in names of people and institutions (schools for example), Yan Fu had a hard time finding publishers for his translations (Bao 1971:219).

Still, the fact of the matter is that the ideas of evolution had become a convenient interpretative framework

right before the anti-American boycott. As early as the 1880s the Confucian scholar-official Huang Zunxian had lamented that "Today is not yet the age of Great Unity (*datong*); we only compete in cleverness and power" (Arkush and Lee 1989:64). Twenty years later, Huang explicitly acknowledged that: "We live in a period when competition and natural selection is severe and ruthless" (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1,1:334).

As the century turned, Chinese intellectuals began to use the concept of evolution more consciously, widely, and even indiscriminately (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1 and v.2). The advent of the new century provided an occasion for reformers and revolutionaries alike to remind Chinese people of the kind of world they lived in. "Step from the stairs of the nineteenth century onto the stage of the twentieth century, which is the era of most drastic competition," one author wrote poetically in 1903 (Zhang and Wang 1962, v 1, pt. 2:538). Not only was the twentieth century an era of Darwinian competition, but China was also the center of the struggle, some warned their compatriots. In an article entitled "The Reconstruction of China," the author began his political sermon emotionally: "Alas! Today's China is the burning focus of the world powers' competition." A student publication echoed: "In danger is China! She is the center of power struggle of the countries. Alas! how many people know that, due to China's situation in the struggle, our country is at the center of the center?"

Another article, "On the Future of China and Her Nationals' Responsibility," could not agree more: "What is the date, today? It is when our China is at the center of world competition" (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1, pt. 1:416,434,460).

Despite the other differences between reformers and revolutionaries, the theory of evolution was embraced by both political groups in early twentieth century China. As the leading constitutional reformer of the day, Liang Qichao, asserted: "Reform is the unavoidable universal principle in the sphere of evolution. Whatever is suited to its environment will survive; whatever is unsuited to its environment will perish" (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1, pt. 1:243). The most radical and widely known revolutionary of the time, Zou Rong, on the other hand, argued passionately that: "Revolution is the universal principle of evolution. Revolution is the universal principle of the world" (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1, 2:651).

The vocabulary of evolution was also used by many Chinese intellectuals as a useful interpretive tool for virtually all phenomena. The nation state, for instance, was interpreted as the result of evolution. As an essay titled "On Nationalism" explained: "...the origin of states is the result of competition among nations. However, I would like to turn the axiom the other way around: every [people] that wants to preserve itself in the competitive world has to establish a nation state. ...The [results of] evolution of group

organization are called states (*guojia*)" (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1, pt. 2:486). Similarly, various political systems were also explained in terms of evolution. The author of "On the Evolution of the Polity" started his article with a typical philosophical generalization: "[In a world of] natural selection and competition the fittest survive. This is true for all things, especially true for polities." Another author expressed a similar view in converse terms: "Whether or not the world evolves depends on the gain and loss of polities" (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1, pt. 2:546,530).

As the term evolution became more familiar to more and more Chinese, the analysis became more sophisticated. In due course, evolution began to be applied to many specific spheres. Thus not only people and matters evolved; nations, polities, education, economies, and diplomacy also evolved. Even marriage patterns could be interpreted in term of evolution, and the theory of evolution was conveniently used to justify free marriage (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1, pt. 2:853-59).

For many Chinese at the time, to talk about evolution was to spread and advocate the idea of competition and struggle. Thus soldiers were presumably engaging in military combat, while merchants spoke in terms of commercial warfare, students of learning competition, and so on. Competition was stressed because it was through competition that the fit emerged. This stress on competition eventually gave rise to

new moral values. For some selfishness was no longer perceived as morally bad; instead it was encouraged as the driving force to excel (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1, pt. 2:494-95). Along the same line, natural selection was not explained as inevitable fate beyond human control. Rather it was man, not nature or heaven (*tian*) that selected, some argued (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1, pt. 2:714-15; 866-67).

It is important to note, however, that for many Chinese intellectuals of the time, the theory of evolution was not incompatible with ancient Chinese teachings, and for some of them not even totally new. One author, for example, found Mo Tzu's (ca. 468-376 B.C.) idea of stressing human effort very similar to the ideas of evolution (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1, pt. 2: 866-67). Another argued that Mencius (371-289? B.C.) and Yang Zhu (440-360? B.C.) both praised selfishness as the theory of evolution encouraged (Zhang and Wang 1962, v.1, pt. 2:495).

In the early twentieth century the concept of evolution was so popular that it was used as verb (*jinhua*) and adjective (*tianyan*), as well as noun. *Jinhua* also became the synonym of progress or development (*fazhan*) in Chinese. For example, *fazhan shi* (history of development) was also written as *jinhua shi* (history of evolution). Although the term *jinhua* was probably imported from Japan (*shinka*), *tianyan*, a more widely used synonym, was of Chinese origin. The wide

acceptance of the usage can probably be explained by the fact that *tianyan* was not entirely a foreign concept and somehow sounded familiar. Many Chinese aphorisms had *tian* (heaven) as their key concept and revealed the profound meanings of mythical heaven. In Chinese classics and popular literature one can easily come across such phrases as: "those who submit to heaven will prosper; those who challenge heaven will perish" (*shuntian zhe chang; nitian zhe wang*); "tian is principle" (*tian ji li yie*); "the net of Heaven has large meshes, but it lets nothing through" (*tianwang huihui shu er bulou*); "The ruler's heaven is people; and the people's heaven is food" (*wangzhe yimin weitian; minyi shi weitian*). In fact, *tian* was such a familiar concept that one diligent thinker was afraid that *tianyan* might not contain any fresh meaning at all. Thus he suggested in 1903 that *tianyan* should be understood as *renyan* (evolution by man), for Social Darwinism stressed human effort (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1 pt.2:714-719).*

This does not mean, however, that the theory of evolution was the only scheme through which the world was understood by Chinese urbanites. Socialism, anarchism, and rudimentary Marxism were introduced into China in the early twentieth

*Although this author suggested that the ancient Chinese concept of *tian* was more pessimistic, his position was actually untenable since Confucianism was such an inclusive body of ideas that one could easily find absolutely opposite views of heaven in Confucian phrases such as "man will triumph over heaven" (*rending shengtian*).

century as well. Even communism entered popular literature. Lin Xie, a popular writer before and during the anti-American boycott movement, for example, ridiculed the abusive use of the term communism by so-called reformers (*weixin dang*) (Zhang and Wang 1962 v.1, pt. 2:905). However, there is little question that the vocabulary of evolution was adopted by people of wide political spectrum and various degrees of literary competence. And few found the new idea totally contrary to ideas they had believed in.

Not surprisingly, the theory of evolution was also used to explain the American exclusion acts and to justify the boycott. As Chen Yikai put it bluntly in his influential editorial for the *New China Daily* in 1903: "Today's world is a world of power, a world of competition, and a world of prevalence of the superior and the subordination of the inferior.... Appeal to reason alone is by no means enough to persuade people. ...[We] cannot reason with Americans nowadays...What is the way to abolish the treaty, then? It is a boycott" (A Ying 1962:589-91,611). Like Chen, many boycott activists perceived the confrontation with the United States from a much broader perspective than simply as an isolated dispute over immigration rights. The importance of its victory therefore was no less than Japan's triumph in the war of 1904-5 against Russia. In a letter to Zeng Shaoqing, Wu Woyao, the noted novelist, wrote: "The Chinese boycott against the American treaty today is also a war without its military

form. If the battle is won, the prestige [of the Chinese] will not be lower than that of Japan" (A Ying 1962:667). Lin Quanhong, a female activist, exhorted her fellow sisters in a open letter which echoed Chen's editorial almost word for word:

Alas! Today's world is the world of racial competition. [In the struggle] the superior will triumph and the inferior will be defeated. This is decided by universal principle and there is no way to avoid it....Thus today's boycott against American goods is our last resort. If, by fortune, we succeed, the prestige of our people will be known to the peoples of five continents and our people will be welcome by most of them....Otherwise, [I] cannot think how dangerous our fellow people's future will be" (A Ying 1962:648).

This millennial concern was also expressed in various literary pieces for the less educated. In the opera *The Adventure of Haiqiao chun*, a young man (*xiaosheng**) stated:

The competition of things and natural selection is the universal principle of heavenly evolution. Haven't you gentlemen all heard? [We] cannot survive without competition. And [we] cannot compete without organizing into a group. ...The hair-thin chances of survival [for Chinese] hang on today's boycott against the American treaty" (A Ying 1962:467).

In another popular drama written in Cantonese dialect, an actor presumably sang in a measured tempo (*zhongban*):

My fellow countrymen, do you know that things compete and heaven evolves?/ Do you know the superior wins and the

*"Sheng" is the male protagonist of traditional Chinese drama. *Xiaosheng* is usually a physically strong and courageous youth.

inferior loses in the struggle for survival?/...[I] hope our fellow countrymen will unite and boycott without delay" (A Ying 1962:683-4).

Anti-American novels were interspersed with similar expressions of Social Darwinism. *The Bitter Society* couched the confrontation between the United States and China in terms of racial competition. One protagonist cynically told his friend who assumed that America was a free country: "In today's world, there is no freedom for the yellow race; there is only freedom for the white race" (A Ying 1962:78). A speaker in the novel *The Bizarre Tale of the Boycott* (*Juyue qitang*) told his audience that to boycott American goods was to engage in a struggle of life and death (A Ying 1962:230-1). *The Wretched Student* was a novel written by a returned student who was apparently not a stranger to Social Darwinism at all. The allegorical adventure of the student started with a metaphoric scene of an ant fight. In the course of the battle, a motley group of yellow ants was savagely defeated by a well-organized army of white ants. The author concluded, through the introspection of his hero, that even the struggle between ants demonstrated the same principle of evolution: "the inferior is doomed to perish while the superior will certainly survive. There is no exception to this rule" (A Ying 1962:273-74).

To a great extent, the boycott movement was inspired by a more general concern for national and racial survival and stimulated by a widely shared sense of crisis. The theory and

vocabulary of evolution helped Chinese urbanites to put the Sino-American dispute concerning the immigration issue in to a broad perspective. The notion of struggle and evolution was so influential that the boycott movement was also called the "treaty struggle" (*zhengyue*), a neologism with a Social Darwinian connotation.

By comparison, the specific social and economic causes of Chinese emigration and of American discrimination against Chinese immigrants were not thoroughly discussed and widely publicized at all. In their letter to the Qing government, Chinese merchants in America cited the millions of dollars Chinese immigrants sent back to China every year as one reason why the Chinese government should provide protection for Chinese-Americans (A Ying 1962:513). However, this theme was not picked up by newspapers or other media. Economic concern was expressed in rather general terms and as a benevolent side effect of the boycott.

Influential as it was, Social Darwinism was by no means the only mental scheme through which American discrimination was perceived and understood by boycott activists. Social Darwinism is after all a theory of the strong, since the doctrine implies that might is right. It is interesting to note that the weak--Chinese in this case--adopted the theory at all. Actually, the writings and speeches of the boycotters did show tremendous confusion, ambivalence, and inconsistency

in their endorsement of ideas of competition and evolution. Confusion and contradiction were evident in the wide and anomalous use of the two related yet antithetical noun phrases: *qiangquan* (power) and *gongli* (sometimes *gonglie*, meaning principle). The confusion derived from the fact that the boycotters vacillated between the meanings of the concept *gongli*. It could at once mean cosmic law, which was beyond human control and therefore neutral and objective, and moral principle, which meant just and righteous. The following are some examples from various boycott publications:

1) In today's world, races compete, and the superior prevails over the inferior. *Gongli* is evident and inexorable (A Ying 1960:648).

2) In today's world, there is no *gongli*; there is only *qiangquan* (A Ying 1960:684).

3) In the relations between two countries the important thing is *qiangquan* not *gongli*.... To speak of *gongli* only...is useless (A Ying 1962:589).

4) *Gongli* has no force....(A Ying 1962:589).

5) [American politicians]...do not care about *gongli* (A Ying 1962:291).

6) How can the United States resort to *qiangquan* disregarding the treaty with China? (A Ying 1962:79).

Clearly, in 1) *gongli* means cosmic law which is neutral and beyond human control. Accordingly, *gongli* in this sense is perfectly congruous with *qiangquan*. Statement one therefore suggests that power politics is beyond right and wrong, the logical conclusion of Social Darwinism. In the other cases, however, *gongli* implies moral principle. In this sense, *gongli* and *qiangquan* are antithetical and mutually exclusive. In

these statements, *qiangquan* is inherently evil. Obviously, despite the tremendous appeal of Social Darwinism and the immense popularity of its vocabulary, many boycotters refused to endorse power politics.

Apparently some boycott activists realized that there were contradictions and confusions involved in the use of *gongli* and *qiangquan*, and attempts were made to provide a more convincing interpretation of the two concepts. An article in a Canton newspaper thus made a distinction: "When powerful countries negotiate among themselves they evoke *gongli*; when powerful countries deal with weak countries they resort to power (*qiangquan*)" (A Ying 1960:610). An author who apparently had some knowledge of international law put the idea in a more sophisticated and persuasive way: "When the powerful tyrannize over the weak *gongfa* *(universal law) is more than adequate; when the weak deals with the powerful *gongfa* is inadequate" (A Ying 1960:641).

Evidence above shows that boycotters in general were more disgusted than thrilled by power politics among nations (cf. my discussion of the perceived injustice of the exclusion acts at the beginning of this chapter). Although Social Darwinism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided urban Chinese with a fresh way of perceiving the world,

**Gongfa* is a legal term in modern Chinese. But in the boycott discourse *gongfa* and *gongli* had the same connotation.

boycotters by and large did not simply embrace the idea of evolution enthusiastically. They had doubts and reservations about the seemingly inevitable truth and reality of competition and evolution.

While Darwinian vocabularies were adopted largely to build up the psychological power of fear, the traditional concept of universal humanity (*minbao wuyu*, roughly, forming one body with the universe) was used to appeal for conscience. Once again set phrases were skillfully used. "Minbao wuyu" was a concept first formulated by the Song philosopher Zhang Zhai (1020-1077). The gist of Zhang's idea is that one should extend one's love and care to all mankind and things in the universe, for nothing on earth is not made up of *ying* and *yang*, the two basic substances of the universe (Cihai 1979:1085, 1805; Chan 1963:498-9). Clearly, Zhang's idea of universal humanity had persisted in the popular mind and given boycotters moral strength in the early twentieth century despite the new ideas pouring into China. Like much other popular wisdom, the notion of *minbao wuyu* was also poetically expressed in a proverbial phrase *luyuan zhifang* (literally: rounded head and square foot). The phrase was evidently taken from *Huangdi neijing*, the famous Chinese medical book written around the second century B.C. Chapter Seven of the book read:

Heaven is round; the earth is square. Man's head is round; his feet are square so as to correspond to the [shape of heaven and earth]. Heaven has sun and moon; man has a pair of eyes. The earth has the nine districts; man has the nine

orifices. Heaven has wind and rain; man has joy and anger. Heaven has the four seasons; man has the four limbs. Heaven has the five notes; man has the five viscera. Heaven has the six (yang) pitch-pipes; man has the six bowels. Heaven has winter and summer; man has cold and heat....These are the mutual correspondences between man and heaven and earth (Unschuld tran. 1988:51-52).

This Chinese medical theory was also a general world view which assumed the intimate relationship between the structure and functions of the human organism and the universe. The boycotters used the term to imply that since all people looked alike and belonged to the same category, they ought to love each other as equals. The moral power of the phrase was such that even a person as radical as Zou Rong found it useful. His popular pamphlet *The Revolutionary Army* (1904), for instance, passionately expressed the idea of *minbao wuyu* despite its overwhelming cliches of Social Darwinism. He condemned in strong words the astonishing callousness of the Qing government toward the fate of the overseas Chinese:

Our brothers and sisters are suffering from mistreatment worse than that exercised toward beasts. The Manchu government, however, turns blind eyes and deaf ears to the fact. People have the same rounded head and square feet. Yet some are so respected and noble while others are so despised and mistreated. Alas! Alas!" (Zhang and Wang 1962:658-9, emphasis mine).

One of the motifs which runs through a variety of boycott literature is the idea of universal humanity regardless of races and social classes. In the novel *The Golden World* one protagonist expressed the idea metaphorically. Referring to some people's indifference toward the sufferings of Chinese

immigrants, he asked: "Even the fox mourns the death of the hare.* How can [we people] with all our rounded heads and square feet have no conscience?" (A Ying 1960:143). A Canton newspaper article had the following to say about the exclusion acts: "Heads have the same roundness and feet are similarly square; are we Chinese not human?" (A Ying 1960:610). The idea of universal humanity was also theatrically expressed in the opera *The Adventure of Haiqiao chun*. A Chinese student who wound up in the shed on his way to the United States stated on the stage:

My sorrow persists with tears on my face/ Ask heaven where is *gongli* ?/ I was stuck in the alien land that is a great shame to my home country/ Who does not have a rounded head and square feet, how come [we] are treated like oxen and horses? (A Ying 1962:446).

This concern for universal humanity was such a powerful moral force that it eventually divided the boycotters themselves. When it was said that the merchant leadership of the movement was going to take a more conciliatory position and ask only for the right for the immune classes (mainly merchants and students) to enter the United States, some radicals found the stand contradictory to the moral ethos of the movement. One popular pamphlet questioned: "The four classes of gentry, peasants, artisans and merchants are all Chinese. Why should laborers alone suffer; are they inferior to the other three

*Also a Chinese set phrase: *tusi hubei*.

classes?" (A Ying 1962:552) Out of the same concern, the novelist Wu Woyao petitioned in a letter to Zeng Shaoqing the leader of the boycott in Shanghai, "If the boycott is just for a few people's rights, it is not morally right, and our consciousness will never be at peace. Personally I do not think it is right." (Zhu 1958:149). The Renjing (Man-Mirror) Study Society, a literary organization in Shanghai, was more direct on the issue: "The four classes of gentry, peasants, artisans and merchants are equal. We cannot treat them differently. Their equality is eternal and universal (*italics mine*). Zhu 1958:149). A woman speaker, featured in *The Golden World*, drove the point home:

Sisters! Aren't we the mother of Chinese nationals? ...In the eyes of a mother, there are only children, there are no classes....Today we talk of boycott because foreigners have abused our overseas nationals. Of the overseas Chinese, workers are the largest in number and they also suffer the most. If workers can get out of the bitter sea to the happy land, merchants and students will automatically have the same [opportunity]. If we just revise the treaty in order to benefit the merchants and students only, workers will not have the same right. Sisters! aren't they our children as well? (A Ying 1960:176).

These boycott activists refused to be "realistic" in politics and refused to compromise their moral standard.

It is evident that the movement was inspired by various social ideas. And it is important to point out that few boycotters thought that Social Darwinism was fundamentally at odds with Confucian notions of universal benevolence (*fanai*). The boycotters selectively used both ideas to mobilize the urban masses. We may also argue that urban Chinese in the

early twentieth century did not embrace Social Darwinism wholeheartedly because the traditional ideas tempered the raw force of evolution and competition.

3. Populism vs. Democracy

Description of the mistreatment of overseas Chinese and diagnosis of the problems facing China led to a prescription for their solution. The boycotters found the solution in organizing individual Chinese into groups and appealing to their sense of civic responsibility. The boycott discourse as a whole took a populist stance. The practical and reconciliated attitude toward ruthless competition and universal love was also shown in boycotters' discussion of such broad issues as democracy and civic responsibility. The American exclusion acts and the rise of the boycott movement provided urban Chinese an occasion to reflect upon issues of political organization and philosophy. In this respect, once again, the boycott rhetoric showed remarkable consensus and adopted a moderate and progressive view. While they were critical toward American democracy, they vigorously advocated popular rights as opposed to governmental authority.

For the boycott activists, the peculiar American political system was much to blame for the absurd and inhuman law of exclusion. A repeatedly-stated theme in various

boycott publications was that the American Labor Party had initiated the idea of exclusion and the United States government had been overwhelmed by popular pressure. This theme was first put forward by Chinese merchants in North America. In their petition to the Qing government in 1903, they pointed out the vulnerability of the American government to popular frenzy. The petition maintained that the idea of exclusion was first advocated by a rascal in California who latter attracted many Labor Party followers. It went on to explain how the popular demand for exclusion became a government policy:

The United States is a country ruled by people. From the president down to the officials of provinces, all of them have to be obedient to public opinion in order to be elected. Thus the Labor Party becomes more and more powerful. As a result the exclusion law becomes more severe (A Ying 1960:510).

Two years later when the boycott movement started, this thesis of democratic vulnerability was echoed by boycotters of different political persuasions and various degrees of intellectual sophistication. Both the more radical newspaper *Shibao* and the conservative paper *Zhongwai ribao*, for example, editorialized that the American government had simply submitted to the Labor Party's pressure (A Ying 1960:599-601).

An author with the pen name of "China's cold-blooded man" (*Zhongguo liangxue ren*) represented the better informed and more sophisticated boycotters. He wrote:

It was the American Labor Party that envied Chinese immigrants and initially championed exclusion. The American government at first rejected this demand. Later it found the Labor Party had more and more followers and became increasingly powerful. Under the democratic system none of the officials, from the president at the top down to ministers of various departments, can hold on to their power if they are disliked by the people. Besides, American politicians were divided into two parties competing with each other. Thus the Labor Party with its large number of people enjoy decisive power. Eventually, the American government adopted the Labor Party's suggestion and signed the treaty with our government (A Ying 1960:231).

Writings for popular consumption conveyed a similar message in plain language. A storytelling and ballad sing-song piece in Suzhou dialect explained American politics in a simple and sarcastic manner: "America has been called a great civilized country. Only because the Labor Party has the say, does the government enact the labor treaty, lest our Chinese snatch their rice bowl." (A Ying 1960:483-4). Vulgar language and rhymed words were used by another composer of a ballad:

When American laborers get power, Chinese workers will suffer.../ [If] the Labor Party says yes, Americans will hush/ [If] the Labor Party says no, its countrymen will echo/...The Labor Party is wooed as sluts are courted/ Why is it so? It is the way a democratic country works and civilized law dictates (A Ying 1960:5-6).

This criticism of the American political system, however, only reflected a less sanguine view of democracy rather than the rejection of it out of hand. On the contrary, while criticizing the American political system, boycotters vigorously advocated people's rights vis-a-vis government authority in China. It should also be noted that by

championing people's rights and power, the boycotters did not go much beyond the Confucian notion of the people as the basis of the state (*minben*). In fact, the political concepts frequently invoked during the movement were not democracy, which acquired some negative connotation as I have shown above, but group solidarity (*tuanti* or *qun*) of the common people. As a popular play had it: "[One] cannot survive without competition; [one] cannot compete without organizing a group. Let's unite together to compete" (A Ying 1962:467).

Whatever the similarities and differences between democracy and populism, theoretical consistency seemed not to be a major concern of the boycotters. What they did with great vigor was simply to redefine the people-government relationship so that the common people could take more responsibility for public affairs. A long essay in *Shibao* maintained that China's weakness derived from the political apathy of its people: "If all the people of a country abandon their responsibility and leave everything to their government, then blame the government for not being able to compete with others, the country must be weak." The essay went on to argue that a country is just like a family and people should help their government just like children ought to help their father (A Ying 1962:616-7).

Although this line of argument has strong connotations of Confucian ideals of the body politic, a fresh notion emerged in the same article which did not stress the cooperative

relationship between people and government. Instead the new concept advocated separate responsibilities of the two, for the government was not likely to be able to do much for its people anyway. As the article put it bluntly: "Americans will continue to exclude Chinese according to their own law with or without a treaty with the Chinese government." Therefore, the article urged, Chinese people should do their share regardless of the policy of the government (A Ying 1960:614-5). The article went on to define the separate responsibilities between government and people. It pointed out that while the Chinese government could not boycott American goods due to the commercial treaty between the two countries, the Chinese could because: "the government does not have the right to force its people to buy and cannot guarantee sales" (A Ying 1960:620). A speaker in *A Bizarre Tale of the Boycott* told his audience: "We ought to know that it is merchants' right to order or not to order certain merchandise rather than government's business....It is up to individual people to buy or not to buy..." (A Ying 1962:234).

Similarly, an essay in the *Guangzhou Daily* exhorted Chinese people to abandon the illusion that they could rely upon their government to abolish the exclusion acts. It argued that putting pressure on the Qing government was of only secondary importance; since what the people could do was only to send telegrams asking the government not to sign a new treaty. It was then up to the government to decide whether or

not to have the treaty. The people had no way to prevent a treaty, if the government chose to have one. The most important thing for the people to do, according to the essay, was therefore not to buy American goods and not to serve Americans, for these sorts of things "are what we as merchants and common people ought to do and have the natural right to do. By doing so we are not interfering with affairs of either the American or Chinese governments" (A Ying 1962:608-9).

It is important to note that the essay did not advocate popular pressure on governmental decisions; rather it championed direct action by people in given areas. The boycott was thus explained as entirely people's initiative, having nothing to do with the government. It is of course superficial to assume that the advocates of people's rights were inspired solely by abstract beliefs in people's rights and power. There was a very practical concern by boycotters that the boycott movement might lead to American pressure on the Qing government and the Qing government in turn would be forced to suppress the boycott on behalf of Americans.* The author of *The Bitter Society* spoke to this concern through his hero in the boycott movement (A Ying 1962:110). An article in *Diplomacy* (*Waijiao bao*) provided the clearest and

*On the delicate relationship between the merchant-intellectual leadership of the movement and the Qing government in 1904-5 see Chapter Five.

most sophisticated view on the interdependency of people's rights and government authority:

Which country's goods to order is decided by merchants. Foreigners cannot coerce and our government should not interfere. However, ...since the boycott is triggered by the Exclusion Act, it is a matter of international concern, thus government help is essential. We do not expect the government to make public speeches [on our behalf]; we just ask the government to leave us alone. Not to suppress [the boycott] is to help (Zhang and Wang 1963 v.2, pt.1:4).

If people's strength did not derive from the government, it had to come from their sense of solidarity and identity. The

"boycott nationalism" was the product of this practical necessity. I use the term boycott nationalism to stress its artificial creation and to distinguish it from many other theories of nationalism developed by various political forces for their respective purposes in early twentieth century China. For example, the national essence school (*guocui pai*) advocated national learning as the essence of a nation (Zhang and Wang 1963 v.2, pt.1:43,52). Revolutionary nationalism was anti-Manchu and had strong racist connotations.

By comparison, the boycott nationalism had populist overtones. An essay in *Shibao* related people's rights and responsibilities to a new concept of nation. It read:

In this treaty struggle, we do not rely solely on official power, rather we are able to use our own strength. Our people have been relying on government for hundreds and thousands of years. Everything from domestic to foreign policies has been controlled in the hands of government. If the policies are good, people benefit from them; if they are bad, people suffer from them, never questioning. Today, [people] begin to have the notion of nation, and to realize that the nation and we have intimate relations.... Thus people begin to speak up

when something is wrong with important domestic or foreign policy decisions (A Ying 1960:601-2).

The vernacular pamphlet *A Story of Ill-Treatment Inflicted upon Chinese Brethren* expressed a similar idea in simpler and plainer language: "The common folk (*baixing*) of a country should fulfill their share of responsibility to the country" (A Ying 1962:524). This was not an idle appeal. Many of the boycott publications attributed the weakness of China to the Chinese people's lack of nationalistic consciousness (A Ying 1962:589, 600, 605, 648).

The boycott nationalism also had a humanistic aspect which thought of the nation as an extended family. *A Bizarre Tale of the Boycott* tried to explain the concept of nation through a simple analogy:

People are given birth by parents. Men by the same parents are brothers and together they make a family. Several families make up a clan and men of the same clan are all brothers. Expanding from clan to village, village to district, district to prefecture, prefecture to province, province to country, all countrymen are brothers....Gentlemen, gentlemen! All the people of one country are brothers of the same father and identical mother...(A Ying 1962:245).

The family analogy was a popular one. A vernacular pamphlet writer asked his compatriots to "love [your] motherland just as [you] love [your] wives" (A Ying 1962:657). As in the case of some other important ideas propagated in the boycott literature, the concept of nation was also understood through traditional ideas.

To sum up, the boycott ideology was a combination of

ideas old and new. This was clearly shown in the extensive use of both newly-borrowed concepts from the West (many of them arriving via Japan) and traditional Chinese proverbs and aphorisms. This mixture of the new with the old does not change the fact that the boycott discourse showed remarkable uniformity. This was made possible largely because key concepts and images were expressed repeatedly in idiomatic Chinese through various media. The acceptance of the new concepts was evidently facilitated by putting them into familiar linguistic forms and by the belief that the new concepts were entirely compatible with or only extensions of traditional wisdom.

Chinese culture was clearly in transition under the impact of Western ideas, Social Darwinism in particular, at the turn of the century. The complexity of the boycott ideology lay in the fact that the urban populace in early twentieth century China did not simply embrace one (might) and discard the other (right, as Chinese traditionally understood it) or simply accept one as the other. Rather the boycotters took a stand I call tempered progressivism. That is, they accepted the notions and adopted the vocabulary of Social Darwinism without discarding ideas of Confucian humanism (*fanai*, literally: universal love). To a great extent, the boycotters used Social Darwinism as a means to mobilize the urban masses in order to achieve the end of Confucian humanism--abolition of the exclusion acts.

Similarly, the boycott discourse also showed an ambivalent and contradictory view toward democracy. In this respect mild progressivism took the form of cautious populism. On the one hand, boycotters held the American variety of democracy--government's submission to popular demands--responsible for the exclusion treaty. On the other hand, boycotters advocated people's rights vis-a-vis government authority when organizing a boycott.

Theoretical eclecticism was also clear in the boycotters' concept of nationalism. The boycott nationalism included racial awareness, a sense of group solidarity, and people's rights and responsibility. Although boycott activists tried very hard to appeal to a Chinese sense of nation, their Chineseness was clearly more culturally and racially-oriented than territorially- and sovereignty-oriented. There was a practical reason for this tendency, for the nationalism of Chinese Americans could not be anything but cultural and racial identity. The point is, nevertheless, that the traditional sense of cultural and racial identity only facilitated the rise of modern nationalism, if the distinction is possible at all.

The uniformity of the boycott discourse did not mean absence of confusion and contradiction, for traditional ideas did contradict the new. The most obvious conflict was that between might (*qiangquan*) and right (*gongli*). More

importantly, the boycotters seemed unified only by the means--boycott--and reached no consensus concerning the ultimate goal of the boycott. This partially explains why the movement was initially successful but ultimately failed. Initially, ideological ambiguity did not undermine boycotters' sense of the justice of their cause. As the boycott continued and merchants' interests suffered, however, the uniformity began to collapse. The next chapter will analyze how the boycott affected the interests of merchants.

Chapter Four

Economics of the Boycott and Merchants as Political Activists

As I have shown, although the 1905 anti-exclusion boycott was triggered by American mistreatment of Chinese in the United States and advocated first and foremost by overseas Chinese, the boycott itself was propagated and organized by Chinese urbanites in China proper. Understanding the boycott's domestic origin is crucial to understanding the movement not only because there were purely domestic causes why the boycott movement occurred in early twentieth century China, but also because its development and outcome were decided by domestic social, economic, and political factors independent of foreign influences, including those of overseas Chinese.

In this chapter, I shall analyze the domestic setting of the boycott movement with special emphasis on its economic aspects. I shall first of all put economic boycott as a retaliatory strategy into historical and structural perspective. I argue that the boycott was adopted not because it was the most effective tool to change American immigration policy, but because it was the least dangerous yet most symbolic way to confront a great foreign power for both the Qing government and for urban Chinese at the time. Though it was publicly stated at the time and has since been argued by some historians that the boycott would help domestic industry

and sellers of native products (Zhu 1958:7), in fact the boycott was primarily an economic means to achieve a specific political purpose. The alleged long-term economic benefit to the Chinese national economy was only a dubious economic justification for a clearly political cause. The boycott should therefore be understood in political as well as in economic terms.

Not only was the boycott as a retaliatory strategy adopted according to China's domestic political and economic situation, but also the prime location of the boycott was chosen because of new developments which had occurred in China in the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially, some overseas Chinese wanted to initiate the boycott movement in Hong Kong or Guangzhou, Guangdong province, but the idea was quickly dropped in favor of Shanghai as the headquarters of the boycott movement because of the latter's commercial importance and its significance as the largest city in China since the late nineteenth century (Zhang 1966:33). Thus the movement cannot be fully understood without understanding some characteristics of the city at the turn of the century. While it was a city in which many modern patriotic movements originated (Liao 1986), it was primarily an economic and commercial (and to some extent a cultural), not a political, center. It was the merchants and petty intellectuals* instead

*For a discussion of intellectuals active in the boycott movement please see Chapter Two.

of gentry and radical students who dictated the city's moderate and progressive political tone, at least at the turn of the century, and who played the most important role during the movement.

The Shanghai merchants were among the first to organize into modern chambers of commerce in the early twentieth century. While the rise of the merchant class indicated a relatively independent economic and political force in modern China, the merchant organizations were under the strong political supervision, if not the absolute control, of the Qing government. Furthermore, the merchants were organized along native-place as well as trade lines, which complicated their collective behaviors. All of the above factors significantly shaped the course of the boycott movement in 1905.

1. The Boycott in Perspective

In their 1903 petition* to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, and several high ranking officials of the Qing government, Chinese-Americans asked the Qing government to take retaliatory measures against American mistreatment of Chinese in the United States. The petition specifically suggested that the Qing government raise import duties against American goods (A Ying 1962:511-12). It was

*For details of the petition please see Chapter 3. The full text of the petition is in A Ying 1962:509-20.

argued that if the tariff was raised the United States would certainly give ground on the immigration issue since, according to the petitioners, America's dominance of the world industry and commerce depended entirely on its ability to expand to China (A Ying 1962:511).

This assertion was of course a gross exaggeration, for trade with China had little importance to the U.S. economy (Chao 1986:103-04). But the Qing did not respond favorably to the idea probably for the simple reason that China did not recover its tariff autonomy until 1928. More importantly, the immigration issue was definitely not important enough for the Qing to take such a dramatic action against the United States (see Chapter One). However, some Qing officials did suggest other retaliatory measures. The Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi Zhang Zhidong suggested as early as 1888 that China should recall Chinese ministers to the United States, dismiss American employees in various governmental services in China, and forbid American missionaries to go to China's interior (HGCGSL 1/4:1385). In 1902, Wu Tingfang asked the Qing government to warn the United States that if the latter continued to mistreat Chinese nationals in America, Chinese merchants might retaliate with a boycott (WJSL 152/19). Liang Cheng, the Chinese minister to the United States at the time, wrote the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early 1905 suggesting that if the United States continued to make and implement exclusion acts against Chinese nationals, China should

retaliate in kind: letting Chinese customs personnel know about American exclusion acts and implementing them against Americans in China (cited in Zhang 1966:29).

Liang's suggestion was legally valid based on reciprocal articles in the treaties between the two countries. The problem was, however, much more complicated, not only because Americans came to China for entirely different reasons from those motivating Chinese immigrants to the United States, but also because the number of Americans in China was much fewer--only about two percent as many as the Chinese in America.* Besides, China was not powerful enough to confront the United States on equal terms, as many Chinese at the time realized.** At any rate, no record shows that the Qing court ever seriously considered Liang's suggestion.

The idea of boycott was first explicitly and systematically advocated in 1903 by Cheng Yikai, the chief writer of the *New China Daily* (*Xinzhongguo bao*) of Honolulu, Hawaii (A Ying 1962:588-597). In an article in the newspaper, he argued that a boycott against American goods was the only effective way to confront exclusion acts because China had become the center of the commercial warfare (*shangzhan*) of the day and a boycott would hurt American commerce, industry, and

*In 1900 there were 1,908 American residents of all types in China (McKee 1977:16), compared with about 10,000 Chinese in the United States.

**For a detailed discussion of the boycott ideology please see Chapter Three.

eventually the American laborers who had initiated the idea of the exclusion (A Ying 1962:591-92). He also argued that by boycotting American goods China could develop its own industry (A Ying 1962:593). Chen's formula for the boycott included three related aspects: 1) merchants would not buy and sell American goods; 2) port laborers would not handle American goods; 3) consumers would not purchase American goods (A Ying 1962:591).

Obviously Chen exaggerated the significance of a boycott either to America or to the Chinese economy (for details see below). But he was right in suggesting that short of violence a boycott was the only method available for Chinese people, as opposed to the Qing government, directly to hurt American interests and express their anger toward the exclusion acts. Chen argued that to correct wrongs Chinese people could not rely solely on one competent official (such as Wu Tingfang), or rely on the weak Qing government. Chinese people had to make their own contribution to the cause and to make their power felt. The best and only way was a boycott, for it was people's right to decide what to buy (A Ying 1962:594-95). Chen's article was serialized in *Shibao* two years later when a new immigration treaty was to be negotiated in China (*Shibao* 15-17 May 1905).

As it turned out, out of many alternative ways of confronting the exclusion acts only the boycott against American goods eventually became reality. Why did urban

Chinese respond enthusiastically with a boycott? To what extent was the boycott effective? Whose interests other than those of the Americans would be affected by the boycott? Why couldn't the boycott as a retaliatory strategy continue later on? No studies of the movement have provided adequate explanations for these questions. Historians (Zhu 1958:7; Yang et al.:376) have argued, among other things, that because a boycott would benefit the rising Chinese national capitalists (*minzu zichanjieji*), therefore Chinese merchants supported the idea. This is true only in a very general and limited sense, because the boycott was targeted only at one country's goods, not foreign goods in general, and because American goods consisted of only a very small fraction of the foreign goods imported to China (for details see below). Furthermore this assertion tells us very little about what kind of merchants (and industrialists) supported the boycott.

The exact role economic nationalism played cannot be fully understood or convincingly explained without an analysis of the nature of trade between China and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Four aspects of the trade relationship between the two countries are relevant to this study. They are: the types and value of American goods sold in China; the geographic distribution of American goods in China; the merchants who sold American goods and their methods of selling foreign goods in general and American goods in particular; and the type of consumers who

relied on American goods and the extent of their reliance.

A. Types and Volume of American Goods Sold in China

Historically and economically American trade with China was insignificant to both countries (Chao 1986:104-105; Schran 1986:237-258). In the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the average share of U.S. exports in the U.S. gross national product was about seven percent and the share of trade with China was about one percent of the total American exports (Schran 1986:239). While two items--cotton and tobacco products--accounted for large shares of total exports from American cotton and tobacco industries, they comprised a relatively small share of the total production of both industries (Chao 1986:104-127; Cochran 1986:153-203).

Foreign trade probably constituted an even smaller share of the Chinese economy (Feuerwerker 1969:2). While imports from the United States increased from \$3,844,200 in 1895 to \$53,384,000 in 1905,* American imports constituted less than ten percent of total foreign imports to China (Hsiao 1974:22-14; Li 1985:698; Yan 1955:64). The United States trailed Great Britain and Japan in exports to China (Yan 1955:64).** The

*The figure is calculated based on the statistics by Chao (1986:105). Chen Yikai (A Ying 1962:592-593) provided comparable figures based on Chinese currency, the tael. According to him, American exports to China were 3,603,840 taels in 1895 and 24,722,906 in 1903.

**According to Yan's statistics the relative shares of imports in 1901-1903 were: Hong Kong 41.6%; Great Britain

total American interests in China were also relatively small compared with those of Great Britain, Japan, and even Germany, according to a contemporary survey (see Table 1)

Table 1 Foreign Business Firms in China

Country	Number of Business Firms	Personnel
Japan	560	5,280
U.K.	520	5,612
Germany	159	1,659
U.S.	114	2,542
France	71	1,203

Source: *Dalu* (The Continent) April 1905, in Li (1985:712).

Imports from the United States were, however, conspicuous in China for two reasons. One was that American imports were mostly consumer goods; the second was that American imports were relatively concentrated in populous cities. The most important American exports to China in the early twentieth century were: cotton textiles, flour, petroleum products, tobacco products, and other consumer products of daily use such as soap, candles, cosmetics, hardware (*wujin*, the five metals), stationery, and so on (see Table 2). China also

15.9%; Japan and Taiwan 12.5%; the United States 8.5% (Yan 1955:64).

started to import machines from the United States, but the amount was definitely negligible from the point of view of the boycotters.*

Table 2 Composition of U.S. Exports to China (% of total exports)

Year	Cotton Tobacco	Iron and Steel Products	Machinery Products	Oils, Mineral Refined
1901	42.5	5.1	2.6	22.7
1905	51.6	1.9	0.5	15.9

Source: Shu-lun Pan, *Trade of the United States with China*, pp. 42, 59-60, 110-111, in Schran 1986:252.

Between the 1830s and 1910, the most important American goods sold in China were cotton textiles. In 1900, \$8,783 worth of cotton cloth was sold in China, comprising 57.6% of total American imports in China. In 1905 the sale of American cotton cloth in China increased more than three times that of the year 1900 to a record high of \$27,760, which comprised fifty-two percent of total American imports to China. Five years later in 1910 the figure dropped to \$5,763 (Chao 1986:105). The rise and fall of American cotton textiles occurred not because of political reasons, the boycott

*From 21 July to 3 September 1905, about 13,000 business firms, stores, and individuals declared in *Shibao*, among other newspapers, that they decided not to sell, buy, and use American goods (*Shibao*, July-September 1905). I find that only a few mentioned machinery. According to Yan Zhongping's statistics, machinery comprised only 0.7% of total foreign imports into China in 1903 (Yan 1955:72).

included,* but because of economic reasons, such as compatibility of American cotton products to the needs of Chinese consumers and competition from products of other countries.** In the early twentieth century, the thick American cotton cloth was well-regarded by ordinary Chinese consumers because of its sturdiness and warmth, compared to the finer and thinner British types (Chao 1986:110-111). In 1905 at least eleven brands of coarse cloth, four brands of fine cloth, ten brands of twill (or drill, *xiewen bu*), and thirty-one brands of various types of sheets were sold in China by the United States (*Shibao* 21 July 1905).

Around the turn of the century, American cotton fabric comprised eighty percent to ninety percent of total Chinese imports of coarse cloth (Chao 1986:111). Both for its quantity and quality, American cotton cloth could not easily be replaced by native-made cloth, either, for traditionally China had been a cotton-importing country and its textile industry did not start until the late 1890s. In the early

*The boycotters, however, did realize that cotton cloth was among the largest items imported from the United States and they listed at least several dozen different brands of American cotton cloth as items being banned. I shall discuss in Chapter Five specific reasons why the boycott did not achieve its goal as the boycotters expected.

**Ironically, 1905 was a particularly good year for American cotton textiles despite the boycott movement, and the drop in sales in the second half of the 1910s had little to do with the boycott movement either. In Kang Chao's discussion of the rise and fall of American cotton textile sales in China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he did not find it necessary to mention the boycott movement at all (Chao 1986:103-127).

twentieth century the Chinese textile industry developed slowly, largely because of traditional political and economic obstacles, not because of foreign competition (Li 1985:695-96).

The second largest import from the United States was petroleum products.* From an economic point of view American petroleum imports to China not only did not become an obstacle to the native petroleum industry but were in fact a necessity for modern Chinese industry as a whole, due to the slow development of China's own oil fields (Cheng 1986:205-233). The largest proportion of petroleum imports from the United States, however, was kerosene, which was used primarily and widely as a consumer good in both households and stores, and was thus a convenient target of the boycott (Cheng 1986:206-207). In 1905, for instance, China imported 153,470,000 gallons of kerosene from various countries, of which 50-60% were from the United States, while only importing 47,000 gallons of gasoline (SHDWMY:194). Increasing kerosene imports from various countries, from the United States in particular, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was due to its lower price relative to that of vegetable oils. In 1879, for example, the same quantity of kerosene was about 50%

*Chu-Yuan Cheng (1986:205-233) asserts that "petroleum products dominated American exports to China from 1876 to the 1920s." This statement is probably due to a different way of calculating available data. From the large quantity of boycott literature, it is clear that cotton textiles were considered the most important American imports.

cheaper than tea oil in Hankou. In 1884, the retail price of kerosene in Ningbo was only about 40% that of bean oil (Cheng 1986:207).

Tobacco products were probably the fastest growing American imports in China. If other American businessmen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found that the market for industrial goods in China was impenetrable or they were not aggressive enough to open the market, the same was definitely not true for American businessmen in the tobacco industry (Cochran 1986:151). For American businessmen of the tobacco industry, the China market became a reality in the early twentieth century. The British-American Tobacco Company (BAT), a joint venture established in 1902, sold 1.25 billion cigarettes in China in 1902, and 9.75 billion in 1912 (Cochran 1986:152-153).

While it is hard to estimate how many Chinese began to smoke cigarettes as a habit, it is safe to say that cigarette smoking began to become popular among urbanites. Virtually all the boycott pledges run in the newspapers in 1905 mentioned American cigarettes and identified several brands. The Pinhead brand (*pinhai bai*) in particular seemed to be the most popular (*Shibao* 21 July 1905). On the other hand, however, it should also be pointed out that cigarette smoking was a relatively new phenomenon in China and that only a fraction of consumers were directly affected by the boycott. Opium and pipe smoking were still popular in large cities such as

Shanghai and Suzhou, as reflected in contemporary novels (Wu 1959:684). And it was relatively easier for Chinese industrialists to manufacture cigarettes to substitute for the imports because little capital was needed to start the business (Cochran 1986:196). All of the above factors, among others,* made the boycott against American cigarettes the most successful.

American flour was another consumer good which was conspicuously visible in China in the early twentieth century. During the boycott movement a popular song was composed entitled "A Song Advocating not using American-Flour-Made Mooncakes," which went:

It is about time for the Mid-autumn Festival to celebrate the bright moon/
Tens of thousands of families have prepared delicious mooncakes/
But if they are made of American flour they are not clean/
[Because] American flour is [made of] Chinese blood/... (A Ying 1962:9).

There were also many boycott pledges which specified American flour. Compared with other items mentioned above, however, flour was much less significant in overall American exports to China. Flour comprised only 0.7 percent of total Chinese imports from America in 1894; and 1.8 percent in 1913 (SHDWMY:195). No specific brands of American flour were mentioned in these boycott pledges.

*The marketing mechanism and relative financial and political strength of cigarette merchants also played a role. For details of these two factors see below.

B. Geographical Distribution of American Goods in China

While there were political and cultural reasons (see Chapters Two and Three) for Shanghai to lead the movement, the economic reason was also obvious. Not only had Shanghai developed into a commercial and financial center of China since the second half of the nineteenth century, but Shanghai had also become the center of American imports in particular. As I mentioned earlier, American merchants (with a few exceptions) were not particularly energetic in opening up the China market, especially interior markets. American merchants stayed in the big cities, especially in Shanghai. The biggest American companies and firms in China such as China, Japan & Co. (*Fengyu*, cotton textiles), Fearon Daniel & Co. (*Xielong*, cotton textiles), American Trading Co. (*Maosheng*, soap, cotton textiles, and others), Standard Oil (*Meifu*, petroleum products), and BAT (tobacco) all had their headquarters in Shanghai (SHDWMY:102; *Shibao* 21 July 1905; May and Fairbank 1986 *passim*).

It should be pointed out, however, that the fact that American merchants conducted their business mostly in Shanghai was common rather than exceptional for all foreign businessmen in China, due to the increasing importance of Shanghai as a commercial, financial, and industrial center since the late nineteenth century. This is to say that the bulk of the international trade was conducted in Shanghai, not that

Shanghai consumed most of the imports of all kinds. The bulk of foreign imports entered China first in Shanghai (see Table 3), and some of them were then transshipped to other ports.

In 1894, for example, 93,256,000 taels (57.53 percent of the total imports to China) entered Shanghai port. Of this amount, goods worth 62,614 taels (or 67.59 percent) were transshipped to other ports throughout China (SHDWMY:30). The import of cotton textiles was also illustrative. Out of 13,790,000 bolts of cloth imported into China in 1894, 13,000,000 bolts entered Shanghai first. Only about twenty percent of this 13,000,000 were actually sold in Shanghai. Therest were transshipped to other areas (Yan ed., 1955: 47).

Table 3 Proportion of Total Chinese Imports
in Five ports 1871-1903

Year	Guangzhou	Shanghai	Hankou	Tianjin	Dalian	Others
1871-1873	12.7	64.1	2.7	1.8	-	18.7
1881-1883	11.8	57.1	4.2	3.1	-	23.8
1891-1893	11.6	49.9	2.3	3.1	-	33.1
1901-1903	10.4	53.1	1.8	3.6	4.9	31.1

Source: Yan ed. 1955:69.

American imports clearly followed the same pattern. The best example is probably American cotton textiles imported to

China. In the 1870s when the basic trade pattern was established, most American cotton fabrics landed first in Shanghai and then were shipped to other ports throughout China. Only 9.4 percent of the total cotton fabrics from the United States were sold in Shanghai, whereas 38.8 percent and 33.5 percent were transhipped to Tianjin and Xinzhuang (Hebei), respectively, where the cold weather apparently helped sales of the thick American cloth (Chao 1986:111-112).^{*} Altogether American cotton textiles were sold in at least nineteen cities in North, Central, East, and South China as early as the 1870s (Chao 1986:111-112). Zhenjiang, a small city along the Yangzi river in Jiangsu province, for example, imported foreign cloth from Shanghai in 1886 and the quantity increased steadily over the years (*Zhenjiang Gazetteer* juan 22,31).

Shanghai played similar roles in the import and sale of American cigarettes. BAT had its branch headquarters in Shanghai. In addition, BAT had its first and largest cigarette factories in Shanghai, too. But again Shanghai was important geographically for American cigarettes, not so much for its consumption as for its central role as a distribution center. As Sherman Cochran has convincingly shown, American entrepreneurs in the tobacco business were exceptionally aggressive in their selling efforts in China. They advertised and sold American cigarettes not only in large cities but also

^{*}The figure is for the year 1876.

in small towns and even in rural, mountain, and desert areas (Cochran 1986:151-203).

The distribution of American cigarettes was conducted through a metropolitan--city--market town hierarchy. While Shanghai was the most important distribution center of American cigarettes, many other cities throughout China became the division centers of BAT products (Cochran 1986:160-161). It should be noted, however, that American cigarettes were yet to reach some important cities in China's interior. One notable example was Chongqing, Sichuan in the southwest of China, where people still thought cigarettes were poisonous (Ding in SHWSZL 56:introduction 21). It should also be noted that cigarette consumption was something new in big coastal cities in early twentieth century China. Important market towns very close to Shanghai (less than fifty miles away) such as Songjiang and Changshu did not record any cigarette imports until the Republican period (*Songjiang Gazetteer* 233; *Changshu City Gazetteer* 458-459).

Standard Oil opened its first office in Shanghai in 1885. Eight years later in 1894 Standard Oil hired the Shanghai merchant Ye Chengzhou to sell its oil (Miao in SHWSZL 56:45). In only a few years Ye opened stores selling kerosene in Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Wuhu (Jiangsu), Jiujiang (Jiangxi), Hankou (Hubei), Yingkou (Liaoning), Tianjin, and Yantai (Shandong). Standard Oil opened another office in Hong Kong in 1894, and by 1908 it had established branches at Fuzhou, Amoy, Swatow,

and Guangzhou (Cheng 1986:216). Relatively smaller cities imported American kerosene from larger cities. Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, for example, recorded imports of American kerosene from Shanghai as early as 1886. In 1891, Zhenjiang imported 1,509,000 gallons of American kerosene (and 908,000 gallons of Russian kerosene). In 1899 the figure jumped to 2,561,000 gallons (*Zhenjiang Gazetteer* 22,31). In the early twentieth century, kerosene was probably the only American import which entered China's rural areas (Cheng 1986:214-219).

Available data provide us with a general picture of the geographic distribution of American imports. The bulk of the American imports apparently landed in Shanghai first, and many of the imported goods were also first accepted and consumed in Shanghai. The sale of American cotton textiles in China had probably the longest history of all the most important imports from the United States. By the early twentieth century, foreign cloth in general and American cotton fabrics in particular had long been accepted and favored by Chinese throughout China. As a result, in 1905 the Shanghai area was no longer the consuming center of American cloth but a distribution center. The bulk of American cloth was sold in Tianjing and Xinzhuang in northern China.

American cigarettes and kerosene were probably sold even more broadly than American textiles, despite the fact that they were relatively new imports to China in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, Shanghai was most important and crucial not so much for the consumption as for the distribution of American products.

The wide geographic distribution of American imports thus made the boycott necessarily a nationwide movement. On the other hand, the boycott might have been much more effective if American goods never left Shanghai at all, given Shanghai's importance as an entry port and a distribution center for the bulk of American goods. I will return to this issue later. For now let's examine the ways American goods were actually ordered and sold in China and the various merchant firms which handled American goods, for these factors had significant implications for the boycott movement.

C. Ways American Goods Were Handled and by Whom

China's trade with Western countries had been dominated by the westerners through *yanghang* (foreign firms) in China. China's trade with the United States was similarly controlled by American firms (*meihang*). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the common practice was that American firms in China, mostly in Shanghai, ordered goods from the United States. Chinese merchants rarely had direct contact with American manufacturers, but American firms relied heavily on their Chinese agents to sell goods in China. These Chinese agents, who were called by different names but commonly addressed by Chinese as compradors (*maiban*), behaved as

middlemen in helping to sell American goods to Chinese retail merchants, who then sold American merchandise to consumers.

In the early twentieth century, however, some Chinese merchants began to engage exclusively in one type of merchandise and acted as wholesale merchants (*pifa shang*) who directly ordered American goods from the United States and then sold the goods to retail merchants. The variable importance, financial and political strength, and interests at stake largely decided the different attitudes and behaviors during the boycott movement and shaped the course of the event. For the purposes of this study, I shall focus on various Chinese merchants who were directly involved in handling and selling American goods.

Compradors

In selling American goods, American companies and firms, just like other foreign companies in China at the time, relied heavily on Chinese representatives--compradors--though with different titles and job assignments (see Table 4).

BAT, for example hired several Chinese, notably Wu Tingsheng and Li Wenzhong among others (SHWSZL 56:145-155; Cochran 1986:170-172). Officially, they were called interpreters rather than compradors. But functionally, they worked for the company just like other compradors at the time, serving as middlemen between foreign companies and Chinese merchants. Wu Tingsheng and Li Wenzhong as compradors were formal employees

Table 4 Compradors who worked for American Firms (Meihang) or Sold American Goods in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Name	Birth Place	Trade (or Company)	Source
Ding Zhongmao	Zhejiang	BAT	(Wang 1983:335)
Zheng Bozhao	Guangdong	BAT	(SHWSZL 56:156)
Wu Tingsheng	Zhejiang	BAT	(SHWSZL 56:155)
Ye Chengzong	Zhejiang	Standard oil	(SHWSZL 56:155)
Chen Guanyi	Guangdong	Standard oil	(Zou 1989:121)
Yuan Hengzhi	?	International Banking Co. foreign cloth	(Wu SHWSZL 56/74)
Xu Chunrong	Zhejiang	Deutsche Asiatische Bank foreign cloth	(Wu SHWSZL 56/76)

of BAT. Salary was an important part of their income. At least during the period under discussion they were not independent merchants.

An important quality for a comprador, in the case of American cigarette sales, was wide connections with other

Chinese merchants rather than just a knowledge of some foreign languages. Other social connections with officials, gentry, militarists, businessmen, and even peasants were also helpful, as Wu's case indicated, for troubleshooting was one of the main functions of compradors (Cochran 1986:170). Their other important job was to recruit and organize Chinese distributing merchants in Shanghai and attract regional sales representatives in other areas of China. Wu, for example, co-founded the Shanghai Tobacco Trade Guild in 1898, which initially had ten members* (Cochran 1986:171). While Wu was in charge of sales in the Lower Yangzi River Valley area, Li was a leading BAT comprador in North China. In 1905, Li attracted merchants in nineteen new locations to become BAT dealers (Cochran 1986:171).

In the early years of BAT's expansion into the China market, compradors apparently played an important role and compradors defended BAT's interest most vigorously because of the close relationship among them. As I shall discuss later, Wu Tingsheng tried to help the sale of American cigarettes during the boycott movement in 1905. But even in 1905, compradors were definitely not as important as they were in the nineteenth century in foreigners' trade with Chinese. Compradors, if they were not actually merchants themselves,

*According to another source (SHWSZL 56:156-157), Jinlong, an American firm in charge of cigarette sales, had six contract Chinese firms in Shanghai. They were Yongtai, Fuhe, Qiankunhe, Ye Dexin, Yongshengchang, and Shunxinyuan.

were increasingly overshadowed in the early twentieth century by Chinese merchants who controlled sales networks (see below). Standard Oil thus had a different approach when it began to expand to China in the late nineteenth century by hiring Ye Chengzhong and later Chen Guanyi (Guangdong) as its sales representative (Zou 1989:121). Similarly, American cotton textile sales in China relied more on Chinese merchants than compradors.

Wholesalers

While the compradors were indispensable because of their language ability, which enabled them to act as intermediaries between foreigners and Chinese merchants, they were not as essential in the sales mechanism as distributing merchants. The same was true with the sales of American goods in China in the early twentieth century. While many studies have been done on BAT's activities in China, we have only scattered information about BAT's distributing agents, especially their relationship with smaller retail merchants in the early twentieth century, probably because an extensive retail network throughout China was yet to be established. Still, some tentative generalizations can be made based on available information.

First of all, the actual sales techniques were designed by Chinese merchants, not by foreigners or compradors, whose role was confined more or less to advertising (Cochran 1986:172-173; Cheng in SHWSZL 56:157). More importantly it was

BAT's distributing agents (or wholesalers)* who innovated ways to recruit retailers and maintained special relationships with the retailers. Zheng Bozhao, a cigarette merchant who became BAT's distributing agent, serves as a good example to illustrate the key role played by wholesale merchants in the mechanism of American cigarette sales in China (Cheng in SHWSZL 56:156-177).

Zheng was a clerk (who later became manager in probably 1904 or 1905) of Yongtaizhan, a wholesale warehouse established about thirty years before it was affiliated with BAT (Cheng in SHWSZL 56:155-156; Cochran 1986:173). It became a franchised firm selling American cigarettes when BAT was established in 1902. At first Yongtaizhan was franchised to sell one brand, *Pirate*. Later a different brand, *Ruby Queen*, was added to Yongtaizhan's sales list as a reward for the firm's successful sales record (SHWSZL 56:157).

Yongtai, like other franchised stores--there were six of them in the early twentieth century in Shanghai--had to sell a certain amount of cigarettes in order to renew its contract with BAT (SHWSZL 56:157). The more it sold, the more commission it got, and the larger amount of cigarettes it would get from BAT to sell.

Thus the relative success of a distributing agent depended on a dependable retail network. In this respect Zheng

*I use the term wholesaler in accordance with my discussion of merchants who sold other American goods, especially American cloth.

was one of the most successful agents of BAT. He used Yongtai's old retailers in the Shanghai suburbs and diligently recruited new retail merchants in other areas to sell BAT cigarettes (Cheng in SHWSZL 56:157-158). Apparently, Zheng chose his own regional retailers basically on his own terms. He stressed business experience and long-term relationships of trust instead of financial strength. Thus small merchants with little means, if they worked hard and had selling ability, were given cigarettes on consignment. Once the relationship was established Zheng would not replace a retailer for small problems. Zheng's retailers, on the other hand, would work hard and carefully for him (SHWSZL 56:160-161).^{*} The loyalty of the retailers therefore could be expected, even during unexpected events such as the 1905 boycott movement.^{**}

BAT had several other Chinese distributing firms in Shanghai in the early twentieth century. They were Fuhe, Qiankunhe, Yedeqing, Yongshengchang, and Shunxinyuan. These distributing firms had their own retail network (Cheng in SHWSZL 56:157). BAT also had its regional distributing agents

^{*}It should be noted that the discussion on Zheng is largely based on the information provided by Zheng's long-time secretary Cheng Renjie, who did not work for him until 1921. While there is little information on Zheng in his early years as BAT's distributing agent, Cheng's account can give us some idea of the way Zheng gradually established his retail network, for which he was highly regarded by the BAT.

^{**}It is said that during the boycott movement of 1905, Zheng changed the name of Ruby Queen to make it sound like a British brand and he was successful in selling the brand even during the movement (SHWSZL 56:157).

in other cities such as Tianjin, Baoding, Taiyuan, Fuzhou, and Ningbo. (Cochran 1986:171-172; Wang 1983:335). Apparently not all of these distributing firms were conducting cigarette sales alone, especially in the early years of BAT. Many of them continued to sell a variety of other goods besides cigarettes (Cochran 1986:172). It is hard to estimate to what extent these distributing firms relied on cigarette sales, of American cigarettes in particular, for their business. Given the fact that cigarette smoking was a relatively new phenomenon and a wide variety of methods of tobacco consumption (smoking, inhaling, or chewing) were still popular, there is no reason to believe that many merchants depended entirely on American cigarette sales for their livelihood. Thus yielding to popular pressure during the boycott movement, at least temporarily, was the rule rather than exception, as some contemporaries testified (Wang 1983:335).

The situation of cotton textile imports and sales in China was somewhat different. The textile imports had a much longer history, and textile merchants had organized their sales network much earlier, in the mid-nineteenth century. A group of wholesalers (*pifa shang*) began to appear during the same period. The wholesalers in the textile business played the key role in selling foreign cotton fabrics, American fabrics in particular. Unlike cigarette merchants, some Chinese merchants of foreign cloth (*yangbu shang*) began to

order their goods directly from manufacturers abroad under the so-called indent system (*dinghuo zhidu*) in 1879 (SHDWMY 112). Under the indent system, foreign firms in China acted like compradors themselves. They ordered the goods (the quality and quantity of which were decided by Chinese merchants) for their clients and earned commissions. It was the Chinese wholesale merchants who owned the goods ordered and who took the risk of the changing market situation (SHDWMY 112-113).

The numerous wholesale firms in Shanghai developed because of the rise of many retail stores selling foreign goods, from which the wholesale firms themselves developed in the late nineteenth century. The wholesale business became profitable also because many merchants of other areas (*kebang*) came to Shanghai to purchase large quantities of foreign goods (BHSYS 22). Tianjin's foreign cloth merchants, for example, established *shengzhuang** in Shanghai and purchased large quantities of foreign cloth from Shanghai wholesale firms for good prices (Linyuanwenzi 103). A Chongqing merchant talked about the ways in which the foreign cotton wholesale trade was conducted in Shanghai. According to him, Shanghai wholesale merchants ordered cotton textiles from *yanghang* (foreign firm) merchants--only two of which did not take orders from Chinese merchants. After a deal was made, the price would be decided according to the current rate of the British pound sterling and Chinese silver. When the goods were

*Residence stores in Shanghai (*sheng*).

delivered, Shanghai merchants would pay with local bank (*qianzhuang*) promissory notes. A Sichuan merchant, on the other hand, had to order foreign textiles through a local merchant or a broker. The purchase contract was signed by the local merchant, who earned 0.5 percent commission but had to pay for the shipping fee. The Sichuan merchant could go to the contract foreign firm to examine the contract in order to make sure no fraud was involved. If the ordered goods were not received in four weeks, the Sichuan merchant could cancel the order. On the other hand, if in two (sometimes four) weeks, the buyer was not able to pay, the foreign firm would keep the five percent deposit (Yao ed. 3:1549). The wholesale merchants were financially powerful. They also knew the market and, to some extent, controlled the market by determining what to order and the price. The attitude of the wholesale merchants, especially those of American cotton textiles, towards the boycott movement played a very important role in the course of the event. As I shall discuss in Chapter Five, they opposed the movement most vigorously and tried various ways to sabotage the movement.

Retailers

In the sales network, retail merchants were most numerous. In the early twentieth century, international trade developed on such a large scale in Shanghai and other port cities in China that special stores were established to sell particular goods, foreign goods included. In Shanghai, for

instance, retail stores were divided into several different types, each of which were famous for their particular goods. Generally speaking there were Beijing goods stores (*jinghuodian*), Guangdong goods stores (*guanghuodian*), Beijing and Guangdong grocery stores (*jingguang zahuodian*), and foreign and Guangdong goods stores (*yangguang zahuodian*).*

Beijing goods stores mostly sold native handicraft goods but also sold a few small foreign items, such as towels, socks, foreign candles (*yangzhu*), kerosene (*yangyou*), foreign needles (*yangzhen*) and cloth. These stores were normally very small family stores with only one or two apprentices (BHSYS 14-15). With limited financial sources, these stores usually had few goods in stock. A typical Beijing goods store had a business of less than 200 taels a month (BHSYS 15). But stores of this type were numerous and their customers were ordinary city dwellers.

All the other three types of retail stores were usually larger and sold goods from Guangdong and from foreign countries. These were also family stores but with share capital from others. Their business was about several thousand taels a month, on average and they had more variety of goods than family stores selling Beijing goods (BHSYS 17). The bigger a store was the more foreign goods it would carry. Many large retail stores were concentrated in foreign concessions

*The development of the retail stores can be summarized as: *jinhudian* (1840)--*guanghuodian* (1850)--*jingguang zahuodian* (1860)--*yangguang zahuopu* (1870; BHSYS 13-14).

on Nanjing Road, Henan Road, and Qipan Street. On Nanjing Road alone there were about twenty large retail stores selling foreign goods, among other things (BHSYS 22).

Retail merchants were not only most numerous but also dealt with customers most directly. Thus their support of the movement was most solicited. Compared with the wholesalers, retail merchants were small merchants with little means who usually sold a variety of goods. For these two reasons they yielded more easily to the boycott pressure, as I shall show in the next chapter.

2. Political Consciousness of the Merchant Class

Considering the fact that Chinese merchants did play a leading role, at least initially, in the 1905 boycott, an analysis of the political consciousness of the merchant class is necessary. Merchant was not just an economic category. Chinese merchants played much more than just economic functions in late Qing China, as Rankin (1986) and Rowe (1984, 1989) have convincingly argued. According to Rankin, the late Qing local elite activism by gentry-merchants in Zhejiang included supervising welfare projects, financing local education, organizing militia, water control, road construction, as well as business activities (Rankin 1986:Chapters 3-5). Likewise, Rowe's well researched studies on Hankou show that the merchants and their organizations not only played leading economic functions in the city but also

became community leaders on social and political affairs (Rowe 1984 and 1989). Exactly because of these extrabureaucratic managerial activities by non-official elites, Rankin and Rowe argue that the role played by Chinese merchants in the intermediary area between official and private realms in late imperial China was very similar to that played by the bourgeoisie in the public sphere in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe (Rankin 1986:15-21, *passim*; Rowe 1989:183-86).

Nobody can dispute the fact that elites--many of whom were merchants or engaged in commercial activities--began to play an expanding role in local, sometimes national, affairs in the post-Taiping era as the dynasty declined. The question, however, is whether this expanding role by non-official elites represented just quantitative and cyclical change or a qualitative breakthrough in late Qing politics. In other words, did the elite managerial activism lead to expanding political demands from which a new power relationship would eventually emerge? These questions are important because Habermas argues explicitly that the structural and institutional transformation in eighteenth-century Europe led to important political changes--more open and democratic political systems (Habermas 1992:Chapters 7 and 11).*

*As Geoff Eley points out, "In other words, the public sphere derives only partly from the conscious demands of reformers and their articulation into government. ...[T]he latter were as much an effect of its emergence as a cause. Socially, the public sphere was the manifest consequence of a much deeper and long-term process of societal transformation....The category of the public was the

For this reason and because of the scope of this study, I would like to address the current debate* on the Chinese public sphere by analyzing the political consciousness of the merchants in late Qing China. This issue is also very important to an understanding of the behavior of merchants during the movement since apparently economic interests did not directly and exclusively decide the merchants' political behavior.

For Rankin, there is no question that the expanding managerial functions played by the elites, merchants included, led to their rising political consciousness. She argues that elites' initiatives went beyond local concerns to lead to interest in national affairs and politics due to domestic and foreign pressures (Rankin 1986:29,301).** To quote her:

unintended consequence of long-run socioeconomic change eventually precipitated by the aspirations of a successful and self-conscious bourgeoisie..." (Eley 1992:290-1).

*See articles in *Modern China*, Vol. 19 No. 2. [April 1993] and in Calhoun ed., 1993).

**Rankin's view of the society/state power relationship in late nineteenth century is quite sophisticated and well versed. As she puts it (1986:28): "When state and local interests clashed, the disputes remained specific and isolated. The elites still derived privileges from their association with the state, and conflicts with officials were likely to create a desire for improved contacts within the government rather than foster collective demands for separate political power." She adds on quickly that this situation had decisively changed since the promulgation of the New Policies of 1902: "This situation had already changed substantially during the late 1890's, and the Qing New Policies, which mandated sweeping administrative reforms after 1902, completed the disequilibrium" (Rankin 1986:28).

A characteristic of the last Qing decade was the simultaneous outward extension of local and provincial elite activists to the national level. This nationalistically inspired and soon highly politicized process overshadowed the local defense of elite interests against the state, and ultimately it pulled the most dynamic organizations of the public sphere into revolutionary politics (Rankin 1986:29).

Rowe's study ends at an earlier point (1895) and is confined more strictly to urban merchants. Yet he, though to a lesser extent, shares Rankin's sanguine evaluation of the merchant elites' political consciousness. He sees rising nationalistic sentiment and detects on the part of the Hankow merchants and urbanites "a growing hostility to foreigners that was less related to innate criminality, or to cultural chauvinism, than it was to a protonationalist resentment of foreign arrogance toward Chinese" (Rowe 1989:273).

At least three recent studies on late Qing merchants and merchant organizations by PRC scholars (Yu 1993; Xu and Qian 1992; Zhu 1991) support the view that merchants, more specifically the newly-founded chambers of commerce, represented a new political as well as a social and economic force. Zhu Ying (1991) argues that:

...after the new type of merchant groups emerged, the industrialists and merchants were much better organized and their class consciousness increased. They became an independent [social] class. ...The bourgeoisie began to lead large scale anti-imperialist patriotic movements (Zhu 1991:13).

More specifically, he argues that the political consciousness of the merchant class manifested itself in three aspects:

nationalism, a sense of social and historical responsibility, and the idea of grouping (*jie tuanti*; Zhu 1991:43-52). Similarly, Yu Heping (1993:Chapter Five) points out that although merchants formerly had not participated politically at all except for publishing some reform suggestions in the late nineteenth century, they began to take political actions in an organized fashion after chambers of commerce were established in the early twentieth century. Xu Dingxing and Qian Xiaoming (1992) point out in their study of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce that Shanghai merchants and industrialists were among the first to introduce Western ideas into China. Such influential businessmen as Zheng Guanying, Zhang Jian, Xu Run, Zhu Dachun, and Zhu Yunzuo were vocal advocates of Western learning (Xu and Qian 1992:24-27). In the early twentieth century, Shanghai merchants began to adopt a Social Darwinian world view and publish ideas about commercial warfare (*shangzhan*) in such merchant periodicals as *Jiangnan shangwubao*, *Shangwubao*, and *Xuanbao* (Xu and Qian 1992:29,33). The political consciousness of the "new social class," a term used by Xu and Qian (1992:35), was also transformed into political action in the 1905 boycott, rights recovery movement, self-government demands, constitutional reforms, the 1911 Revolution, and later in the May Fourth Movement (Xu and Qian 1992: Chapters 3-5).

However, this sanguine assessment of the merchants' political consciousness is challenged by some China scholars.

Wakeman (1993) believes that Rankin and Rowe have exaggerated the independence of merchants' activities and their organizations from governmental interference and bureaucratic domination. In fact, Xu Dingxing himself in an earlier study on Shanghai gentry-merchants stresses the dependent position of Shanghai big businessmen upon the Qing state by pointing out the fact that 1) many big businessmen such as Yan Xinhou, Sun Duoseng, and Xu Run were former officials themselves; and 2) many successful businessmen sought official privileges and protection by purchasing honorific official positions. The most famous examples are Ye Chengzhong, Zhu Baosan, Zhu Dachun, Xu Chunrong, Shao Qingtao, and Zeng Shaoqing (who later became the leader of the boycott) (Xu 1988:53-55). As far as Western ideas were concerned, he admits that "what could be absorbed by the people of industrial and commercial realms was very limited" (Xu 1988:56).

The most disparaging view of the Chinese bourgeoisie's political consciousness is offered by Zhang Yegong and Xu Siyan (1992). They argue that until the late 1920s the Chinese bourgeoisie (as represented by chambers of commerce) were politically passive, observing the motto "being merchants, talking commerce" (*zaishang yanshang*, Zhang and Xu 1992:110,114). They point out that although the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was involved in constitutional reforms, the railroad recovery movement, and the 1911 Revolution, this foremost merchant organization played only marginal roles in

all these events. Far from playing the role of community leaders the Shanghai merchants participated in these political movements only for their narrow interests and for a quicker return to stability and normalcy (Zhang and Xu 1992:111-114).

Chinese merchants, Zhang and Xu argue, were politically myopic. Although they began to develop some political consciousness in the early twentieth century, their nascent political consciousness was never transformed into a modern sense of political participation. To protect their short term economic interests they could easily give up political principles and rights (Zhang and Xu 1992:113). The reasons for the merchant class's political impotence were, according to Zhang and Xu, the traditional educational background of merchant leaders,* organizational weakness,** state suppression, and lack of leadership capability and confidence on the part of business leaders (Zhang and Xu 1992:126-27, 129-30).

While these criticisms sound too harsh and the authors seem to demand something historically impossible from Chinese bourgeoisie, these studies persuasively explain why Chinese

*The educational background of merchant leaders changed in the 1920s. By that time, many bourgeois Chinese had more systematic Western educations (Zhang and Xu 1992:130).

**All the sub-committees of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, for instance, were established for economic purposes. Such modern institutions as schools, libraries, arbitration offices for commercial affairs, and commercial investigation bureaus were established for general education and for improving commercial activities (Zhang and Xu 1992:126).

merchants and capitalists played at most only secondary role to Chinese intellectuals and students in modern politics. Modern Chinese political history might have been very different if the Chinese bourgeoisie had played more a significant and active role.* In 1905, Chinese merchants, I would argue, had a chance to play first fiddle. The fact that the merchants abandoned their leadership responsibility half-way through the boycott significantly tarnished their image. The painful and unsuccessful experience during the boycott significantly affected the merchant class's future political performance.

All the above assessments of Chinese merchants' political consciousness have the advantage of looking at the issue from a long and broad perspective with different comparative emphases. Rankin, Rowe, and Xu and Qian stress changes in and the modernizing aspects of Chinese merchant elites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as compared with traditional elites and traditional merchants. Wakeman stresses the differences that still existed between Chinese merchants and the Western bourgeoisie despite the changes in China. He bases his central argument upon the intimate relationship between social elites and the state. Zhang and Xu examine the

*Reflecting upon the 1989 pro-democracy movement in China, some scholars argue that "the constituent elements of a nascent civil society are relatively limited in number, largely urban based, mainly centered in the intellectual-student community" (cited in Chamberlain 1993:202).

Chinese bourgeoisie in general, including merchants. They try to find why Chinese capitalists' political performance did not match their economic strength and social influences. They argue that compared with other social groups, intellectuals and students in particular, the Chinese bourgeoisie's political apathy was obvious and deplorable.

My purpose is more specific. I try to show the factors that contributed to or hindered merchants' leadership role in one of the first and most important political protests in early twentieth century China. This sort of specific case study can test the usefulness of higher-level generalizations such as those I have summarized above. My focus will be on the merchant leadership of the boycott movement, but I shall use a different approach from the one I used to analyze the intellectual leadership of the boycott because merchants participated in politics as well as other social activities much more as groups than did intellectuals (Bergere 1989:140-86; Yu 1993:1; Zhang and Xu 1992:107-109; Zhu 1991:8-9). As Marie-Claire Bergere points out, for the Chinese bourgeoisie family relations and regional links played a fundamental role in their personal careers (Bergere 1989:140-41). Politically merchant organizations, which were formed along both regional and trade lines, played crucial roles. I shall first make some general observations about merchant leaders at the time, and then examine more closely some important merchants' organizations to illustrate my point.

First of all, merchants were politically pragmatic. More specifically, they were not interested in or good at political articulation and theorization. Despite the claim that merchants were among the first to introduce Western ideas into China (Xu and Qian 1992), there were very few publications specifically for merchant consumption and the few such periodicals that were published in the late Qing had little to say about political affairs (Zhang and Wang eds., 1962-63). As one contemporary merchant deplored: "Merchants do not pay attention to current affairs, do not read newspapers, and therefore are not enlightened" (in Zhang and Wang eds., 1962, vol.1, part 2:891). Out of about one thousand newspapers, literary journals, and periodicals published in late Qing only three were published by merchants and for merchants. They were *Gongshang xuebao* (f.1898, Shanghai, weekly), *Jiangnan shangwu bao* (f.1900, Shanghai), *Shangwu bao* (f.1903, Beijing, three issues monthly). I have not found a single article published by merchant periodicals on American mistreatment of Chinese immigrants or on the boycott. The latest and presumably most influential of the three, *Shangwu bao*, clearly had official ties (JDQK vol.2:1151). Virtually all the articles in seventy issues of the magazine published from December 1903 to January 1906 were strictly devoted to specific commercial affairs. Not a single article was on or related to constitutional reforms (JDQK vol.2:1151-1153). Also revealing is the fact that of the several hundreds of important political commentaries published

in the first decade of the twentieth century none was from a merchant periodical and only one was by a merchant study society (Zhang and Wang eds., 1962-63).

Political pragmatism is, however, not the same as political apathy. Merchants were in fact very active politically in the early twentieth century on policy issues very closely related to commercial affairs. Concerned merchants considered promoting business in general to be a measure of national salvation (the idea of commercial warfare). In 1904, gentry-merchants Sun Duoxing, Sun Duoseng, and Xu Run* established the Shanghai Society of Commercial Learning (*Shanghai shangxue hui*) in order to "enlighten the merchants and expand trade" (*Shibao*, 25 August, 1904). Merchant scholars were also influential in the Shanghai Study Society (*Huxue hui*) founded the same year in Shanghai. The Shanghai Study Society was a scholarly society headed by Ma Xiangbo, an educator with substantial business and official ties.** The Society aimed at "opening [people's] minds,

*More about them later.

**Ma had a mixed Confucian-Western education. He served as secretary for the Chinese Minister to Japan. After he retired from public service in the late nineteenth century he had been active in education. He founded the *Zhengdan gongxue* in 1902. His educational efforts were greatly helped by the Governor General of *Liangjiang* (in charge of the provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Jiangxi). Because of his exceptional talent in making public speeches he was praised as the "first speaker of China." When the boycott movement started in 1905, he was the chairman of the Shanghai Study Society (*Huxuehui*), a scholarly study group (reminiscence by Li Qingya, Ma Yuzhang, Han Jingqi, and Lu Zhangpu in *Materials of Shanghai Local History* (*Shanghai wenshi ziliao*

encouraging dialogue of learning, and promoting the public welfare of the intellectual sphere." (JDSHDSJ:583). During the boycott movement both study societies organized boycott meetings.* Merchant political pragmatism was also reflected in their case-by-case approach and readiness to back off or to make compromises if their goals seemed unachievable (Zhang and Xu 1992)."

My second general observation is that merchants' official connections did not always make them politically inactive. It is certainly true that merchants, wealthy ones and community leaders in particular, had closer relationships with the official establishment. This is much more obvious when they are compared with intellectuals who were increasingly alienating themselves from the state. In the late Qing, the top stratum of the merchant class and politically influential merchants*** were a hybrid called gentry-merchants**** (*shenshang*). They were formed in two ways. One was urban gentry (traditional scholars and retired officials) turned into merchants. Such top leaders of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce as Yan Xinhou and Sun Duoseng were good examples. The

No.4, 1986:128-145).

*Unfortunately there are very few materials available for a more detailed account of the two study societies.

**See my discussion of the Zhong Shengyou case below.

***Most wholesale merchants that I discussed earlier in this chapter belonged to this group.

****Bergere uses the phrase "scholars and merchants".

former engaged in foreign affairs (*yangwu*) under Li Hongzhang before he became a banker, investor, and first general manager (*zongli*) of Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. Sun was from a scholar-official family. His grandfather was a *jinshi* and ranking Qing official. He himself was not very successful in the civil service examinations. After the New Policies were promulgated he and his brother Sun Duoxing invested in flour factories. Thanks to family ties, they obtained tax-exempt privileges from the Ministry of Commerce and their business developed very fast. The Sun brothers became very influential in the business world (Xu 1988:54).

The majority of the gentry-merchants were, however, merchants who assumed gentry (*shen*) status by purchasing official titles. The big wholesale merchants such as Ye Chengzhong, Zhu Baosan (kerosene and hardware), Zhu Dachun, Zhou Shengqing (iron and steel), Xu Chunrong, Shao Qingtao (foreign textile) and Zeng Shaoqing (rice and sea products) all held official titles. Unlike gentry-turned-merchants, this group of people's official connections were more symbolic than real.

More importantly, when the state itself was undertaking a reform policy as the Qing government was after 1901, and when the state itself had grievances against foreign powers, as was the case when Americans mistreated Chinese immigrants, merchants did not have to be rebellious in order to be politically active. The Sun brothers founded the Society of

Commercial Learning when the Qing government itself began to encourage commerce and industry (*shiye*). In the case of the anti-American boycott, officials from both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce were supportive, as I shall show in detail in the next chapter. Until the late 1910s the official-merchant relationship was probably more cooperative than antagonistic because the Qing government itself was the initiator of numerous modernizing programs. A recent study of the New Policies period goes so far as to argue

The real revolution of modern China, which dismantled China's 2,100-year imperial form of government and its philosophical underpinnings, was not the political Revolution of 1911 centered on the activities of Sun Yat-sen...and his associates. Rather, it was an intellectual and institutional revolution centered on the Xinzheng or New Systems Reforms of the late-Qing government, 1901-1910. The heroes of that revolution were not the self-proclaimed revolutionaries around Sun but, ironically, their targeted enemies--the Manchu government they were trying to overthrow and its conservative Chinese and Manchu official and gentry supporters. ...[T]he Xinzheng Revolution and its achievements have since 1911 served...as the real bedrock upon which postimperial China has defined its course intellectually and institutionally, even up to today (Reynolds 1993:1).

Thus close official connection should not necessarily disqualify the merchants' leadership position in society. As another scholar points out: "Historically conceived, civil society is as much a creature of the state as it is of society" (Chamberlain 1993:204).

The third point I would like to make is that politically regional links played significant roles in a national movement such as the 1905 anti-American boycott because merchants were

organized along regional as well as trade lines. Since it is crucial to understand the ways merchants organize themselves in order to understand their behavior in the boycott, I shall provide a more detailed analysis of some merchant organizations in general and the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce in particular.

3. Merchant Organizations in the Early Twentieth Century

During the period under discussion, Chinese merchants in large cities were generally organized along two often-overlapping lines: native-place associations and trade associations. Since Shanghai merchant organizations played a pivotal role in the boycott movement, let us focus on the way Shanghai merchants were organized.

Huiguan*

The first anti-exclusion meetings in 1905 were mainly organized by *huiguan* (Su JDSZL 1954/1:13-25). It seems that native-place associations were, at least politically, more conspicuous than trade associations. In Shanghai as in many other Chinese commercial centers merchants came from various places and were traditionally and naturally gathered along

*Generally speaking *huiguan* were native place associations dominated by wealthy and prestigious merchants, with people of various occupations and social status as members. *Gongsuo*, on the other hand, designated merchant organizations of the same trade. This study uses the above definitions. However, careful readers will find that the two terms were sometimes interchangeable. For example, the Guangzhao *gongsuo* was a native place association instead of just a trade organization.

native-place lines (Rowe 1984 Chapter 7). Many *huiguan* had been established in Shanghai since the mid-seventeenth century (SHBKZL:507-513). *Huiguan* were also among the longest-lasting social institutions in commercial cities. According to the *Shanghai Guide* of 1926 there were still sixty *huiguan* active in the most modern city of China in the 1920s (cited in Xu 1990:91).

According to the constitutions of the various *huiguan* in Shanghai, these predominately native-place organization performed above all sentimental functions. The phrase "to promote native-place sentiment" (*yilian xiangyi*) appeared in many constitutions of *huiguan* (SHBKZL *passim*). *Huiguan* were established to promote this native-place sentiment largely for two specific practical reasons. One was simply to provide a place where people from the same locale could pray to their commonly-worshipped gods. Many Chinese merchants believed in and relied on blessings from their gods. Secondly, *huiguan* and the estates they possessed also provided places where deceased compatriots could be buried, if the family of the deceased could not afford to have their bodies shipped home (SHBKZL 397). Of course, *huiguan* were also funded for more worldly reasons; such as to help native-place compatriots in their disputes with others in cities where people from all over China gathered (SHBKZL 397).

One of the most celebrated cases which had shown *huiguans'* social and political strength was that of the

confrontation between the authority of the French Concession in Shanghai and the Siming Gongsuo (the Ningbo Guild of Shanghai) over the latter's grave land. In 1874 and in 1898 the Ningbo Guild had twice successfully resisted the French municipal authority's attempts to construct roads which would disturb the graves of their fellow-townsmen (Remer 1933:13-14).

However, there were obstacles hindering the native-place organizations from playing a significant role in a nationwide popular movement such as the 1905 boycott. As an insightful reader of the *Shibao* pointed out, the Ningbo Guild's struggle was just for the land of one *gongsuo*. On the other hand, the boycott required the unified action of much broader social groups (*Shibao* 20 June 1905).

That the native-place organizations did not play decisive roles in the 1905 movement was also because their functions were not historically political. As time went on many *huiguan* failed to maintain their original attractions to their members. Quite a few *huiguan* were neglected by their members after the death of their original founders. *Huiguan* properties were often not cared for; documents were lost and many properties themselves began to become objects of dubious ownership claims (SHBKZL). While a few *huiguan*, most notably the Guangzhao Gongsuo, gradually took on new functions such as establishing schools and hospitals as Shanghai became an increasingly complicated modern city, many others were

satisfied with their traditional functions of god-worshipping and welfare activities. The privilege of performing these functions was increasingly an unattractive duty rather than an opportunity to advance one's power. As a result, this type of organization declined as other social groups began to play more prominent roles socially and politically.

Trade Gongsuo

The trade organizations known as *gongsuo* had a history as long as the *huiguan*. As Shanghai became a large commercial trade center in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *gongsuo* began to take the place of *huiguan* as more important merchant organizations, especially in the realm of commercial activities. An indication of the increasing importance of *gongsuo* was the large number of such institutions established during the period. From 1843 to 1911, there were at least forty-three trade *gongsuo* established in Shanghai, whereas only half that number of *huiguan* were founded during the same period (SHBKZL 507-513; SHYJZL 2/144-153). It was these trade guilds which regulated aspects of Shanghai merchants' commercial activities such as prices, market division, and new members. These trade organizations, along with native-place organizations, also provided the basis for local municipal administration in the late Qing (SHYJZL 2/154). During the boycott movement numerous public pledges of boycott against American goods were made by trade guilds instead of by individual stores (*Shibao* and *Shenbo* 1905,

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especially July and August issues).

It is important to point out, however, that the difference between native-place organizations and trade guilds was never absolute in Shanghai as well as in many other cities at the time (Rowe 1984 Chapters 7,8). While merchants in the same trade might not necessarily come from the same district or province, merchants from the same provincial locale were indeed often in the same business (SHYJZL 2/144). This can be seen from the fact that numerous names of *gongsuo* in Shanghai were preceded with locale designations, such as Shandong & Henan Silk Gongsuo, Ningbo Carpenter's Gongsuo, and Suzhong Jade Products Gongsuo.

Generally speaking, in Shanghai foreign trade was largely dominated by merchants from the three provinces of Zhejiang (especially Ningbo), Guangdong, and Fujian. Foreign trade was further divided by trade with the Western countries, with Japan, and with South Sea (*Nanyang*) areas (Singapore, Malaya, and the Philippines). The trade with Western countries and with Japan was mainly conducted by merchants from Zhejiang and Guangdong, whereas the *Nanyang* trade was predominately handled by merchants from Fujian (SHDYMY 1/chapters 3,4). Therefore it is probably true that the boycott affected the merchants from Zhejiang province the most, especially the large wholesale merchants.

Thus the merchants' interests were complicated by both common native-place sentiment and common trade interests.

These parochial interests were reflected in the Shanghai merchant organization par excellence--the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, which was established in 1904 in an attempt, among other things, to reconcile the contradictory interests among merchants. Since the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce played a crucial role in orchestrating the 1905 boycott movement, I shall discuss the organization in detail, with emphasis on its power over the merchant community in Shanghai, its leadership, and its relationship with the Qing government. For purpose of comparison and because of the available source materials, however, I shall also discuss aspects of another important merchant organization at the time--the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce (*Tianjinshi Zongshanghui*).

4. The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce

The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was established as a result of increasing commercial activities and the Qing government's reform policies in the early twentieth century. In 1902, the Shanghai Council of Commerce (*Shanghai shangye huiyi gongsuo*) was established to provide counsel for the Qing government in its commercial treaty negotiations with foreign countries. After the Ministry of Commerce (*Shangbu*) was established in 1903, the Shanghai Council of Commerce was reorganized as the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce (*Shanghai zongshanghui*) according to the *Concise Chart of Chambers of Commerce* published by the Ministry.

The stated purpose of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was to "bring together the people in the same trade; promote knowledge; investigate commercial affairs for the Ministry of Commerce's advice; maintain public interests and correct [unsatisfactory] guild regulations; provide good offices in disputes and present complaints for the victimized..." (TJSH archives 1/5; Xu SHYJLC 1988/1:242). The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce would be led by a general manager (*zongli*), an assistant manager (*xieli*), and sixteen (plus two alternate) board members (*yidong*). The managers would be elected annually by the members of the board and then confirmed and appointed by the Ministry of Commerce (TJSH archives 1/5-6). The managers' qualifications included: 1) good character and reputation; 2) having a solid business in Shanghai; 3) being familiar with official documents and having rational thinking ability; 4) being a member of the chamber; 5) aged around forty.

The number of members was not decided in 1904 when the Chamber was first founded because it was uncertain how many merchants would join the organization. However, the maximum number could not exceed fifty according to the regulations of the Ministry of Commerce. It is important to note that the membership was actually given not to individuals but to merchant *bang* (merchant groups based on common native-place relationship) and *hang* (trade associations). According to the charter of the chamber, a *bang* or *hang* which made

contributions to the chamber of 300 taels annually could elect one representative (member) to the chamber; for a contribution of 600 taels, they could elect two members; for 900 or more taels, three members. The qualifications of a member were: 1) good character; 2) doing business in the trade; 3) rational thinking; 4) having personally made financial contributions to the chamber; 5) aged about thirty years old. Individual merchants who made financial contributions of more than 300 taels a year could be special members of the chamber (TJSH archives 1/5-20).

The charter of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce also stipulated that the elected managers and members should not decline the positions and those who failed to pay membership fees or failed repeatedly to show up at chamber meetings could not vote. The charter further provided that the elected managers and board members had to attend chamber meetings on time. Absences due to sickness should be communicated to the chamber in advance, and three absences without good reason would be punished (the penalty would be decided by members according to circumstances). The chamber was supposed to be an independent merchant organization, yet with a close and subordinate relationship with the Qing government, the Ministry of Commerce in particular. According to the charter (clause 72), the decisions by the chamber on important commercial matters should not be implemented without the consent of the Ministry (TJSH archives 1/5-20).

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Soon after the founding of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, several other chambers of commerce were established in Beijing (April 1904), Tianjin (6 December 1904), Xiamen (July 1905), Guangzhou (22 September 1905), Suzhou (November 1905), and Hunan (24 December 1905). Many more were established after 1906 (TJSH archives 1/301-303). These chambers of commerce largely followed the model of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce in their structures, at least according to their respective charters (TJSH archives 1/4).

The power of these chambers of commerce lay in their prestige as community leaders rather than on their solid legal bases. The charter of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was very vague about its jurisdiction. The chamber confined its responsibility largely to commercial affairs, and it could only discipline its disobedient members by stripping them of membership and imposing fines (TJSH archives 1/5-20). The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce's action in one case involving two Shanghai merchants may illustrate what the chamber tried to do in asserting its authorities and also its power limits.

The case involved a merchant named Yang Yunzhi, who had a *juren* degree and the title of *Daotai* (*houbu dao*). Yang was charged by his business partner Zhou Liuji with monetary fraud. Legal action was taken by Zhou, the Municipal Council of the Concession (*gongbu ju*) interfered, and Yang was subsequently arrested by the Concession foreign police. The newly-founded Shanghai Chamber of Commerce believed that the

case should be solved between Chinese merchants with the Chamber as go-between. The Chamber distributed a meeting notice to Shanghai merchants regarding the case and about two hundred people attended a meeting on 24 May 1905. Speakers stated that disputes among Chinese merchants should not be brought to Concession authority and no lawyers should be hired in monetary or debt disputes. Zhong Jinzheng, a board member of the Chamber, spoke for the Chamber. He insisted that while the Chamber could not interfere with legal disputes, the Concession police should not arrest decent Chinese merchants for trivial monetary disputes (*Shibao* 29 May 1905).

Although there is no record to show how the matter was eventually solved, two points could be made about the Chamber's authority over Shanghai merchants based on circumstantial evidence. First of all, the Chamber had no way to stop a merchant from taking formal legal action against his fellow Chinese merchants if he decided the action would serve his best interests. Secondly, the Chamber could not legally stop the Concession police from arresting Chinese merchants, although the Concession authority had previously promised cooperation with the Chamber regarding disputes among Chinese merchants (Xu SHYJLC 1/243).

Despite the slight legal basis for its authority over merchants, however, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce began to play the role of community leader in several matters of public concern after its founding in 1904. In July 1904, for example,

the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce successfully thwarted a tax scheme by the Road Construction Bureau of the Southern City (*Nanshi malu gongcheng ju*). In August, the Chamber sent a telegram to the Minister of Nanyang Commerce demanding that Chinese merchants have rights equal to those of the foreign merchants (SHDSJ 583,584). In December 1904 and January 1905 the Chamber played the role of intermediary between the Qing authorities and Shanghai urbanites in a complicated murder case in which a Russian sailor killed a Chinese bystander, Zhou Shengyou (SHDSJ 587,590,591). Since the so-called "Zhou Shengyou case" was highly-publicized at the time and occurred right before the boycott movement, a little more should be said about the case and about the role the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce played.

About four p.m on 15 December 1904, two Russian sailors, whose battleship was seeking refuge in Shanghai during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), had a dispute with a rickshaw puller. One of the Russian sailors got angry and picked up an ax. He missed the puller, but hit a bystander named Zhou Shengyou right in his face, and Zhou died from the wound (SHDSJ 586). Since the Russian ship was seeking legal protection from Japanese attack by placing itself under Chinese sovereignty, the Shanghai Daotai demanded that the murderer be turned over to Chinese authorities despite extraterritoriality. The Russian consulate in Shanghai refused. While the Chinese authorities were ready to back off

from their extradition demand, the Shanghai urbanites' angry voices were hard to quiet, in part because the victim was a native of Ningbo, whose fellow compatriots claimed the strongest commercial and financial power in Shanghai. A meeting of Shanghai merchant representatives was held at the residence of the General Manager of the Chamber. Shanghai Daotai Yuan Shuxun also attended. At the meeting some suggested a merchant strike (*bashi*). The Daotai opposed the idea and stated the official position of non-recognition, that is to say, refusing to acknowledge the Russian court's verdict and sentence (SHDSJ 590).

Apparently Shanghai merchants believed they had at least some degree of political independence from the government, for they held another meeting at the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce on 14 January 1905. At the meeting, Zeng Shaoqing, who later became the leader of the boycott movement, pointed out that people could not trust officials to protect their interests, for they only "care about their own lives and well-being." Therefore he suggested that merchants organize themselves and find their own solution. Another merchant suggested cutting off all economic relations with the Russians. The meeting finally decided not to use Russian banks' currency from that day on (SHDSJ 590).

However, when thousands of shopkeepers and people from all walks of life gathered in front of the Siming Gongsuo, the Ningbo native organization hall, the leading merchants of the

Shanghai Chamber of Commerce began to worry about riots. They, along with the Shanghai Daotai Yuan Shuxun, rushed to the trouble spot and persuaded the passionate crowd to cool off. The next day, the Qing appointed Sheng Xuanhuai, a very influential official-merchant who had first suggested the establishment of chambers of commerce throughout China, to handle the case, along with the discredited Daotai (Xia 1988:345-352). Sheng successfully persuaded the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce to accept the final settlement between the Russian and the Chinese government: to compensate the family of the victim and sentence the sailor to an eight-year jail term and hard labor in Russia (SHDSJ 591; Xia 1988:351-353).

Compared to the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce apparently had even greater control over its members. In its charter, the Tianjin Chamber stipulated, among other things, that merchants could only wear plain but clean dress on ordinary days; that silk and other fancy dress should be reserved for special occasions; that on normal days merchants could have only one dish for each meal; that merchants were forbidden to visit brothels and other notorious places; and that merchants were forbidden to smoke opium as a habit. (TJSH archives 1/38-39). The punishment for the violators was also more specific and severe. Those who were caught in a notorious place the first time had to declare in the newspaper that they would not do it again. If caught a

second time, they had to pay a fine, and for a subsequent offense the guilty person would be expelled from the Chamber. Opium addicts were given a few months to quit, but if they did not their membership would be stripped immediately (TJSH archives 1/39).

The power chambers of commerce had over their members was ultimately decided by the number of merchants (or merchant groups) who found it was advantageous to become members at all. Studies have shown that merchants, especially those in relatively small cities, were initially reluctant to establish or join chambers of commerce. They thought it was just another government trick to get more taxes. But very soon the advantages of the chambers began to be obvious to Chinese merchants at large. From 1902 to 1904 only five chambers of commerce were established with a total membership of 3,593 throughout China, whereas in the single year of 1905 ten more were founded with a total membership of 14,703 (Zhu 1991:55).

Unfortunately we do not have detailed information on the membership of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. But from the fact that the most wealthy and powerful merchants in Shanghai became members or managers and board members (more later), it can be assumed that the Chamber of Commerce was by no means an organization of a few. The archives of the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce provide more detailed information on its membership. By 1905, thirty-two trade groups (*hang*) representing 581 firms

(*shanghao*) had already joined the Chamber (TJSH archives 1/276). The most important merchants' groups in Tianjin--Chinese banks, salt and grain *bang*, and cloth merchants--were all conspicuous members. All these firms were issued membership certificates and plaques for their doors. Among the 581 firms, fifty-nine went out of business and returned their certificates in 1905. However, the next year saw 191 new firms become members (TJSH archives 1/62). Among the members were twenty-six *yanghang*, thirty-five foreign cloth, and twenty-seven foreign medicine firms which might have been directly involved in the sale of American goods (TJSH archives 1/63-78). The sixteen oil firms might also have been involved in the sale of American kerosene, as well as vegetable oils. The only conspicuous absence from the membership list who might have been directly involved in the sales of American products were cigarette merchants. It is clear that the attitude of the chambers of commerce was an important factor in the boycott movement at least in such a commercially-important port city as Tianjin.

In Suzhou, which was not commercially as important as Tianjin in the early twentieth century, the Chamber of Commerce was established later and had fewer members when the boycott movement broke out. A 1906 report by the Suzhou Chamber of Commerce stated: "Since the founding of the Chamber, it has been a year. So far there are about forty *bang* which have already joined in the Chamber. However, there are

still quite a few which have not joined in. As the news spreads out they should gradually come along." (Suzhou Chamber Archives 67/24, in Zhu 1991:322). Presumably, the Suzhou Chamber had less control over Suzhou merchants.

Now let's look at the members of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, which was the exemplar of chambers of commerce in China. The Shanghai Chamber had five general board members (*zongdong*) who presumably had the ultimate authority over the Chamber. Of the five *zongdong* (in 1902), two were from Zhejiang province and both of them represented the *Siming gongsuo* as well as their trades. Two were from Guangdong, and one of them represented the *Guangzhao gongsuo*. One was from Qingjiang, Jiangxi province. Of the five general board members, only one (Zhu Baosan from Zhejiang) represented the hardware and foreign goods trade, which had substantial interests in imports of various kinds. Zhu Baosan himself, while representing the *yanghuo hang* (foreign goods trade), invested in a variety of other businesses such as insurance, flour, silk, airplanes, and banking. He also worked as a comprador for a British firm (Wang ed. 1957 2/965-966). Obviously none of the general board members profited primarily from the sale of American goods. On the other hand, all these powerful merchants engaged in a variety of commercial and industrial activities and could be affected one way or the other by the sale of foreign goods in general and American goods in particular. For instance, four of the five general

board members were involved in the banking business (Xu 1991:46).

The daily work of the Chamber was run by an executive branch, which was made up of a general manager, two assistant managers, and thirteen board members (*yi yuan*). In 1902, the general manager (Yan Xinhou) and one assistant manager (Zhou Jinzheng) were both from Zhejiang. The other assistant manager was from Jiangsu. Of the thirteen board members, six came from Zhejiang, two from Guangdong, one from Jiangxi, and four were of unknown origins (Xu 1991:46-47). Among the managers and board members, only one (Su Baoseng) profited primarily from the sales of foreign goods.

In 1902, the Shanghai Chamber had fifty-nine recorded members besides managers and board members. Four of them represented foreign goods firms which mainly sold foreign textiles, kerosene, and hardware. Of the four at least two were from Zhejiang, one was from elsewhere in Jiangsu, and one was of unknown origins. As was the case in the Tianjin Chamber, nobody represented the cigarette business (Xu 1991:47-50).

Zeng Shaoqing, who later distinguished himself during the 1905 boycott movement, was then an ordinary member of the Shanghai Chamber. He represented the Fujian *bang* (*Jianchao bang*) and the *Nanhua* business--sea food, rice, and other native products from southern China and Southeast Asia (SHDWMY 1/165-166; Xu 1991:50; Wang ed.1957:956). The *Nanhua* trade was

a conspicuous yet not particularly important business in Shanghai engaged in primarily by merchants from Fujian and Guangdong. In 1894 Shanghai merchants had 126,225,000 taels (81.4% of the total) of trade with Western countries (*Xiyang*), 14,998,000 taels (9.7 percent of the total) with Japan, and only 13,861,000 taels (8.9 percent of the total) with *Nanyang* (SHDWMY 1/190).

Unlike *Xiyang* merchants who traded with foreigners, *Nanyang* merchants' business partners were mostly overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. They sold Chinese local products tea, textile products, etc.--to overseas Chinese and brought various sea products and rice back to Shanghai. Economically, organizationally, and even culturally *Nanyang* merchants were significantly different from *Xiyang* merchants (SHDWMY 1/203). The former's business had little to do with foreigners and they were therefore more independent and presumably nationalistic. The latter, on the other hand, relied heavily on foreigners and were associated with things foreign. While more systematic study has to be done in order to decide whether merchants who sold Chinese products were more nationalistic politically than merchants who dealt with foreigners, suffice it to say that these two groups of merchants often at least had different family and educational backgrounds. As Wu Tingsheng's case indicates, *Xiyang* merchants usually had some sort of foreign education in their youth and later worked in foreign firms. On the other hand,

merchants who had business only among Chinese and sold primarily Chinese native products often did not have much contact at all with foreigners and things foreign. Zeng Shaoqing was no exception to this rule. Since he was probably the most important figure during the boycott movement, let us take him as an example.

Zeng was originally from Tongan, Fujian province. "When he was young he read widely [in Chinese] and dabbled with painting" (Wang ed., 1957 2/956). Zeng's family engaged in overseas trade for generations, but it was not until Zeng Shaoqing's time that the Zeng family became commercially prominent in Shanghai (Wang ed., 1957 2/956). Zeng's success was associated with the famous *Nanyang* trade firm Malcampo & Co. (*Fuyunan*), which was established in 1860s in Shanghai by Su Ziming, who was also a Fujianese. Su's interests and ambition were apparently not limited to pure commercial activities when he established the *Jianding Huiguan* (SHBKZL 275). Zeng became Su's business partner after Malcampo & Co. was established. The firm mainly imported various sea products to Shanghai from overseas Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia. The firm also exported grain, silk, and other Chinese local products to *Nanyang* Chinese (SHDWMY 1/165). After the Boxer Uprising in 1900, Zeng imported rice to China from Southeast Asia. He made a name for himself by selling the relief rice at a low price, and he also showed his sound business sense by making a lot of money (Wang ed. 1957 2/956). In 1905, Zeng

became the manager of Malcampo & Co. when Su died and Malcampo & Co changed its name to *Defahang* (SHDWMY 1/166,416).

Although he was in his late fifties, Zeng's position in Shanghai business circles rose steadily. Not satisfied with trade only, Zeng invested in the insurance business in Shanghai, paper industry in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, and porcelain manufacture in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi from 1905 to 1907 (Wang ed. 1957 2/1094). In 1905, he became board member of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce representing the *Nanhuohang* and the Fujian gang (*bang*). In December of 1905, he was elected the general manager of the Chamber.

However, Zeng's rise as a prominent figure in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was not because of his accumulated wealth. Nanyang trade was not a significant business in Shanghai, as I have pointed out earlier. Zeng's new investments in industries were not outstanding either, compared with other merchants/industrialists at the time. Yan Xinhou, the general manager of the Chamber from 1902-1905, had investments four times larger than Zeng's (Wang ed., 1957 2/1092-1094). Of the thirteen big investors in national industries, Zeng ranked eleventh (Wang ed., 1957 2/1091-1095).*

Apparently, Zheng Shaoqing's prominence among merchants

*This is by no means a complete list of investors in national industries during the period. For instance, Zhang Jian, who allegedly invested twenty times more than Zheng Shaoqing (Zhang 1984:468), is not on the list.

in Shanghai was largely because, like his former business partner Su Ziming, Zheng's interests went far beyond business circles. He was a leader of the Fujian merchants, and also simultaneously a secretary of the Jiangsu Society (*Jiangsu xuehui*) in charge of financial matters (SHDSJ 608). His interest in social and political affairs was shown first, but by no means only, in the Zhou Shengyou case, when he advocated self-reliance in solving the case. However, like most other wealthy merchants at the time, Zeng was by no means radical or in any way rebellious against the Qing regime. Quite the contrary, he associated with the regime, just as many other merchants did, by purchasing the title *Daotai*.

Several other leading merchants of the Shanghai Chamber also deserve special attention, not because they were particularly active during the boycott, but because they engaged in the import business, American goods in particular, and they had every reason to abort the boycott as soon as possible. They were Shao Qintao, Xu Chunrong, Su Baosheng (in the foreign cloth trade), Ding Qinzhai, Xu Wenwong (in the kerosene business), Zhu Baosan (foreign goods), and Zhu Dachun (machinery).

Among them the most wealthy and powerful in the Chamber were probably Zhu Baosan and Zhu Dachun. Zhu Baosan was a *zongdong* and a board member of the Chamber in 1902. He became assistant manager in 1905 and also served as a board member in later years. Zhu Dachun was a member of the Chamber in 1902

and became a board member after 1906, possibly earlier (Ding 1983:502). While the two were definitely involved in the trade with the United States, they became wealthy and powerful largely because of their other business. Both of them had been compradors working for British firms and had invested in a variety of trades and industries (Wang ed., 1957:958-960,965-966). Therefore, their business could not be fatally affected by a boycott against American goods alone.

On the other hand, a boycott movement could be disastrous to the other merchants, especially to merchants in the foreign cloth business. While these merchants were not the most powerful in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce (Shao and Ding were both ordinary members of the Chamber in 1902; Su was not on the 1902 membership list of the Chamber), their influence and voice in the Chamber were by no means negligible. Their position in the Chamber was definitely rising. In 1906 at least three of them became board members of the Chamber (Ding 1983:502). More importantly, these merchants had extensive and intimate relations among themselves and with other powerful merchants in Shanghai. For example, Xu Chunrong, who represented the foreign cloth trade in the Chamber, was a business partner of Shao Qintao and a close friend of Yuan Hengzhi, a comprador of the American International Banking Corporation as well as a foreign cloth importer. Shao Qintao and Yuan Hengzhi were sworn brothers (Wu in SHWSZL 56/74,88,103,106). A leading foreign cloth merchant, Xu

Chunrong, also invested substantially in banking, in which he had Xi Ligong, a very wealthy merchant/industrialist, as his partner. The business partners were also in-laws (Wu in SHWSZL 56/101). The connection with the Xi family was important because the Xi family was not only very successful in business but also had official connections. Xi Ligong's father was a sworn brother of the then-Shanghai-daotai Yuan Shuxun (Wu in SHWSZL 56/98). Business connections were further strengthened by native-place relationships, for virtually all of these merchants mentioned above were from Zhejiang (with the exception of Xi Ligong who was from Suzhou, which like Zhejiang was also a Wu dialect area), a province with negligible emigrants.

Economically, these merchants and merchants represented by them had every reason to oppose the boycott movement, although they might go along with the movement initially under popular pressure. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to identify any merchant in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce who would gain substantially and directly from the boycott. Economically, therefore, a boycott made very little sense to Shanghai merchants. The boycott leadership of the Shanghai merchants can only be understood and explained from a social and political point of view. Shanghai merchants would only gain social and political prestige from the boycott, not economic power.

Chapter Five

The Politics of the Boycott: The Limits of People's Power

As I have pointed out in Chapter Four, a boycott against American goods was to achieve political purposes by using economic means. While the boycott was economically detrimental to merchant interests in Shanghai and other large cities, it was blessed by "public opinion" (Iriye 1967:216-238) led by intellectuals who controlled the media (see Chapter Two). This is not to say that all merchants were opposed to the movement. In fact most merchants were supportive of the movement, not only because it was a just cause but also because the boycott allegedly would help the merchant interests in general in their *shangzhan* (commercial warfare) against foreign business interests (see Chapter Three).

The rising merchant class exemplified by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce adopted, and eventually led, the boycott despite the potential economic hardships because of the rising political consciousness of merchants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Zhu 1991:43-52) and because of the practical fact that merchants provided organizations and controlled the trade mechanisms. Their attitudes became the focus of the public and they were

pushed to take action. As I shall show in this chapter, the leading merchants in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce pledged their support of the boycott largely as a short-term retaliatory measure for its symbolic effect rather than as a serious long-term political and economic plan.

This was evidenced by the fact that the actual leader of the boycott movement was a lesser merchant, Zeng Shaoqing, who was patriotic but not the most powerful in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. He represented only a not-very-important group of merchants in Shanghai (see Chapter Four). While the boycott was certainly not in the best interests of the merchant class, however, even those who profited from the sale of American goods the most initially worked to change American policy toward Chinese, in hopes that the anti-American sentiments which were hurting business would end soon. Only when the movement actually started and seemed to become an open-ended commitment did the concerned merchants begin to sabotage the boycott and undermine the united front. It was in fact the merchants themselves, represented by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, not the Qing government, who took the first step to see the end of the movement.

The 1905 boycott movement against American mistreatment of Chinese immigrants started with popular enthusiasm and solidarity blessed by official acquiescence. However, the people's solidarity began to collapse when the Chinese

merchant interests were seriously damaged and when the boycotters had difficulties defining a clear and practical goal of the boycott. This chapter will show that the boycott failed because of its widening goals and narrowing means. As the popular movement unfolded, its goal became an open commitment to total justice instead of specific political demands. On the other hand, the boycott degenerated from a collective action to individual consumer choices when large merchants decided to uphold their rights not to boycott. The concept of people's rights led to a dilemma when the people could not agree among themselves. But the failure of the movement testified to more than just the failure of the concept, it also demonstrated the degree to which the social elites--gentry-merchants--relied upon the state.

1. Defining the Scope of the Boycott

When boycott as a strategy against the exclusion acts was adopted by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce on 10 May 1905, the scope of the boycott was not clearly defined. Initially, the boycott was understood as a much more extensive retaliatory measure against Americans and American institutions--schools, newspapers, and churches--as well as American goods. It was only gradually that the boycott against American goods became the only focus and the rallying point of the movement. The way in which this consensus was achieved--by open and rational discussions

through newspapers and public meetings--somewhat resembled the way in which political issues were supposedly handled in the liberal public sphere in Europe.

On 13 May, three days after the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce decided on the boycott, the Speech Society of Public Loyalty held its own meeting. The meeting decided that Chinese should not only boycott American goods but also American schools (*Shenbao* 16 May 1905). Four days later, Zhang Zhujun, one of the women activists in Shanghai, suggested a more radical boycott strategy in an open letter to the *Guangzhao gongsuo*, one of the most active native-place organizations during the movement (see Chapter Four). She suggested that porters not carry American goods; Chinese employees working for American hospitals, churches, consulate, and businesses quit their jobs; and students in American schools quit their schools (*Dalu bao* No.4, 17 May 1905).

Despite the fact that some people did resign from their American employers' posts as newspapermen, teachers, and business clerks, they spontaneously and freely took these actions as individuals. The most publicized case in point was Wu Woyao, the famous novelist, who resigned as a writer for *Chubao*, an American-owned newspaper in Hankou. These people were cheered for their patriotic deeds (*Shibao* 19 June 1905). But theirs were not planned and organized boycotts. Only school students took collective actions.

Some young students in Shanghai were apparently excited by the popular sentiments. On 21 May students of the *Qingxin shuyuan*, an American missionary school in Shanghai, walked out of their campus to protest American exclusion acts (*Shibao* 24 May 1905). But the boycott against the American schools did not last and few students of other American schools, the most prominent of which was St. John's University, followed suit.*

"Public opinion," as expressed in major newspapers such as *Shenbao*, *Shibao*, and *Dagong bao*, considered boycotting schools too radical. Suzhou gentry and merchants, for instance, publicized their concern to *Shenbao*, one of the most circulated newspapers in Shanghai. They agreed only to boycott American goods, but not to boycott American schools, hospitals, and churches, which they considered to be beneficial to the Chinese and to have nothing to do with the immigration law (*Shenbao* 19 June 1905). An article, which was originally published in *Yangcheng ribao* and later

*One historian argues that the students' action was significant and that they played the most active role in the boycott movement (Li, 1993:8-9). Evidence, however, does not support his argument. Not many students quit schools and those who did walk out returned to their schools very soon (see my discussion below). School students were indeed very active in large cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing, and Beijing. But they followed the leadership of the merchants and intellectuals instead of acting as an independent political force in this popular movement. The consular despatches by American diplomats in China used the term "students" in a broad and misleading way referring to both the petty intellectuals and school students. In fact, only the former played the role of intellectual and organizational leaders for the boycott.

reprinted in Shanghai's *Shibao*, shared this view. It contended that going to American schools was a matter of scholarship. It should not be banned even between enemy countries (in *Shibao* 23 June 1905).

Tianjin merchants also contributed to the discussion through newspapers. They were even more cautious in their decision to go along with the boycott against American goods but not to dissolve schools and hospitals associated with Americans. They argued that hostile actions against Americans in China would violate international law and therefore exhorted people "not to take reckless actions" (*Shenbao* 25 June 1905).

Not only did the merchant organizations advocate boycotting American goods only, but the intellectual leaders of the movement also shared their concern and wanted to have the movement under strict guidance. From the conservative and elitist journal *Diplomacy* (*Waijiao bao*, No.117, 5 August 1905) in Shanghai to the popular *Anhui Vernacular* (*Anhui suhua bao*, No.21-22, 13 September 1905:1-15), a wide range of journals and newspapers published articles advocating actions. Behind these cautious warnings was the fear that the mass movement might develop into another Boxer Uprising (*Anhui suhua bao*, No. 21-22, 13 September 1905:12-13). This fear of turmoil and its devastating blow to business was felt most keenly by merchants in Tianjin, where the Boxer Uprising in 1900 had caused tremendous damage. The "Boxer

turmoil" (*quanluan*), as it was called by many contemporary newspapers, had hit the business section in Tianjin the most. A large quantity of silver was taken away by the allied forces and most stores were looted. As a result of the event, inflation went up 200 percent and merchants were desperately short of cash to conduct trade and other business (Hayashibara 1987:107). Therefore the Tianjin merchants, while agreeing to boycott American goods, repeatedly warned against "reckless actions" (*Tagong bao*, 13 June , 19 June 1905).

From 18 May to 21 May 1905, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai Study Society, Society of Commercial Learning, and Speech Society of Public Loyalty jointly and respectively held public meetings in Shanghai. These meetings again resolved to boycott American goods (*Shenbao* and *Shibao*, 20 May to 23 May 1905). The only other action suggested at these meetings was to engage in anti-exclusion propaganda by comrades from *xuejie* (the realm of learning).^{*} They would be in charge of holding speech meetings and printing anti-exclusion materials (*Shibao* 22 May 1905). Thanks to the intellectuals and students, a large quantity of anti-exclusion materials were produced (see Chapters Two

^{*}The term *xuejie* (the realm of learning) was widely used in conjunction with and as opposed to "*shangjie*" (the realm of commerce) during the boycott movement. The denotation of the term *xuejie* was, like the phrase *shangjie*, quite broad and vague. It referred to scholars, petty intellectuals, and students who were associated with newspapers, publishing houses, bookstores, and schools.

and Three).

Among the discussions of the scope of the boycott, the most persuasive and comprehensive analysis was probably provided by an article initially published in *Shuntian shibao*, a newspaper in Manchuria, and later in Shanghai's *Shibao*. It stated:

Three boycott resolutions were proposed in public meetings organized by Shanghai merchants. They were 1) in both public and private services, no Americans should be hired; 2) Chinese under American employment should resign from their posts immediately; 3) Chinese should not ship and sell American goods....

The first would not affect American interests very much but would have implications in political and educational areas. The second option would have to sacrifice the livelihood of numerous Chinese before it would work.... The third method is the best and easiest to implement. That is to use peaceful means without much fanfare yet powerful enough to paralyze American commerce. Although the boycott is something new in China, it is often practiced in Europe and America over economic disputes (in *Shibao* 20 June 1905).

Through these open public discussions mainly in the press and public meetings, the movement was gradually narrowed to boycott American goods only. Although no individuals or organizations had the legitimacy and the authority to issue orders, a consensus was apparently reached on the issue.*

If they were determined to have a peaceful and limited

*Later when the boycott actually started in late July, 1905, some people and organizations went beyond this restraint, but their actions were never legitimized through open public discussions in the press. The Qing government's crackdown on the popular movement started because of these actions.

boycott, Chinese urbanites were equally determined to have the boycott start according to a schedule set up by the public. Once the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce promised to inaugurate the boycott in two months if the United States did not change its immigration policy, it was impossible for the Chamber to back off from its position without losing its credibility.

Even when the two-month ultimatum was challenged by the newly arrived American Consul General James L. Rodgers, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was obliged to stand by it. On 21 May Rodgers invited leading merchants in Shanghai to the American Consulate to try to persuade them to call off, or at least postpone, the boycott (*Shenbao* 23 May 1905). Rodgers argued that the current talk of boycott was the result of misunderstanding and that the two-month ultimatum was not reasonable because the United States Congress would not convene and discuss the matter until six months later. Rodgers also warned that a boycott might damage the friendly relationship between the two countries (*Shibao* 22 May 1905; *Shenbao* 23 May 1905).

Zeng Shaoqing, who had been at the center of boycott agitation and therefore become focus of public attention, replied that the mistreatment of Chinese immigrants was well known to everybody and the two-month deadline could not be changed just because of American Congressional procedures. To the sixty-year old merchant, the idea that tens of

thousands of Chinese immigrants' livelihood would be disastrously affected just because of some meeting schedule was absurd. Zeng conceived the issue at stake to be on a higher plane. He argued: "All of us would of course like to hear amendments to the immigration treaty. But even the current treaty does not explicitly include a mistreatment clause" (*Shenbao* 23 May 1905). Zeng believed that the real issue went much beyond legal process to involve politics: that the United States government had submitted to the Labor Party's pressure (*Shibao* 22 May 1905; *Shenbao* 23 May 1905).

Su Baoseng, a foreign cloth merchant (ref. Chapter Four), agreed with Zeng Shaoqing that the status quo could not go on for another six months. But Su was worried about his business more than the welfare of the Chinese immigrants. As a wholesale merchant dealing large quantities of American textiles, he could not afford to take such a noble stand as Zeng did. He pleaded to the Consul General that a solution had to be found soon, for even if the boycott did not really start the public sentiment would certainly affect the sale of American goods. He added that some of his orders for American linen were placed six months in advance for delivery at the end of the year. Therefore a large amount of money was at stake (*Shibao* 22 May 1905; *Shenbao* 23 May 1905).

Although the meeting eventually ended with talk of traditional friendship between the two countries, nothing

substantial was achieved as far as the immigration issue was concerned. The Shanghai merchants were as obligated as they were before in carrying out the boycott promise on schedule, whereas the Consul General did not even report the meeting to the State Department, let alone suggest any policy changes. After all, the Shanghai merchants might well back off from the boycott when the day came, given the interests they had at stake. One good sign to this effect occurred when the Shanghai merchants held a party for the American businessmen and officials in Shanghai several days later on 28 May. The atmosphere of the party was so amiable that the American Consul General got the impression that the boycott would not be in effect in two months' time (*Shenbao* 20 July 1905). In fact, even if the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce had really wanted to call off the boycott it could not have done so.

The Shanghai merchants were simply under tremendous public pressure to launch the boycott on time. The meetings with Americans were closely watched by the public, as they were publicized by such major newspapers as *Shibao* and *Shenbao*. *Shibao* not only published the conversation between Mr. Rodgers and the merchants, but it also commented on the Consul General's remark that the boycott would harm friendship between the two countries and the Chinese people should wait for Congress's decision in six months. It stated:

We Chinese have suffered from the exclusion treaty for more than twenty years. We cannot bear [the exclusion] any more; therefore we begin to speak of boycott. For our Chinese we have already waited for too long. How can the American Consul say it is not the proper time to act because the Congress is not going to meet for six months? Besides we can put pressure [on American policy makers] only before the issue has been discussed and the treaty is signed.... As for the argument that a boycott would damage the friendship between the two countries, it is absurd. How come it is not considered to harm the friendship when Americans exclude Chinese for several decades and it is when we begin to talk about boycott? (*Shibao* 22 May 1905).

On the same day that the *Shibao* eloquently refuted the Consul General's remarks regarding the boycott, it also acknowledged the complicated problems a boycott might involve. The newspaper sought solutions from the general public by putting out an advertisement soliciting ideas on the specific methods of the scheduled boycott. It said:

Today the [abolition of] the exclusion treaty is the most important and urgent issue of all. We comrades have resolved that not to use American goods is the best tactic. But there are extremely complicated problems involved. If any insightful gentlemen have good ideas on how to implement the boycott please write us. We shall publish your ideas to the public. Many thanks (*Shibao* 22 May 1905).

There were indeed many problems involved in carrying out the boycott. One of the most obvious problems was that most consumers could not possibly distinguish American goods from those of other foreign countries. Therefore, the most effective way to carry out the boycott was to persuade merchants not to order and sell American goods.

Some concerned urbanites in smaller cities realized this early on. Hangzhou intellectuals, for example,

published a letter to Zeng Shaoqing in late May which suggested that the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce simply command Hangzhou native merchants in Shanghai who had been in the business to stop dealing with American goods. By so doing, the letter argued, the boycott could be carried out most efficiently, because people in Hangzhou and in the entire country would certainly support the patriotic action (*Shibao* 24 May 1905). This, of course, was not possible, for the Chamber did not have the authority to issue such a command (see Chapter Four).

For the small retail merchants who carried some American goods but did not rely upon selling American goods for their survival, stopping the sale of American goods was not a serious problem. They would sacrifice some interests for a popular and a good cause. Some of them just waited for the boycott notice from the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, as the Shanghai bookstore association pledged to do (*Shibao* 24 June 1905). Some merchants in interior China even acted without waiting for the notice from Shanghai and for the scheduled date. The Hunan Commerce Bureau, for example, decided to purchase German rice processing machines instead of American ones despite the fact that the latter were of better quality (*Shibao* June 24, 1905).

However, there were definitely some merchants who wanted to continue to sell American goods, at least those goods in stock, given the fact that they had little extra

capital in hand (see Chapter Four). Another problem involved with the boycott therefore was how to deal with these merchants. Some suggested mutual watching and punishment measures (*Shibao* 26 May 1905). As I shall show later, these measures were eventually carried out only on very limited scales due to the fact that large numbers of small retail merchants' livelihoods were at stake. More importantly, few chambers of commerce had the authority to discipline their members. Their charters did not give them that authority (see Chapter Four).*

A more serious problem with the boycott lay in the fact that the attitudes of the retail merchants toward the boycott movement, one way or the other, were not as important as those of wholesale merchants who dealt with large quantities of American goods. These merchants, whose behavior I shall discuss shortly, were not willing to stop *ordering and distributing* American goods, not only because larger interests were at stake but also because these activities were less visible than *selling* them in retail stores. Wealthy Shanghai wholesale merchants could and would continue to order American goods and even distribute them to wholesale merchants from other areas, at least before the two month deadline. It is obvious that the more they ordered and distributed American goods before the boycott formally

*One of the major chambers of commerce, the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce, did have the power, but it called off the boycott even before it started (see below).

started the more difficult it would be for the boycott movement to be implemented later. The American goods in the possession of Chinese merchants would inevitably serve to divide Chinese urban communities against each other.

Unfortunately, only a few concerned individuals pointed out this potential problem at the time. In the crucial period before the scheduled boycott, the most powerful and active social groups such as the Man-Mirror Study Society (*Renjing xueshe*), Speech Society of Public Loyalty, and the Book-Reading Society of Yangzhou (*Yangzhou yueshu she*) in Shanghai and other cities focused their attention almost exclusively on mobilizing and educating the general public--the consumers--instead of on the real source of the problem--the wholesale merchants. They seemed to be too busy organizing public meetings and distributing flyers to devise a workable and effective boycott strategy. These social groups, led mainly by intellectuals, did not have the required knowledge and specialization to design such a strategy. But the real reason for the lack of action in persuading the wholesale merchants not to order American goods before the deadline was probably a matter of credibility and legitimacy: no individual or organization could openly advocate not dealing with Americans without a grace period, let alone enforce the idea. The only thing the activists could do before the boycott officially began was to let the general public recognize and persuade them not to

buy American goods once the deadline arrived.

Thus, beginning in late May the boycotters in Shanghai, mainly those from schools and various study groups, had started a campaign to educate people about American products. The Shanghai Study Society, for example, collected donations to print flyers describing trademarks on American products (*Shibao* 26 May 1905). Gong Ziyang, the general manager of the Society, donated 10,000 flyers (*Shibao* 29 May 1905). In Guangzhou, the same campaign was organized by charity halls (*shantang*) which were sponsored and controlled by merchants. This is because in Guangzhou intellectuals did not have the same strength as they did in Shanghai, and also because, as I have shown in Chapter Four, the Guangdong merchants did not have substantial investments in trade with the United States.

By late May and early June, however, concrete boycott methods did begin to take shape, thanks not to the merchant organizations but to some literary groups and concerned and insightful individuals who published their suggestions in newspapers, *Shibao* in particular. One letter to *Shibao* by a member of the "common folk" had a set of very insightful suggestions:

1. Investigate the amount of imported American goods and their shapes, color, etc. Set up an exhibition to display samples of American imports;
2. Have the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce take the responsibility of finding out which business firms deal with American goods and let them pledge not to order American

goods before [the deadline]. For those American goods which have already been ordered, a list should be made and turned over to the Chamber of Commerce in order to prevent fraud....

3. Set up strict punishment measures for those who secretly order American goods. If found, Chinese banks (*qianzhuang*) will not do business with them and the names of the merchants and their firms will be published in newspapers for their damage to the solidarity (*Shibao* 28 May 1905. Emphasis mine.)

In a letter to Zeng Shaoqing of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, several individuals were deeply upset by the fact that the Chamber failed to take effective preparation measures before the scheduled date of the boycott. They urged Zeng to contact various merchants of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce to take immediate action and stop ordering American goods first. They argued that "[We] have to stop ordering American goods [now] in order to carry out the boycott effectively." (*Shenbao* 20 June 1905. Emphasis mine). Another concerned individual also suggested the need for more concrete and coherent boycott strategies than mass meetings and aimless speeches. He complained that although numerous meetings were held by merchants and intellectuals none of these gatherings went much beyond talking randomly about not using American goods (*Shibao* 29 May 1905).

By late June, many boycott activists and sympathizers began to be very suspicious and critical of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce for its inaction. About one month before the scheduled boycott day, the Man-Mirror Study Society demanded that Chinese merchants stop ordering American goods

immediately (*Shibao* 22 June 1905). Letters were pouring in to Zeng Shaoqing (*Shenbao* 24 June 1905; Zhang 1966:76). Most of these letters questioned Zeng why no action had been taken by the Chamber and warned Zeng not to be fooled by American sweet words promising reform in the future (*Xinwen bao* 19 June 1905, cited in Zhang 1966:76). One letter even went so far as to suggest that Zeng might have accepted bribes from Americans. Zeng was obliged to publish his defense in Shanghai newspapers and pledge to carry out the boycott measure to the end if no satisfactory reforms were taken by 20 July 1905 (18 June 1905 lunar calendar), the deadline (*Shenbao* 21 June 1905).

But what exactly would constitute *satisfactory* reforms? This was another thorny issue for which the boycotters needed to come up with an answer. Again, it was some concerned individuals who began to discuss the exact goals of the boycott in newspapers. The same person who criticized aimless speeches suggested that the leadership of the boycott first of all find out precisely to what extent the immigration treaty must be amended. Boycott organizers, he further suggested, also needed to think about what should be done if Americans only partially amended the treaty; what if the treaty had been changed but the reality of the exclusion and the mistreatment were still the same? (*Shibao* 29 May 1905).

These suggestions touched on the most complicated issues of the boycott. Yet, since the first meeting of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce on 10 May 1905, the boycott activists had largely ignored the exclusion treaty itself. While there was much public discussion of the methods of carrying out the boycott, there were no public meetings devoted to the discussion of specifics of a satisfactory treaty regulating Chinese entering the United States. Apparently such a complicated matter as an immigration treaty could not possibly be discussed, let alone decided, by the general public, as the boycott tactics could. The real problem was, however, that both the merchants and the intellectuals were too reluctant seriously to consider the future treaty between the two countries.

On the treaty issue, they relied almost entirely on the Qing government, which they did not trust in the first place. The typical attitude in this regard was expressed by the phrase "discussion of the treaty by the government; boycott by the merchants" (*yiyue zaiguan; dizhi zaishang*, *Xinwen bao* 3 June 1905, cited in Zhang 1966:80). The phrase expressed a tacit understanding between the boycotters and the government that neither party would interfere with the other's legitimate sphere. What the boycott activists wanted from the Qing government was only that it would not sign a treaty with the United States behind the back of the public (*Shibao* 24 May; 29 May 1905). In a letter to the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, Zeng Shaoqing went so far as to demand that: "...this time the treaty draft has to be sent to Shanghai merchants to see before the Ministry can sign it." (Zhu ed. 1958:146-7). But the boycotters did not know and could not agree upon what kind of treaty--if any treaty at all--they wanted the Qing government to have with the United States.

Most Qing high officials were actually sympathetic to the boycott cause (Zhang 1966:62-72; *Shenbao* 14 June)* though no one knew where this movement would lead. Under popular pressure of unprecedentedly wide scope and solidarity, the Qing government had no plan to sign a secret treaty with the United States, whose treatment of Chinese, including Chinese mandarins, was humiliating to the Qing government as well (see Chapter One). On the other hand, it was very unlikely the Qing could and would negotiate a treaty with the United States which could satisfy all the boycott groups, given the fact that these groups were divided among themselves on the issue.

On 4 June 1905, *Shenbao* published a treaty draft by Liang Cheng, the Chinese Minister to the United States. This was probably the first time in Chinese diplomatic history that a treaty draft with foreign countries was ever published

*According to *Shenbao* (14 June 1905), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined the request by William W. Rockhill that the boycott movement be stopped by the Qing government.

in a privately-run newspaper. The draft included several important revisions of the previous treaty. It provided, for instance, a narrow and clear definition of the laboring class and made it clear that non-laborers should not be excluded. On the other hand, it acknowledged the U.S. right to exclude Chinese laborers who fell into the definition (Article 1). It also allowed Chinese laborers en route to other countries to travel via the United States. While it required the Chinese laborers traveling via America to obey the law of the United States, it prohibited violation of the laborers' rights (Article 2). Article 2 also protected the rights of laborers already in the United States who wished to go back to China and then return to the U.S. The draft treaty further differentiated the United States proper from its territories, such as Hawaii and the Philippines, where Chinese laborers should be allowed to enter, as other Asian immigrants were (Article 4). Article 6 of the draft treaty stipulated that while waiting for admission to the United States, Chinese nationals should not be detained. If questioning was necessary by American administrative officials, the concerned Chinese nationals should be allowed to hire their representatives. Chinese nationals were also given the right of appeal and protection against arrest without warrant (*Shenbao* 4 June 1905; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, NA, RG85, 52320/27, cited in McKee 1977:95-6). On 12 June 1905 the treaty draft was also

published in Tianjin *Tagong bao* (*Tagong bao* June 12, 1905).

Considering the fact that this treaty draft was first submitted to the U.S. government in August 1904, the date of its publication in Shanghai and Tianjin in June 1905, when the boycott was building up momentum, was significant. It demonstrated the impact of the movement upon the Qing government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular. As early as 31 May 1905, Guangdong gentry and merchant had sent telegrams to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting the publication of the American treaty draft (*Shenbao* 27 May 1905). Four days later, Suzhou boycott activists similarly requested the text of the American treaty draft (*Shenbao* 27 May 1905). It is understandable, considering that negotiation was underway, that the Qing government could only publish the Chinese treaty draft. Still, the publication itself was significant. However, it is also significant that the publication of the treaty draft failed to provide a focus for the boycott." Little if any attention was paid to the draft treaty, and *Shenbao* itself did not make any comments on the draft.""

"This treaty draft was considered very reasonable by John Hay the Secretary of State and William W. Rockhill, the new American Minister to China. But the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor provided a counterdraft which was vastly different from the Chinese position (Mckee 1977:95-99). The negotiation in Washington did not lead to any solution of the problem.

""The only brief discussion of Liang's treaty draft was an article published in *Yangcheng ribao* (Guangzhou Daily). The article considered that the treaty draft needed only

The question of what the exact goals of the boycott were slowly caught the attention of increasing numbers of people just before the boycott was scheduled to start in July. But the public discussion of the issue was diffused and almost entirely ignored the position of the Qing Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An article published in *Lindong ribao* argued that the interests of merchants and laborers were intimately related and the mistreatment of merchants and other Chinese originated with the laborer exclusion treaty. Therefore the article insisted that the movement was not just to amend some of the clauses of the exclusion treaty, but was to abolish it in its entirety (in *Shibao* 18 June 1905). In an open letter to Zeng Shaoqing, a group of intellectuals in Shanghai argued that if the treaty was only to be amended and not abolished the exclusion acts would certainly not be abrogated either (*Shenbao* 20 June 1905). The famous novelist Wu Woyao and the literary society, the Man-Mirror Study Society, in Shanghai also expressed similar ideas (see Chapter Three; Zhu ed., 1958:151, 149; Zhang 1966:58-62).

What these suggestions amounted to was that no

minor changes to serve as the basis for the new treaty. However, no follow-up discussion was conducted to catch wide public attention (*Shibao* 24 June 1905:2; 27 June 1905).

On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not plan to use the boycott movement directly in strengthening its negotiation position with the United States. No record shows that there was any direct contact between the boycotters and the officials of the Ministry.

immigration treaty was in fact needed at all. Therefore the goal of the boycott seemed to be rather simple, i.e. to pressure the Qing government not to sign any treaty which was bound to be discriminatory and exclusive. This view was strengthened by an alleged talk given by Wu Tingfan, a Guangdong native who was a former Chinese Minister to the United States and a ranking official (*silang*) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When asked about the possibility that Chinese in America might be totally subjected to harsh American laws if the immigration treaty between the two countries was not renewed, Wu allegedly replied that the current treaty was the worst possible. In fact, if there was no treaty at all between the two countries the situation might be better, for the Americans could not invoke treaty rights to exclude Chinese (*Shenbao* 21 June 1905; *Shibao* 22 June 1905).

Some boycott activists also suggested the abolition of the treaty, but from a very different point of view. Instead of asking the Americans to open the door for all Chinese without discrimination, as the Man-Mirror Study Society did, some believed the solution lay in having all the Chinese in the United States come back to China. Therefore for them no immigration treaty was necessary either. For example, Zhang Zhujun, the woman activist in Shanghai, denounced those who preferred to stay in America as having a slave mentality (*Talu bao* 17 May 1905). Her view was shared widely by such

famous people as Lin Shu, and was also reflected in the popular novel *The Bitter Society* (Chapter Forty-eight in A Ying 1962).*

It is ironic that while the scope of the boycott narrowed to include only boycotting American goods, as I have shown earlier, the goals of the boycott broadened as the movement went on and the urban masses were more and more mobilized. The idea of abolishing the immigration treaty became so widespread that some changes which occurred in June and July in American treatment of Chinese entering the United States were almost entirely ignored. On 14 June President Theodore Roosevelt ordered Victor H. Metcalf, the "annoyingly inflexible" chief of the Bureau of Immigration, to issue "rigid instructions" to be courteous to Chinese entering the United States (Mckee 1977:127). In late June the Bureau began to moderate the regulations significantly (Mckee 1977:129).

The bottom line was still, however, that only

*It is interesting to note that in one of their letters to the Qing government suggesting a solution to the immigration disputes, some Fujian gentry-merchants asked the Qing government to take strict measures to prevent bogus merchants from obtaining merchant identification and punish those who tried to go to the United States under false identification (*Shenbao* 16 July 1905). But this suggestion was definitely not in accordance with the general sentiment of most boycotters, who advocated loosening the harsh immigration regulations by the United States. For most of the boycotters the source of the evil obviously lay in America's inhuman and discriminatory law.

privileged classes were to be admitted. Even the most conservative boycotters in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce did not find the changes significant enough to warrant cancellation of the scheduled boycott.* For most of the boycott activists, the changes in American immigration policy toward Chinese came too little, too late. If anything, the changes probably only encouraged the boycotters to carry out their mission more adamantly.

Several schools in Shanghai began to use stationery made in other countries as early as late May.** In early June the Guangzhou Chamber of Commerce found that the main American product sold in the Guangdong area was flour and the major users of the flour were the pancake stores. The Guangzhou Chamber of Commerce therefore requested these stores not to use American flour any longer (*Shenbao* 10 June 1905). These sporadic, individual, yet totally spontaneous actions quickly became a widespread, organized, in some cases coerced, mass boycott when the day for the showdown finally arrived.

2. Boycott!

*Such merchants as Su Baosheng and Shao Qingtao, for example, pledged boycott of American goods at the 19 July meeting despite the fact that they were extremely reluctant to do so (*Shenbao* 20 July 1905).

**On 27 May 1905 more than one hundred students representing twenty-seven schools in Shanghai held a meeting and decided not to buy American stationery for school use (Zhu 1958:156).

At 4:30 p.m. 19 July 1905 (June 17 lunar calendar), one day before the scheduled boycott, Shanghai intellectuals, students, merchants, and representatives from other cities, totalling about 1400 people, gathered together at the *Wuben nushu* (Wuben Women's School). Sixty-eight-year-old Dr. Ma Xiangbo, president of the newly founded Fudan Public College (*Fudan gongxue*, later Fudan University), made an inflammatory speech. On the one hand he challenged his audience to show Americans that Chinese could unite together in carrying out the boycott to the end; on the other he told them "a boycott was the *easiest* thing to do for it took [individual] voluntary actions with which American nor Chinese government could interfere" (*Shenbao* 20 July 1905. My emphasis).

Many people in various other towns and cities, as well as in Shanghai, must have been anxiously waiting for the day and the moment. Nobody seemed to pay much attention at all to the letter from the American Consul General Rodgers to Shanghai governor Yuan Shuxun, published on the same page in *Shenbao*, next to the report on the boycott meeting. The letter said Rodgers had already notified the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce days earlier that the American president Roosevelt had issued an executive order to give Chinese officials, merchants, tourists and students courteous

treatment.* Rodgers also predicted optimistically that a satisfactory treaty for merchants of both countries would eventually be reached (*Shenbao* 20 July 1905).

A serious and straightforward talk between Mr. Rodgers and Zeng Shaoqing on the next day, 20 July 1905, clearly showed the gap between American reforms and Chinese demands and showed why a mass boycott could not be headed off by minor changes in American immigration policy and by sheer diplomacy. The conversation, as published in *Shibao*, went:

Rodgers: Our [Congress] will not meet until November, why do you insist on what we cannot do now?

Zeng: Things change constantly. [We] cannot treat all matters the same way. For example, our last meeting was on Sunday, 21 May [1905], which was not an office day for me. The reason that I came over anyway was because it involved such an important matter that I had to come. If your islands are under attack, do you wait for the meeting to make a decision or do you just send out warships?

Rodgers: That is a war situation, whereas we are talking about a peaceful treaty, which is different.

Zeng: The [immigration] treaty is not an ordinary matter. [The Congress] should have discussed the matter last year when the treaty was to expire. If [the Congress had done so then] there would be no controversies today....

Rodgers: Our country has already begun to reform [its immigration policy] and our Minister [William W. Rockhill] also wants to settle the issue as soon as possible.

Zeng: This is very good. Why don't you then write me a pledge [of reform] in order for me to show to the public.

Rodgers: I cannot write such a pledge. But can't you just

*The news of the president's order to treat non-laborer Chinese courteously was published in *Shibao* (29 June 1905). But neither comment nor discussion was made by either the newspaper or by concerned individuals. The news was probably not significant enough to catch public attention.

trust me?

Zeng: I certainly trust you with all my heart, but I am afraid that the public does not trust me! (*Shibao* 22 July 1905).*

At this point the Shanghai merchants, represented by the Chamber of Commerce, could no longer back off and had to take the responsibility to lead the boycott.

On 20 July 1905, the same day after Mr. Rodgers failed to persuade Zeng Shaoqing to call off the boycott, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce held a public meeting. Unlike all the previous gatherings, the reluctant big merchants of Shanghai had to make a commitment now. The meeting was to decide specific measures to carry out the boycott. Under the tremendous public pressure Su Baosheng, along with several other merchants dealing with American products, pledged not to order American goods anymore after 20 July 1905. They were cheered by the audience who pledged not to use American goods after the same day (*Shenbao* 20 July 1905).

The success of the meeting was, however, more apparent than real. In the excitement of the moment few realized, let alone pointed out, the obvious distinction between "not to order" (*buding*) and "not to use" (*buyong*). The problem was that the wholesale merchants did not pledge not to sell American goods that were already ordered. But the

*The conversation was published originally in Chinese, which I have translated. The dates used in the dialogue were initially in the lunar calendar. I have converted all the dates into the solar calendar.

conflicting interests and views would end up dividing participants into two parts. One group of people represented by wholesale merchants' interests proposed to stop ordering American goods only--the "non-order faction" (*buding pai*). A banker and board member of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce named Xia suggested that merchants stop ordering American goods that day but consumers continue for another four months to buy American products which had already been ordered. Although this proposal was opposed by many at the meeting, the non-order faction prevailed at the time largely because the conservative social elites, not just large merchants, in Shanghai supported the position. Wang Kangnian (Ganqing), the owner of the conservative newspaper *Zhongwai ribao*, proposed that an investigation be conducted to identify ordered goods so as not to put concerned merchants into a difficult situation. He insisted that this was the only way to achieve non-use of American goods, for the boycott needed support from the merchants (*Shibao* 21 July 1905).

Another group represented by people from the Man-Mirror Study Society and the Speech Society of Public Loyalty insisted that non-order (*buding*) and non-use (*buyong*) had to be implemented simultaneously in order to be effective--they were the non-use faction (*buyong pai*). Their argument was that the continuous sale of some American goods would cause confusion and dampen the morale of the public (*Shibao* 21

July 1905). While both factions claimed support from individuals of various social classes and groups, the leaders of the two factions clearly belonged to two different social groups: big merchants and petty intellectuals. The former was represented by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce with support from such social elites as Zhang Jian and Ma Xiangbo; the latter was headed by the Man-Mirror Study Society and the Speech Society of Public Loyalty.

The meeting, however, reached a consensus to stop ordering American goods immediately, despite the opposition from such merchants as Han Runsheng and Wu Tingsheng, wholesalers of American cigarettes. At the end of the meeting eleven merchants representing iron products, machinery, foreign cloth, kerosene, flour, and timber businesses signed their pledge not to order American goods anymore (*Shibao* 21 July 1905).

The merchants' lukewarm attitude toward the boycott was in sharp contrast to the enthusiasm of intellectuals, students, small clerks, some of the retail merchants, and women's groups in various towns and cities throughout China.* Such a widespread popular movement testified to the

*After the 19 July meeting which officially kicked off the boycott, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce sent telegrams to that effect to thirty-five cities throughout China (Yang et al. 1989:382).

success of the propaganda on the one hand, and to the great degree of consensus on the other. But the increasingly large number of the participants in the boycott in various locales inevitably made the boycott against American goods too narrow a popular focus. Numerous individuals and stores in many cities did find expression of their loyalty to the cause in pledging not to sell and buy American goods. For most boycotters, however, not to sell and buy American goods was either not relevant or just not enough to show their patriotism and their sympathy for their fellow countrymen. They naturally took it as their duty to persuade and coerce others to do the same whenever it seemed necessary. Very soon a spontaneous popular movement began to demand involuntary actions from everyone. In July and August the movement reached its climax.* During this period various social groups--mainly the new type of organizations such as study societies and women's organizations--in different locales began to take boycott initiatives over from Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. These social groups not only intensified the boycott propaganda but also tried to enforce boycott measures.

A Political Movement Turned Theatrical

*This was true in Shanghai. In other cities such as Suzhou, Yangzhou, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou, the heyday of the boycott was in August and September. In Guangzhou the movement lasted the longest--to the end of the year (Zhang, 1966: Chapters Three and Four).

Once the non-elite social groups took over the initiative, the popular movement changed dramatically from rational discussion and organized petition to mass demonstration. Several new developments after late July signified the change of the boycott style from petitionary to theatrical: the appearance of a large quantity of popular literary and theatrical works, the use of posters and handbills as mass mobilization means, and public meetings which were held by and featured non-elite speakers. For these phenomena Habermas's concept of the public sphere seems a bit too unimaginative and narrow. However, scholars specialized in cultural history and collective action have fruitfully compared political protests with theatrical acts in order to show that collective action, often violent* and seemingly irrational, can in fact be rational, meaningful, and symbolic for the participants. The "crowd" were conscious actors themselves (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1992; Wasserstrom 1992; Hunt 1984; Desan 1989).

For me to look at the boycott as a drama and some sort of a festival is not only relevant, because it was tremendously dramatized by artists and writers of the time and perceived as such by some contemporaries, but also revealing of how people's sense of real and surreal affected their sense of public responsibilities and private rights.

*While the boycott never turned violent (see below), it did become dramatic.

A. Adopting Artistic and Literary Forms

In late July or early August, actor Wang Xiaonong (ref. Chapter Two) was having a show at Shanghai's Chunxing Tea Park. When he realized that boycott was at a critical stage he decided to energize the movement by performing a patriotic play. The play was entitled *The Arduous Journey* (*Ku luxing*), and started with Poland's historical experience under foreign invasions. The fate of Poland would, Wang believed, demonstrate the "disastrous consequences" of a people without patriotism. The case of Poland would also show the "miserable conditions of a people that lost its sovereignty." The middle of the play was "about the barbaric polity of the African red [sic] race in order to prove," Wang argued, "that our people are not an inferior race and are qualified to win [a racial competition]." Toward the end of the show "the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi*)* will issue an edict encouraging the Chinese people to carry out the boycott to the end." The drama was scheduled to play on two nights on 11 and 12 August, 1905.**

*Legendary Chinese ancestor sage.

**Wang Xiaonong and Xiong Wentong to Zeng Shaoqing in A Ying 1962:669. The letter did not have date on it. But from its content it is clear that the letter was written in late July and early August. No play script has been found and it not clear if the play was ever shown in public. However, at least one complete boycott play script, *The Adventure of Haiqiaochun*, is available (see Chapter Three) and there is little doubt that some sort of boycott dramas were acted out in Shanghai and Guangzhou.

At about the same time, a quite experienced writer was just finishing up a story which was about a group of unfortunate students (*dushu ren*) who were driven by poverty from their hometown and villages to look for fortunes in big cities such as Shanghai, Suzhou, and Guangzhou. Like other novelists at the time who played the role of muckraking journalists as well, this author also followed such exiting events as the boycott very closely. The novelist decided to let the protagonists of his story go to America to experience the misery of exclusion and then come back to join the boycott. The story was named *The Bitter Society* (ref. Chapter Three). Although the talented storyteller was not important enough to have his name recorded in literary or political history, the appearance of the novel on Shanghai's book market must have been some sort of a publishing event. It was praised at the time as a "moving" work that "could last" (A Ying 1962:15). Printing offices decided to sponsor its publishing (Zhang 1966:100-101). *Shenbao* continued to run an advertisement for the book for more than a week starting from 30 July.

For the majority of the urbanites, however, novels, no matter how well written, were definitely beyond their immediate reach. There is little doubt that the boycotter activists began to create numerous ballads. The following satirical song might have been the "most influential" boycott device of all (Cochran 1986:192). Composed in the

form of Cantonese love songs it playfully exhorted people
not to buy American cigarettes:

You are really down and out,
American cigarettes.
Look at you down and out,
I think back to the way you used to be.
In those days when you were flying high.
Who would have rejected you?
Everyone loved you, saying you make people happy
Because your taste overwhelms people
And is even better than opium.
Smelling it makes people's mouths water.
We've had a relationship
In which up to now there has been no problem.
I thought our love affair would remain
Unchanged until earth and sky collapsed.
Who would have expected that the Way of Heaven would not be
as always.
That human things might change.
Then this movement against the treaty got underway
And spread everywhere
Because America mistreated our Overseas Chinese,
Degrading us like lowly oxen and workhorses.
Therefore everyone has united to boycott America,
And that means opposing Americans.
What is the most ideal way?
People say it is best not to sell American goods,
And to this end we must all united into a collective body.

Ah cigarette,
You have the word American in your trademark for everyone to
see
So I must give you up along with my bicycle.
Our love affairs
Today must end.

Ai,
Cigarette please don't blame me.
Perhaps a time might come when we meet again,
But it must be after Americans abrogate the treaty.
Then as before I shall be with you again (A Ying 1962:14).*

The following song, also in Canton dialect, was composed by
members of the Feshan Self-strengthening Society just before

*I use an English translation of the song (Cochran 1986:192-93) with some changes.

the Mid-autumn Festival.* The song urged people not to use American flour to make mooncakes:

It is about the time of the Mid-autumn Festival.
Tens of thousands of families,
have their mooncakes ready,
 To celebrate the bright moon.
But if you use American flour,
the cake must not be clean
[because] flour from the Flower Flag [country]** is [made]
with Chinese blood.

...
So, please make a change
to use rice flour to make mooncakes,
It is easier and faster to make;
and it is cheaper and tastier.

Let us unite together
with our body and soul;
let us make a resolution to eat our own products,
thus, the moon and the sun will be bright again...(A Ying 1962:9).

In Shanghai storytelling and ballad singing in Suzhou dialect (*Suzhou pingtan*) was one of the most favored entertainment forms. An active boycotter and a member of the Man-Mirror Study Society, Xingqing, wrote a ballad in this style which was actually based on a boycott meeting held by Shanghai women (A Ying 1962:483-86).

In fact, many artistic and literary works of the boycott were based on real people and their stories. This fact had two potentials. On the one hand, because they were based on real events they might have been taken seriously and had tremendous emotional power despite the fact that

*Fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month.

**"Flower Flag" refers to the United States.

they were artistically crude and unsophisticated. On the other hand, the political movement was dramatized and as a result many people might have taken the movement as a show which had some distance from reality and soon would be over. Both potentials were superbly illustrated by some children's songs which were based on real stories.

One of these children's songs told a story about a thirteen-year-old school boy, Li, who set an example for kids in the boycott. According to the story, Li heard anti-exclusion speeches at school and was immensely moved. When he came back home, he found that there were many things in his home--perfume, carpets, and lamps--which were made in America. Ashamed and angered, he asked his parents to throw all these things away. His parents paid no attention to him since they thought he was just a kid and could not be serious. Outraged, Li smashed the American-made phonograph his parents had bought him. Once he was calmed down, however, he began to be afraid of being scolded by his parents. So he began to cry and refused to eat until his parents found out what happened and forgave him. Moved by Li's patriotism, the parents decided to throw away everything in the house which was made in America (Ding 1958:21).

Another children's song was written by Chu E, a nine-year-old-girl of Jiaxing, Zhejiang province. The song told the story of her own:

Listen, listen, listen
Keep quiet and listen to me sing.

My father speaks every day of banning American goods;
My mother talks every night of hating American goods;
Everybody says to discard American goods.

I hate American goods, too, all the times
So, I smash Linwen Perfume [in our house].
My mom is outraged,
but my dad gives me praises.

Everybody applauds,
Saying I am a wonderful child,
'cause too harsh are America's exclusion acts...(Xu et al.
eds., 1991:376-77).

In both cases, children took all the fanfare and rhetoric of the boycott more seriously than their adult parents, who consciously or unconsciously kept a distinction between a public event, which was half-real and half-theatrical for them, and private matters. The distinction of the adult world between public and private and surreal and real did not exist in children's minds. What was significant was that it was the children's view which triumphed because the subtle distinction of the adult world could only be silently kept in private and not be made openly in public.

B. Putting up Posters and Distributing Handbills

Another dramatic change in the method of propagating boycott ideas and mobilizing the urban masses after July was the use of posters. Formerly newspapers had played the key role as a public forum for the boycott movement. As posters

*Apparently Linwen Perfume was American-made, but I cannot find its American brand name.

and handbills overshadowed newspapers, emotions began to overwhelm reason. Posters were often in big characters, in vernacular or dialects, straightforward in their content, and anonymous (Consulate Dispatches, Shanghai, 17 August 1905). On 18 July vernacular posters appeared throughout Shanghai reminding people of the fact that the deadline was approaching and demanding that stores "must carry out [the boycott] measures" (*Shenbao* 19 July 1905). Later on, posters decorated walls, telephone poles, and store doors in Shanghai (Yang et al. 1989:382). One of the most common posters in Shanghai was printed in large bold type on paper eighteen inches by ten inches, and read, "In order positively to retaliate against the American treaty, you cannot buy or sell American Goods. If you buy or sell American Goods you are lower than a pig or a dog." (Consulate Dispatches, Shanghai, 17 August 1905).*

In July in Guangzhou, posters in various colors appeared everywhere. On most of these posters were slogans such as:

The American treaty harshly excluding Chinese mocks universal principle (*gongli*); All the nationals of our country publicly pledge not to use American goods.

The boycott will continue as long as the harsh treaty is not abolished!

This store does not sell American products.

*The translation was by Mr. Arnold of the American Consulate in Shanghai.

Boycott American goods!

Posters were not like newspapers, which were available only in major cities. Boycotters in small towns printed their own posters and distributed handbills catering to the local folks. A handbill distributed in the Songjiang county area was typical. It used very simple words to tell people not to buy American goods and how to tell American goods from others:

Brothers, brothers! Now there is a most important thing [we] have to tell you. That is the Americans do not allow our Chinese to go to America and drive out our Chinese from their country. This is an important matter... therefore we exhort you not to do business with the Americans. Since many of you might not know what are American goods, we print out marks which American goods have. If foreign products have the following signs on them, do not buy:

United-States; United States of
America;

United States of North America; U.S.A.
(Shenbao 23 June 1905)

Clearly these posters and handbills were aimed more at the public at large than at merchants who were specialized in dealing with American goods. Even with the help of these posters and handbills, however, it was still hard for the consumers and the general public to distinguish various American goods, given the fact that brand names could be easily changed if the merchants really wanted to sell the goods in stock. Full cooperation from the merchants was thus considered crucial in making the boycott most effective. In

this respect, public meetings played a much more important role in committing merchants for the cause.

C. Public Meetings

After late July public meetings had continued to serve the purpose of educating and agitating the public but with distinctive new developments. Now the public meetings were more regularly held and more widespread. In Guangzhou, for example, public meetings were held three times a week (Ding 1958:15-17). Many meetings were no longer devoted to propaganda (posters and handbills replaced speeches in disseminating anti-exclusion ideas). They served a more practical purpose: to solicit pledges of not buying and selling American goods. These meetings often ended with resolutions and pledges signed by individuals and stores.

Occasionally resolutions passed by public meetings were accompanied with specific punishment measures for those who broke their pledges and who violated the principle of not using American goods. The Tianjin Chamber of Commerce as early as late June had decided that a fifty-thousand yuan fine would be imposed upon those merchants who continued to buy American flour, kerosene, and machinery. (*Shibao* 25 June 1905). But most of the public resolutions did not carry with them coercive measures, largely because most of the chambers of commerce did not have the authority to do so in the past (see Chapter Four). This was particularly true in Shanghai, where

the chamber had little coercive power other than to persuade bankers not to deal with boycott breakers and to publish names of the individuals and stores that dared to break their pledges. In Guangzhou the public pledge took a more traditional form, in which participants swore not to use American goods "in front of gods and ghosts" (Ding 1958:18).

What was significant with these meetings was the percentage of concerned merchants and stores that attended the meetings and signed their pledges, apparently under popular pressure. In Guangzhou, for example, at one of the first meetings representatives of all fifty-seven stores and firms which had carried American products attended. Of all these stores and firms, only one did not sign the public pledge on the spot. The reason for this conspicuous deviation, the organizer of the meeting explained, was not because there were any objections to the boycott from the store. It was because the representative of the store who was present at the meeting did not have full authority from the store owner (*Shibao*, 25 July 1905).

D. Organizations in the Boycott

Most of the boycott meetings were called for by various social organizations which were formed before the boycott movement for a variety of purposes.* In fact, it is

*Among them were merchant organizations, study societies (see below), reform organizations--anti-foot-binding and anti-opium smoking societies, and revolutionary

unthinkable that any boycott activities would have been possible without these voluntary organizations. As I have mentioned earlier, especially in the introduction, various social organizations boomed in the late Qing. The best-formed organizations were probably the merchant organizations and native-place organizations, as I have discussed in Chapter Four. But even these organizations had only vertical relationships in a given locale. Chambers of commerce and native-place associations of different locales did not have close administrative relationships.*

Also influential, if not powerful, were intellectual organizations.** The best known of this type of organizations were the Shanghai Study Society, Commerce Study Society, Man-Mirror Study Society, and the Speech Society of Public Loyalty. Some less important study organizations were newspaper reading societies, of which the most active was the

groups. All except revolutionary groups were active during the boycott (Zhang 1982; Xu et al. eds., 1991).

*In this regard, the relationship between the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce was probably typical. The merchants from the two chambers had very strict business relationships only. Many disputes resulted from their mutual distrust and poor business behavior (TJSH Archives, 1987, vol.1:81,568).

**Student organizations were negligible during this movement, though many public meetings were held in schools. It was only toward the end of the movement that a national student association became active in Shanghai--the *Huanqiu Zhongguo tongxue hui* (Globe Chinese Student Association, *Shenbao* 10 September 1905).

Book-Reading Society of Yangzhou.***

While the members of these study groups sometimes participated in each other's meetings,** the study groups basically acted as independent units and took distinctive positions on the goals and methods of the boycott. The Shanghai Study Society and the Commerce Study Society were made up of people who were at once gentry, merchants, and intellectuals and who had closer official and commercial ties.*** Ma Xiangbo, the head of the Shanghai Study Society, was a former diplomat for the Qing government and had a close relationship with Zhou Fu, the Governor General of Liangjiang (see Chapter Four). Sun Duoxing, who founded the Commerce Study Society, was a large merchant himself. The Sun family had important official ties in Shanghai (SHJDS:581; Xu 1988:53-55). Consequently, they were more conservative and more sympathetic to the position of the Shanghai Chamber of

*The appearance of these study societies and other reform social groups was part of a larger trend that goes back to the late nineteenth century. After the promulgation of the New Policies in 1901, various study societies flourished. The booming of the newspaper-reading societies serves as good an example. From 1902 to 1911, there were at least 220 such societies organized. Among them ten were for women (Li 1990:103-105).

**Ge Zhong of the Speech Society of Public Loyalty and Wu Woyao of the Man-Mirror Study Society, for example, had spoken at numerous meetings organized by a variety of intellectual and merchant organizations.

***The two societies apparently had a close relationship, for Ma Xiangbo was a prominent member of both (SHDSJ:582).

Commerce in terms of the goal and methods of the boycott.

The Man-Mirror Study Society and the Speech Society of Public Loyalty, on the other hand, were composed of petty intellectuals such as Wu Woyao and Ge Zhong, who insisted on abolition of the discriminatory treaty in its entirety and who were more concerned with the interests of the "public" than those of a few merchants. The Man-Mirror Study Society was definitely a progressive and reform organization. Its charter, which was published on 21 October 1904 in *Jingzhong ribao*, a radical newspaper, stated that the purpose of the society was "to gather people of common aspirations in order to achieve the results of group study and to cultivate useful people." The Society had five branches supervising distinct activities: 1) "Book reading, to cultivate character and exchange knowledge;" 2) "Lecturing, to learn from others who provide a useful mirror [to ourselves];" 3) "Miscellaneous studying (*keyi*), to take additional lessons in science and to study liberal arts (*wenyi*);" 4) "Physical exercise, to train bodies of the soldiers and the people;" 5) "Language reform, to reform language and conform written language to speech" (SHDSJ:584). Such boycott activists as Wu Woyao and Feng Xiawei* were its members.

Less influential but equally active were learning groups and other social groups, such as various women's groups. The

*I shall provide some details about Feng later in this chapter.

latter were particularly conspicuous. Chinese women began to organize themselves along several lines in the late nineteenth century. The first women's organizations were anti-foot-binding societies throughout China. In the early twentieth century women also began to organize along professional and educational lines (Liu 1989; Xu et al. eds., 1991). While the influence of women's organizations in terms of shaping the directions of the movement was definitely insignificant, they nevertheless kept their identity by organizing their own meetings in Shanghai, Nanxiang, Jiading, Suzhou, Wuxi, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and many other cities. In these meetings they made boycott resolutions of their own (Zhang 1966:128-29; *Shibao* and *Shenbao*, July, 1905; Liu 1989:256-59).*

*Here is a list of some of the boycott meetings organized by women

Time (1905)	Location	Organizers

9 Jul.	Guangxi Road, Shanghai	Shi Lanying, Zhang Junhan
16 Jul. Jiang	Lanling School for Girls, Suzhou	Jiang Zhengru, Fengwu
20 Jul.	Shanghai	Zhang Zhujun
	Suzhou	?
21 Jul.	Nanxiang School for Girls, Nanxiang	Wang Qiling
26 Jul.	Wuxi Elementary, Wuxi	Women teachers
27 Jul.	School for Girls, Jiading	?
	Normal School for Women, Shanghai	?
	Guangzhou	Guangzhou women
5 Aug.	Nanxun Hospital, Zhejiang	?
	Jingzhi School for Girls, Wuxi	?
28 Aug.	Natural Feet Society, Shanghai	Zhong Peiying

Because of the decentralized nature of these social organizations, boycott activities were not coordinated and controlled as some had hoped. While many local organizations looked to the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce for specific instructions, most local groups simply passed their own resolutions, especially after the Chamber seemed to care more about a few big merchants' interests than about the cause.

3. The Breakdown of Boycott Solidarity

As I pointed out earlier, the Shanghai wholesale merchants' pledge not to order American goods was made under popular pressure. As the movement began to harm their interests, they did two things to protect their interests. One was simply to break their pledge and continue to order American goods. The other was to sell their American goods in stock. No specific measures were issued by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce regarding how to carry the resolution out

1 Sept.	Su Zhou	?
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Source: Liu 1989:256-59; Zhang 1966:128-33.

Some meetings did not allow men to participate. The reason was largely because at that time men and women were still separated in schools and social gatherings (Li 1990:105-106).

and what should be done if some merchants broke their promises. Rather, as far as Shanghai big merchants were concerned, the most urgent task seemed not to be to apply effective pressure on American policy-makers, but to protect their own interests. Their concerns were understandable, because during the initial period of the boycott what Chinese boycotted were not exactly American goods, but American-produced goods possessed by Chinese merchants. Thus the pressure was first and foremost on Chinese merchants.

The difference between the Chinese-owned and the American-owned goods was stressed by merchants themselves but also recognized by the Shanghai Study Society and the Shanghai Commerce Study Society, the two elitist scholarly societies in Shanghai. That is why during the heyday of the boycott in late July and early August the Shanghai merchants not only did not take the lead in boycotting American goods, but also speeded up the sale of these goods. They were busy finding ways to "dredge" (*shutong*), as it was then called, American goods in stock and those ordered on the way from American ports to Shanghai.*

Even the boycott newspapers in Shanghai such as *Shibao* and *Shenbao* showed their understanding of the idea of "dredging out." After all, one of the purposes of the movement

*According to the American Consulate's report, there were in Shanghai warehouses approximately 160,000 bales of American piece goods, valued at 12,000,000 Haiguan taels, or nearly \$8,000,000 gold (Consulate Dispatches, Shanghai, 16 September 1905).

was to protect and enhance Chinese merchants' strength and interests, not to hurt them. The movement was propagated as part of the commercial warfare (*shangzhan*, see Chapter Three). Besides, the effectiveness of the boycott and solidarity of the boycotters definitely needed, if they did not depend upon, the merchants' hearty support and full cooperation.

Shortly after Shanghai merchants pledged not to order more American goods, Shanghai *Shibao* published a comment on current issues which praised the merchants who had made the "greatest sacrifice" for the public cause. The article further urged the public to show their understanding of the merchants' difficulty (*tiliang shangqing*). It was crucial, the author argued, for the public to find ways of "relieving the [financial] burden of the gentlemen who pledged not to order." Otherwise, the author warned that the movement could not last (*Shibao* 23 July 1905). In a letter to the concerned merchants the Commerce Study Society stated that "...the boycott was against Americans, not our fellow countrymen..." (*Shibao* 24 July 1905).

Not all people, especially those in other cities and towns, shared the same concern Shanghai big merchants had. In many places the boycotters began to put away American goods right after the movement started on 20 July 1905. Some store owners even destroyed American goods in public to show their support for the cause. This discrepancy would certainly be detrimental to the solidarity of the boycotters, especially

when the situation seemed not to change in the short run. Consider: normally the transportation of goods from the United States to Shanghai took about six months. In the best situation possible (when the ordered goods were shipped right way, for example) at least some American goods would continue to be sold half a year after the boycott went into effect. The temptation was, of course, to make false claims about the date of the order, if some merchants wanted to continue the business. A more serious threat to the boycott movement was the possibility that some merchants would continue to order secretly despite their pledges (A Ying, 1962:477-482).

This was obviously a thorny problem confronting the boycotters. The solution proposed by the Commerce Study Society was to convince the merchants that it was financially unsound to order any more American goods. But the shrewd and experienced businessmen would decide this by themselves (A Ying 1962:479). Even if there were no new orders, the problem caused by previous orders was enormous, for some Shanghai merchants put in extra orders when the deadline of the boycott was approaching. Some new orders were put in as late as October (*Shenbao* 12 August 1905). As American goods continued to arrive in Shanghai ports, no wonder some boycotters could not help asking: "When will be the end?"*

A protracted boycott would have numerous implications:

*Meaning the date when a total boycott could be implemented.

the merchants would be exhausted, consumers could not tolerate long-term inconvenience, the government might suppress the boycott to preserve social order, and the United States and other powers might intervene to stop the movement. The boycott had to have some short-term effect upon Americans. To achieve this, some boycotters believed that two things had to be done. One was to press the merchants to cancel some, if not all, their orders. The other was to mobilize porters not to unload American goods.

Zeng Shaoqing justified the idea of cancelling the order contracts at a large meeting on 6 August. He argued that according to the common practice of merchandise orders, orders could be cancelled if such accidental events as workers' strikes occurred. Since China's current boycott was an accidental event, he reasoned, the orders could be cancelled (*Xinwen bao*, 7 August 1905, cited in Zhang 1966:150-1). In the meantime, boycott activists in Shanghai began to mobilize porters not to handle American goods.

These two proposals, if carried out, would have had much greater and more immediate impact on American business interests. The cancellation of the orders would affect American business interests immediately, and stoppage of loading and unloading American goods in Shanghai ports would prevent a large quantity of American goods--valued at \$ 8 million gold--from being transported to other areas of China (Consulate Dispatches, Shanghai, 11 August, 16 September

1905).

But these two measures could not be fully and effectively carried out without causing international legal disputes (*qianshe guoji*), which the boycott leadership and majority of boycotters, at least in theory, were extremely reluctant to cause. When Shanghai merchants mentioned cancellation of their orders, American merchants were deeply upset and reacted strongly. They accused Chinese merchants of violating their agreements and subjected them to lawsuits for damages. Furthermore, the American Consulate reported, "the recognition of such a policy by the boycotters has encouraged those who have contracts with native merchants to repudiate not only their contracts but also their debts, and therefore ruin confronts them [namely the Shanghai merchants]" (Consulate Dispatches, Shanghai, 11 August 1905). It was equally difficult to mobilize porters not to handle these goods, because many of American goods were carried on foreign ships (Consulate Dispatches, Shanghai, 11 August 1905).

Thus conflict between big Shanghai merchants on the one hand and the radical boycotters on the other could not be solved, and it became so tense in early August that two dramatic events occurred. One was death threats to Zeng Shaoqing, the symbolic leader of the movement. The other was news of the death of Feng Xiawei, who committed suicide to encourage his fellow countrymen to carry out the cause to the

end.

In early August Zeng began to receive anonymous letters threatening to kill him if he continued to work for the boycott. On 9 August two strangers came to Zeng's residence to try to persuade him to leave Shanghai (*Shibao* 10 August 1905). In the meantime American Minister Willam W. Rockhill also asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discipline Zeng (Zhang 1966:159). Although there was no evidence indicating who was behind the death threats, they were widely speculated to be supported by powerful Shanghai merchant interests.*

The sixty-year old Zeng Shaoqing responded with an open letter which expressed his determination to be a martyr for the cause:

Since the day [10 May 1905] I signed my name on the telegram [to the government] I had already made up my mind to die for the matter of public good (*gongyi shi*). Why should I avoid it now! Besides if I am afraid of death myself the world would despise all [us Chinese], saying the nature of Chinese is afraid of death...I would be the guilty man.... Please tell our countrymen that to die at the hands of Americans, the hands of those who dealt with American goods, is the right way to die. To die this way is the same as to be alive and I will have no regrets.... I only hope that after I die tens of thousands of Zeng Shaoqings will rise up and continue [my cause] to restore our national power and personal dignity. If one day our country will stand together as equals with other powers the day that I die will be the day that I am reborn.

After I die please do not go after my assassins. Stick to non-use as the boycott principle. Make sure not to rise up to give other countries the excuse of calling us uncivilized. [If that happens] I cannot close my eyes in my death (*Shibao* 10

*Zeng's "Farewell Letter to the World" indicated that he suspected those who engaged in selling American goods were behind the conspiracy (*Shibao* 10 August 1905). The popular play *The Adventure of Haigqiaochun* also suggests the same thing (A Ying 1962:479).

August 1905; *Shenbao* 11 August 1905).

The farewell letter received more than a hundred responses expressing the public's indignation, sympathy and support. Zeng's supporters compared him with Yao, Shen,* Zhuge Liang,** Giuseppe Mazzini, and Abraham Lincoln. One letter promised that if Zeng was murdered, millions of Zeng Shaoqings would rise to carry the movement to the end (*Xinwen bao* 13 August 1905, in Zhang 1966:159-162).

Reflecting the tensions that existed in Shanghai at the time, is the fact that Zeng Shaoqing was not considered a boycott hero at all by some more radical boycotters. He was held responsible for the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce's total inaction after some Shanghai merchants broke their pledges and put in new orders to buy American goods (*Shenbao* 12 August 1905). At the same time that Zeng's life was threatened by big merchant interests Zeng was given three days to answer the question: Why had he, as the initiator of the boycott, not taken punitive measures to stop these activities (*Shenbao* 12 August 1905)? In sharp contrast to his reply to the death threat, Zeng's response to this question must have sounded very disappointing to the enthusiastic boycotters. He said that although the merchants of the Shanghai Chamber of

*Yao and Shen were legendary emperors in ancient China.

**Zhuge Liang (182-234) was a famous strategist in the Three Kingdoms period.

Commerce had made the pledges, he had no power whatsoever to force them to keep their promises (*Shenbao* 12 August 1905). Apparently the boycott activists mistakenly thought he had great power over the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. He was actually just a board member of the Chamber, and the only board member who championed the cause openly and enthusiastically.

The fact that Zeng Shaoqing was caught in a cross-fire indicated the deep schism that existed among the "people," a term the boycotters used to refer to merchants and the general public as opposed to the government. It also shows the dilemma that the boycott movement was facing: if the government had no rights to force people to buy American goods, neither could the boycotters force merchants not to sell American goods.

But even if the boycotters could no longer count on the big merchants, the popular movement might still be successful insofar as the general public stuck to the cause. After all, the merchants would order goods only because people would buy them. It is probably not totally inaccurate to say that Feng Xiawei sacrificed his life in the hope that his countrymen would also give up a little to save the cause. It did not matter what Feng's real motive was. The boycotters certainly interpreted his suicide this way in their numerous eulogies dedicated to the martyr.*

*Feng died on 16 July 1905, several days before the scheduled boycott (A Ying 1962:457; Zhang 1966:165), but his death was not reported in newspapers until 21 August 1905

From the scant evidence, we know that Feng Xiawei was a Philippine-Chinese originally from Nanhai, Guangdong province, the place of origin of many overseas Chinese. (Zhang 1966:61,165; A Ying 1962:457).^{*} He went abroad when he was seventeen years old and had been to South America and European countries. Feng returned to China shortly before the boycott started (A Ying 1962:457). He must have been fairly literate and stayed in Shanghai for a while, for he was accepted as a member of Shanghai's literary society--the Man-Mirror Study Society (*Shibao* 21 August 1905; Zhang 1966:61; A Ying 1962:457).

(*Shibao*). On 20 August 1905, the Man-Mirror Society held a memorial meeting to honor Feng. But *Shibao's* report on the meeting was very brief (*Shibao* 21 August 1905:3). Contemporaries could only speculate on his motive (A Ying 1962:458). We cannot even be certain that Feng Xiawei's death was a suicide and an attempt to protest against American maltreatment of Chinese immigrants. (One reason that newspapers did not report extensively on the event, as they reported on the death threat to the boycott leader Zeng Shaoqing, was probably that they did not want the popular movement to turn violent). At any rate, Feng's death was later exploited by some boycotters to encourage and inspire the general public. Memorial meetings were held in Guangdong and numerous eulogies were read and published (A Ying 1962:696, 699). One scene of the play *Adventure of Haiqiaochun* was devoted to glorifying Feng's presumed heroism (A Ying 1962:457-461).

^{*}The bulk of this information on Feng is from eulogies and the play *Adventure of Haiqiaochun*. As the playwright admitted, the description of Feng's inner thought was fictitious. But the play's description of Feng's personal experiences abroad and his membership in the Man-Mirror Society was probably reliable, for it was in accordance with the eulogies and a few newspaper reports. The play's description of some other events of the boycott movement was also based on real happenings, in accordance with the reports of such fairly reliable newspapers as *Shenbao* and *Shibao*.

Whatever Feng's real intention was, he did not disclose it to anybody before he committed suicide on 16 July 1905. He did not even distinguish himself in the boycott meetings held by the literary society. His name did not appear in any major newspapers, which had meticulously listed thousands of names of the speakers in public gatherings and individuals who pledged not to buy American goods. There is no good reason, therefore, to speculate that Feng intended to attract public attention by taking dramatic action. Nevertheless the development of the popular movement made it almost certain that his death would become a public affair. At the 20 August memorial meeting, the keynote speaker proclaimed that "gentleman Feng had sacrificed his life to protest the exclusion treaty, to wake up his fellow countrymen, [and to encourage them] not to use American goods to the very end" (*Shibao* 21 August 1905).

The play *Adventures of Haiqiaochun* portrayed Feng as a traditional chivalrous hero who nevertheless had a modern flavor, wearing a Western style-suit. He was guided by the spirit of young China (*shaonian Zhongguo hun*) to the American Consulate in Shanghai, where he swallowed poison. He sacrificed his life, the playwright commented, "in order to let the Americans know that the hearts of our countrymen never die and China can therefore be saved" (A Ying 1962:458).

A eulogy dedicated to Feng Xiawei was similarly more a celebration of life (of a new China) than a memorial of the

dead. It praised Feng as greater than ancient Chinese loyal ministers and chivalrous men (*zhongchen yishi*), for they had died only for one man or one family. Therefore, the death of the ancient heroes, the author argued, was for private loyalty and had no great social consequences. Feng Xiawei, on the other hand, "had died for the society" (A Ying 1962:697).

We can never know to what extent the death of Feng Xiawei inspired the boycotters to continue the movement. But it is evident that the boycotters made Feng a symbol. "The exclusion treaty exists for one more day," the eulogy claimed, "Feng's ghost would not rest for more day." (A Ying 1962:697). It is also evident that the death threats against Zeng Shaoqing did not soften many boycotters' determination. The boycott continued to take a toll on the Chinese merchants as well as on Americans. The boycott was particularly effective in central and southern China.*

The wholesale merchants of Shanghai, on the other hand, persisted in their struggle to survive the "accident," which they believed would be over soon either naturally or by government intervention. After August, they began to divert their larger share of the market northward to Tianjin and

*The short-term effectiveness of the boycott is not deniable, though the exact statistics are impossible to obtain. According to Li Shiyue (1985:706), American imports to China were 76,926,833 Haiguan taels, which dropped to 44,436,209 Haiguan taels, the next year. The short-term effectiveness of the boycott is also testified by American Consulate Dispatches (11, 12 August 1905). See also Zhang (1966:152-3) and Cochran (1986:151-203).

Northeast China, where Yuan Shikai, the Minister of Beiyang and the Governor general of Zhili, successfully put the boycott under control (Yang et al. 1989:394). When the boycott activists in the Yangzi delta area planned to send delegates to northern China, however, the Shanghai merchants panicked. They began to be afraid that the boycott was not going to have a natural death soon enough without state intervention. Turning back on their boycott comrades, they finally adopted the last resort: appealing to the Qing government for help.

4. The Qing Government's Suppression of the Boycott

Generally speaking, the Qing government was initially sympathetic to the popular movement and tacitly agreed with the boycott. Even the Empress Dowager expressed her sympathy to the overseas Chinese. Of all the ranking officials in the central and local governments, Yuan Shikai, the Minister of Beiyang, was the only one who openly and decisively opposed the boycott.

The two ministries which were most directly responsible for dealing with the immigration issue and with local merchants' organizations were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce. Two ranking officials in the former ministry, Wu Tingfang and Liang Cheng,* were known for

*On July 7, 1905, Liang Cheng advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that: "All American officials except those from the Commerce Department take the treaty as the most urgent matter. If we do not budge on the issue, and also the boycott by the merchants implicates the market, they will

their opposition to the harsh immigration laws. Liang's treaty draft reflected some of the most essential demands by Chinese, mainly Chinese merchants, in the United States (see Chapter One).

The Ministry of Commerce also supported the cause. The Ministry favorably responded to the boycotters' concerns as early as December 1904 (*Shibao* 7 May 1905). Its ranking officials were present at the first (10 May 1905) Shanghai meeting which decided on the boycott (see Chapter Two). The top adviser of the Ministry, Zhang Jian, showed his support by giving speeches in boycott meetings, although as a big merchant in the Yangzi delta area his position on strict boycott measures was rather conservative.*

Locally, ranking local officials sent memorials showing their support of the public sentiment.** The most powerful support from the local officials were from Cen Chunxuan, the Governor General of Guangdong and Guangxi. Cen not only

certainly give in gradually." (Gong Yue, Qing Archives. Taipei. Liang to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 7, 1905, cited in Zhang 1966:65).

*He was one of the most influential supporters of the idea of "dredging out" (*shutong*) American goods in stock (*Xinwenbao* 7 August 1905, cited in Zhang 1966:150).

**In this respect, the memorial of 18 June 1905 by the Shanxi Censor (*yushi*) Zhang Xuehua was representative. He listed three reasons that the government should not suppress the popular movement: 1) the public sentiment could not be spurned; 2) the previous treaty insulted national dignity and threatened the livelihood of the people; 3) the boycott by itself should not lead to [international] controversy (cited in Zhang 1966:64).

controlled the area where the majority of immigrants were from, but also enjoyed enormous trust from the Empress Dowager (Liu 1985:121-2). The boycott was also blessed by tacit support from Zhou Fu, Governor General of Liangjiang. Zhou had probably the greatest power of all the local officials in shaping the course of the boycott because he ruled the Yangzi delta area where the merchants controlled the trade with the United States and where the intellectuals were most active.

It is significant to note that for the several months in which the boycott meetings were held in many cities and towns, the Qing government tolerated the boycotters' claim that the people had autonomous rights to act upon this very important diplomatic issue. However, the official position on the immigration issue was never as radical as that of the mainstream boycotters, who increasingly favored the abolition of the entire exclusive treaty. Even the most sympathetic Qing official, Liang Cheng, accepted America's right to exclude Chinese laborers (see Liang's treaty draft, *Shenbao* 4 June 1905). Given the fact that the boycotters tried to achieve the unachievable, the Qing government was bound to intervene sometime.

Several factors would affect, however, when the Qing court and the local officials had to intervene. One of the factors was pressure from the United States. Another related to the first was when the movement went out of control and turned violent. The third was the degree that Chinese

merchants' interests and the market in general would be affected. It is hard to say which of these factors was most important, and all of them were related. Any one of them might have forced the Qing government to take action.

Yet the fact remains that the Qing central government and the local ranking officials, with the notable exception of Yuan Shikai, were extremely slow in responding to the repeated urgings from American diplomats in China and from the United States government to stop the boycott. The slowness of the Qing's response was partially because the movement was considered legitimate* and partially because it was by-and-large surprisingly peaceful. It was only when the Shanghai merchants began to experience serious financial problems and appealed for help from officialdom that the Qing government and the local officials stepped in to restore order.

As I have pointed out earlier, it was not just the large merchants who felt the movement went too far shortly after the movement got started. Some famous Shanghai and national scholars and social elites** were very sympathetic to the merchant interests. In Shanghai, and to a lesser extent in

*Liang Cheng wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on May 13, 1905 that: "...The boycott is the people's movement, it shouldn't involve our government. In the light of a united public opinion, our government should not attempt to intervene or dissolve the movement." (Qing Archive, Labor Treaty, cited in Zhang 1966:65).

**People like Ma Xiangbo, Yan Fu, Wang Kangnian, and Zhang Jian who were at once scholars, businessmen, and educators, and who had broad commercial and official ties.

other cities as well, these social elites and big merchants were collectively called *shengshang* (gentry-merchants), who at once claimed the leadership of a growing civic society in late Qing China and intimate official ties (Xu 1988:53-58). On the other hand, the Qing officials relied upon them for social and financial support and responded to their needs and requests more than to those of any other social group (Liu 1984). It is therefore more accurate to say that the suppression was not single-handedly carried out by the Qing regime. It was a cooperative action by both the Qing government and by the upper class of the "people"--the merchant-gentry class.

The exact relationship between the merchant-gentry and the Qing government, however, varied significantly in different geographic areas. In Tianjin, where the merchants were less powerful and autonomous than those in Shanghai, and where the Governor of Zhili Yuan Shikai was hostile to the popular movement, the boycott never went beyond a few meetings and empty pledges (Hayashibara 1985:117).

As early as 20 June 1905, one month before the scheduled boycott, public meetings and anti-exclusion posters had already deeply disturbed Yuan Shikai. He summoned board members of the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce to his office and reprimanded them for damaging China's friendly relationship with the United States by organizing and participating in the movement. Yuan told the merchants that China needed the United States for its good offices in preserving China's territorial

integrity. The Tianjin Chamber of Commerce relied too much upon Yuan's power to preserve the needed stability to disobey him. The Chamber immediately distributed handbills to the Tianjin public which said:

After the Boxer Turmoil Tianjin commerce suffered a great deal. Thanks to the Governor's great efforts to preserve peace, [the market] has been getting better lately. We were hoping for steady growth when the telegram came from the South regarding America's exclusion of the Chinese laborers. Turbulence followed and the market seemed to slow down. If [people] do not buy American goods those who already did cannot sell. Then the ordered goods cannot be returned, either. Problems like these will inconvenience the Tianjin market. We think that after our Tianjin merchants have suffered huge losses we cannot afford such disturbances any more. Thus we have decided to issue this handbill advising various guilds that all the transactions in Tianjin shall be conducted as usual and not to be perturbed by rumors in order to maintain the peace of the market (Zhang 1966:68).

Yuan's effort to ban the leading Tianjin newspaper (*Dagong bao*) from publishing boycott news was less successful. Ying Lianzhi, the publisher of the paper, simply refused to obey Yuan's order. Since the paper was in the French Concession, the only thing Yuan could do was to order the post office in Tianjin not to mail the paper and the public not to buy the paper.

Overall, however, the suppression in Yuan's area was successful, partially because in Tianjin the intellectuals did not have the same power that their Shanghai counterparts had. There were no such literary organizations in Tianjin as the Man-Mirror Study Society and the Speech Society of Public Loyalty to carry the boycott forward after the merchants abandoned the cause.

On 21 and 27 June Yuan twice tried to persuade the Qing central government to issue orders to ban the boycott elsewhere in China. Yuan argued from a real political point of view, saying that China needed the friendship of the United States to preserve China's territorial integrity (Zhang 1966:67-68). The argument was of course strong, but it was certainly not strong and persuasive enough an argument for the Qing government to ban the boycott throughout China, as Yuan had in Tianjin. The boycotters simply did not see why American friendship, which nobody seemed to doubt, could not also be reflected in a more fair and human immigration policy.

In the meantime, William W. Rockhill added pressure on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing to call off the boycott (McKee 1977:117-118). Rockhill stressed the bad timing of the boycott, since negotiations were being conducted between the two governments.* He also pointed out the danger of riots against foreigners at large. The American Minister to China mentioned a handbill distributed in Fuzhou which falsely accused Americans of killing two thousand Chinese in the United States (McKee 1977:117-118; Zhang 1966:70). The Qing government could and would decisively act against this type of agitation without openly defying the public sentiments (yuqing).

On 29 June the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a

*Apparently the Minister missed the whole point of the boycott, for the boycotters acted exactly because they could not trust their government.

telegraph to Ministers of Nanyang and Beiyang, Governor Generals of Sichuan, Lianghu, and Liangguang, and the Governors of Anhui, Shandong, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, and Fujian which said:

Because the American exclusion treaty is being considered for renewal, merchants in various ports suggested not to buy American goods as a means of boycott. They also telegraphed this Ministry suggesting that the treaty not to be signed. Actually, Minister Liang's draft treaty has been sent to the U.S. Department of State and is currently under consideration. No decision has been made. Mr. Rockhill came to Beijing to talk about the matter in a very peaceful manner. He not only has not forced us to sign the treaty but has also agreed to telegraph his government to amend the exclusion treaty. Those merchants who were deeply worried about a harsh decision [on the matter] therefore grouped together to propagate a boycott in newspapers and handbills. While their actions were indeed inaugurated by public indignation, [the government] is afraid that rascals might take the opportunity to instigate the fools, causing other complications. You must persuade [them] with power (*shili quandao*) and inform the merchants of the current treaty discussion in order to dispose of the doubts (cited in Zhang 1966:72).

The term "persuade with power" (*shili quandao*) was a rather vague one. It certainly did not mean, at least to Zhou Fu and Cen Chunxuan, the most powerful local officials in central and South China, to ban the boycott movement in their territories in the manner Yuan had used his power in Northern China. The vagueness was probably deliberate. The Qing central government acted very cautiously and reluctantly, not just because the exclusion treaty was indeed humiliating to China, but also because of the overwhelming pressure by the urban public. Major newspapers in Tianjin, Shanghai and Hong Kong

continuously publicized virtually every move by the Qing court and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Shenbao* 3 June, 14 June, 18 July 1905; *Shibao* 14, 11 July August 1905).

By being vague the Qing government virtually allowed the local authorities to act at their own discretion. Personally, the two Governor Generals in central and Southern China had very different views of the boycott from that of Yuan Shikai.* They certainly acted very differently from Yuan toward the boycott movement in areas under their control.

After receiving the telegram of 29 June from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhou Fu did not take any action other than simply letting news of the telegram become known to Shanghai

*Studies also show that Zhou Fu, and Cen Chunxuan in particular, were political rivals of Yuan Shikai, who was the most ambitious and powerful Han Chinese at the time. The power struggle between Han Chinese was extremely important in understanding the last few years of the Qing regime, for the Qing government relied heavily on Han Chinese in various social, economic, and political reforms. As a Qing official of the time, who later became a historian, pointed out: "After 1900...for about ten years the government had been but a stage for the Han ministers to engage in their power struggles." (Liu 1985:175).

While Yuan had the greatest power and influence of the Han Chinese in the Qing central government after Li Hongzhang died in 1901, Zhou and Cen controlled the wealthiest areas of China. In 1904-5 Zhou Fu and Cen Chunxuan were among several other local ranking officials who suggested constitutional reforms (*lixian*), not totally without power struggle considerations (Zhang ed. 1990:684; Liu 1985:121, 139, 148). It is hard to say to what extent pure power struggle consideration played a role in Zhou and Cen's apparent indifference in suppressing the movement. But it is clear that the two powerful local officials felt much more pressure from the public in Central and South China where the merchants and intellectual organizations were more numerous and powerful and the sense of alienation from the Qing regime was stronger.

boycott leaders (Zhang 1966:73). The Shanghai boycotters simply responded by promising a peaceful and civilized popular protest. Zeng Shaoqing of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce wrote the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that: "I think that not to use American goods is the natural right of everybody (*renren ziyou zhiquan*). It will not complicate international relations whatsoever" (Zhu 1958:147). The famous scholar-businessman Zhang Jia told Yuan Shikai that the boycott movement was a "civilized competition..." (Zhang 1933 vol.3:9 cited in Zhang 1966:74).

These arguments by the boycotters were apparently convincing to Zhou Fu. Even after Americans threatened to hold the Chinese government "directly responsible for failure to insure the rights required by Article 15, of the treaty of 1858," Mr. Rodgers, the Consul General in Shanghai, reported, "The Viceroy of this district, Chou Fu [Zhou Fu], whose official residence is at Nanking, has remained non-committal on the subject despite all efforts to make him declare himself" (Consular Dispatches, Shanghai 12 August 1905). The Vice Consul in charge at Nanjing was finally successful in persuading Zhou Fu to suppress "the inflammatory literature which is being printed in Shanghai," but the Vice Consul was not able to convince Zhou that he should suppress the boycott movement *per se*. "Upon the main question of the boycott," the Vice Consul reported, "his action has not to this date been satisfactory..." (Consular Dispatches, Shanghai 12 August

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Zhou Fu excused his non-action by claiming ignorance of the matter, but American diplomats in China were convinced that he had a "thorough knowledge of the boycott movement...". That he failed to act, Mr. Rodgers reported to the Assistant Secretary of State Francis B. Loomis, was because of "his disinclination to suppress it. His attempts to evade the question have been notorious, and his failure to act has been largely the cause of the development of the agitation of the present" (Consular Dispatches, Shanghai 15 August 1905).

While Mr. Rodgers greatly exaggerated Zhou's role in causing the agitation, it is certain that Zhou's suppression, which came slowly and indecisively, was not the only cause for the movement to subside in Shanghai after early August. The Shanghai merchants began to turn against the boycott even earlier. As early as 11 August 1905, Mr. Rodgers reported to the State Department that: "CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SHANGHAI VERY ANXIOUS TO STOP BOYCOTT.... For the last ten days the members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce have been ready to end the matter..." (Consular Dispatches, Shanghai August 11, 1905 [upper case original]).

An important reason for Zhou Fu not to be able to act quickly even after the Shanghai merchants turned against the movement was that the boycotters were extremely careful to keep the movement peaceful. Despite occasional "incidents" and a few "inflammatory" posters, the Shanghai Consular Despatches

admitted: "...no trouble or violence has been reported" (11 August); "...still no trouble or disturbance,..." (12 August); "...no report of violence from any quarter..." (21 August); "Boycott still continues. No disturbances" (26 August) (Consular Dispatches, Shanghai 11, 12, 21, 26, August 1905).*

To paralyze the popular movement peacefully and with *legitimacy* was critical for the Qing government to survive the upheaval without losing much of its credibility. It is in this regard that the Shanghai merchants played an essential role. They provided two excuses for the Qing government to render the movement impotent. One was that the ordered American goods were now the property of Chinese merchants, therefore they were no longer American goods. The other was that while the state had no right to force its people to buy goods from a given country, no people could force anyone not to buy certain goods, either.

In late August when boycotters planned to carry out the boycott to the North (e.g.--in Tafeng, Chengji, Hongtai, and Yuansheng), about ten foreign goods firms in Shanghai sent telegrams to Yuan Shikai, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce (Labor Treaty, cited in Zhang 1966:153-54). The Ministry of Commerce asked leading gentry-

*This peaceful manner of the movement was kept throughout the heyday of the boycott to early September, when Consul General Rodgers reported to the Secretary of State that: "Public opinion is that boycott practically is abandoned here,..." on 7 September 1905 (Consular Dispatches September 7, 1905).

merchants Zhang Jian, Tang Shouqian, Wang Kangnian, Sun Lixuan, and Zhou Shengqing to consider a solution. The solution was to have the Ministry of Commerce announce that:

The goods that Chinese merchants have ordered from foreign firms were not refundable and therefore are the same as the Chinese merchants' own goods. It is said that in Shanghai the goods ordered without being sold are worth sixty to seventy millions. If all these goods are not purchased, the Chinese merchants must be hurt first before the Laborer Treaty is reformed. Thus [the Ministry] now orders the Chamber of Commerce, Commerce Study Society, and the schools to meet and recognize all the goods already ordered by Chinese merchants...[as Chinese property]. Stamps* are to be put on them to be sold as usual. At the same time, telegrams are to be sent to other ports to do the same (*Shibao* 7 September 1905, cited in Zhang 1966:154).

When the determined boycotters championed the people's right not to buy American goods regardless of their ownership, the Qing officials responded with the argument that nobody had the right to forbid the sale and use of American goods.

It is particularly important to note that the concept of trade freedom (*maoyi ziyou*) was first used by the Qing

*Apparently to put stamps (*yinghua*) on left-over (or closeout) merchandise for final and quick liquidation was a common practice at the time. When such revolutionaries books as *The Revolutionary Army* and *The Awakening Bell* (*Jingshi zhong*) were banned by the Qing government, the Shanghai Book-trade Association (*Shuye gongsuo*) decided to have the printed copies stamped as obscene books for liquidation (Feng 1985:1038).

But the practice during the movement clearly posed a serious problem to the effectiveness of boycott. Some merchants put stamps on the shelves on which American goods were usually sold instead on the goods themselves. Thus newly ordered American goods could also be sold as those which were in stock before the movement started (A Ying 1962:261).

government officials to fend off American pressure to stop the boycott movement. In mid-August, Cen Chunxuan responded to the suppression request by the American Consul General in Guangzhou by saying that: "Trade by merchants and purchase by the people are everyone's free right." "On the other hand," the Governor General reluctantly added, "as long as it should be free, merchants and other people could not force others not to buy a certain country's goods and not to trade with people of a certain country" (*China Daily* 17 August 1905).

The Hong Kong newspaper *China Daily*, which was sympathetic to the boycott, supported the idea. It cheered the argument as "being absolutely in accordance to the universal principle" (*gongli*, my italics, *China Daily* 17 August 1905). The paper further explained that "What is not allowed by the universal principle is what ought to be interfered with by legal authority" (*faqun*, *China Daily* 17 August 1905).

But the argument was clearly a double-edged sword. Later, when the movement began to hurt the merchants' interests and to be out of control, the same argument was invoked to suppress the boycott. In late August, Cen Chunxuan again asserted to the American Consul General in Guangzhou that: "Whether the merchants would buy American goods or not has to be decided by their own free will." But this time he agreed to stop the boycott meetings and speeches in order to "let merchants and other people trade freely as usual" (*China Daily*, 31 August 1905). On 31 August 1905, the Qing Court

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issued an edict which read:

China and the United States have been friendly and never had conflicts. The U.S. government has agreed that all the former exclusion treaties are to be amended through peaceful meetings. [You] should quietly wait for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the changes and should not forbid the use of American goods. The boycott not only has negative effects on the friendly relationship but also hurts Chinese people's business. ... The governors of the relevant provinces should advise the merchants and order them to engage in trade as usual in order to preserve stability (*Guangxuchao donghualu*, cited in Zhang, 1966:203. My emphasis).

While the edict did not end all the boycott activities right away (Zhang 1966:206-7), it did outlaw the obstruction of selling and buying American goods. Despite sporadic boycott activities in various cities throughout the rest of 1905, the movement definitely began to fade away.

In October 1907, when the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce welcomed American Secretary of War William H. Taft with a splendid banquet, the unpleasant event which had occurred two years earlier seemed never to have happened. With much bitterness toward the Shanghai merchants' quick turnabout, Wu Woyao wrote an essay, entitled "The Ghost Cry in the Man-Mirror Study Society" dedicated to the memory of Feng Xiawei, the lone martyr of the movement:

...Years earlier when Americans mistreated our overseas Chinese, Shanghai gentry-merchants initiated the boycott. Some people of the foreign countries said that a boycott was a matter of persistence; something Chinese would not be able to

do. Americans need not have worried. Feng Xiawei, a member of the Man-Mirror Study Society and a martyr from Nanhai, was so shamed by this that he committed suicide. He left a letter to his comrades saying: "Those alive should stick to the end lest foreigners laugh at us." As a result, everybody began to talk about the boycott. But very soon the boycott faded away and the Exclusion Treaty was not changed. [Now] Two years later, when Taft comes [to China], those who come out to welcome him are none other than Shanghai's gentry-merchants. As the saying has it: "Correct wrongs when [you] know them," Shanghai gentry-merchants have done exactly this.

That the strong subdue the weak and the weak are subdued by the strong...is a universal rule (*tongyi*). That the powerless people from a sick and weak country were to boycott a powerful democratic country was no different from a hungry person refusing to eat by the side of a cook. This is called not to know one's moral strength and physical power! Now that Taft comes, [the Shanghai gentry-merchants] suddenly change [from the boycott] to welcome. People who can tell the current (*shishiwu zhe*) often do this.

Now that Taft has arrived, [Shanghai gentry-merchants] hold a banquet at Yuyan in his honor.... When night falls the sound of crying comes from the door of the Man-Mirror Study Society. The sound is sad yet harsh; sorrowful yet passionate. Those who hear the cry ask: "This is the sound of a ghost. Where does it come from?"The ghost answers: "I am Feng Xiawei" (A Ying, 1962:418-9).

Conclusion

Insofar as the goal of the boycott was to reverse American immigration policy toward Chinese nationals it certainly failed. In retrospect, the popular movement could not possibly have accomplished its goal because the means were too limited to achieve the end. By the late nineteenth century, as the need for foreign labor declined, some sort of restriction by the United States on the influx of immigrants was inevitable. The 1882 Chinese-exclusion Act happened to end an era of free immigration in U.S. history. America's sovereign right of controlling its borders might not have been challenged if it had not taken such a brazenly anti-Chinese form.

The source of confrontation also derived from the rapid modernizing process of the American state apparatus. With the establishment of new specialized immigration services in the early twentieth century, American immigration policy began to be *scientifically* implemented by using, among other things, the Bertillon system of identification (see Chapter One). The inhuman and arbitrary nature of the exclusion acts were thus made extremely evident to the point of absurdity. Probably never before in Chinese history had people been so rigidly and precisely categorized--as laborers, merchants, travelers, students, and officials. Only certain classes of people were eligible for specified rights. Discrimination thus had never

appeared to be more obvious and senseless, especially in a period in China when the idea of equal rights among people of different social status and gender was gaining popularity.

Still, the boycott movement might not have occurred at all if the issue involved had just been about the immigration rights of a tiny fraction of the Chinese population. Immigrants themselves might try to achieve their rights as individuals through legal and illegal means, as many did. The immigration dispute could also have been solved through governmental negotiations, as the Qing court tried to do and the Japanese government successfully did in 1908.*

The Chinese urban public took the matter up because they perceived the issue involved in more profound terms. For them the racial discrimination against Chinese immigrants signified a fundamental crisis the nation faced. This crisis had manifested itself earlier in various forms of military defeat and loss of political and economic rights. This crisis also inspired numerous violent responses from peasants, reformist gentry-literati, and conspiratorial revolutionaries against foreigners and the Manchu regime. None of the earlier responses were, however, sufficient to meet the crisis.

The boycott movement of 1905 developed from a distinctive

*In the "Gentlemen's Agreement" (1908) with the United States the Japanese government agreed not to issue passports to Japanese laborers to the United States (Ichioka 1988:71-72).

social and cultural milieu in the growing cities. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, increasing commercial and industrial activities in coastal cities gave rise to a hybrid urban elite class--gentry-merchants whose political consciousness and power increased when they began to form voluntary associations. On the other hand, the rise of the daily press and commercialization of urban entertainment during the same period begot new urban intellectual-professionals who, while low in social status, played a pivotal role in an increasingly commercialized and politicized urban culture. The two social classes began to formulate a rational and reformist political discourse through the daily press, publishing houses, literary journals, and new-style schools. Their political potency was magnified by surrounding urban voluntary associations organized by women, students, and other urban social groups. The Chinese urbanites began to make local and national political issues into public concerns by openly and freely discussing them in newspapers and public meetings. The 1905 boycott should be interpreted as one of the manifestations of urban response to the national crisis.

Unlike the rural masses, reformist gentry, and dedicated revolutionaries, boycotters' political potency did not come from supernatural beliefs, Confucian morality, or organized violence. Rather, the boycotters appealed to public reason and conscience for public welfare. They celebrated rational consensus and interests of the public. Public interests

(*gongli*) were considered different from, and above, private (individual) interests (*sili*). Public interests were also considered different from government interests. That is why the boycotters consciously differentiated people's rights (*minquan*) from state authority (*zhengfu [you] quan*).^{*} The famous phrase "boycott by merchants; negotiation of [the treaty] by government" (*dizhi zhaishang; yiyue zhaiguan*) succinctly expressed this new political conscious.

Few people at the time openly contested this view. For the boycotters not to buy and sell American goods was not just a means to force changes on the exclusion acts but also a test of public solidarity and strength. It was in the growing public conscience that many boycotters found the hope of China and the real meaning of the movement.

The concept of the public interest and public good (*gongyi*) was so important and so powerful for some boycotters that the actual result and tangible achievement of the boycott for the Chinese immigrants, on whose behalf the movement was launched, did not even matter. While the boycott was the least effective method in forcing the Americans to abolish the exclusion treaty, some members of Chinese Educational Society (*Zhongguo jiaoyuhui*) argued, it was the most effective way of arousing patriotic sentiments (*Shibao*, 10 September 1905).

^{*}The term government authority (*zhengfu quan*) was not an idiomatic phrase in Chinese at the time. Instead more often the idea was express in "the government has (or has not) the authority" (*zhengfu youquan*, or *zhengfu wuquan*).

This idea was probably shared by many urbanites who insisted on not using American goods and on the total abolition of the exclusion treaty (*Shibao*, 10, 11, and 14, September 1905)."

Evidently the real meaning of the boycott movement for the Chinese urbanites went far beyond the immigration issue itself to become an expression of their concern for more fundamental issues China faced. From this point of view the boycott movement was simply one link in a chain of political protests in early twentieth century China which expressed urban popular sentiment for political reforms. Thus, the movement was not a total failure at all, for it helped give rise to a growing number of political activists in Shanghai. The organizations and the activists of the boycott movement almost immediately found a new focus of political agitation after the movement was suppressed.

On 8 December 1905, woman Lihuang, the wife of a Sichuan

"After much bewilderment about the true purpose of the boycott, American diplomats in China finally recognized the deeper meaning of the popular movement. In a lengthy report to the Assistant Secretary of State, Consul-General Rodgers said: "that the boycott is but the medium of arousing a popular sentiment and that at the proper time it will be allowed to drop behind, while the cause of reform in China goes to the fore; that anti-dynastic sentiment will develop rapidly and that political troubles of magnitude are coming; that the anti-foreign movement which has, as always, much strength will be joined to other issues and that China like Japan will soon demonstrate to the world its solidarity and likewise accomplish marvels. There is plenty of evidence to justify such conclusions. There is openly expressed contempt for the Central Government" (Consular Dispatches, Shanghai, 14 August 1905).

native official, arrived in Shanghai on her way home,^{***} along with fifteen female servants. The police of the International Concession had woman Lihuang arrested on charge of human smuggling because of the seemingly excessive number of female servants she had with her. The two Chinese legal officials serving in the Mixed Court, Guan Junzhi and Jin Shaocheng, insisted on woman Lihuang's immediate release for lack of evidence. The British police seized the suspect by force despite protests from Guan and Jin (SHDSJ:608).

The next day, Shanghai merchants gathered together in various native-place gongsuo to protest the British arrogance. Again telegrams were sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce demanding official protests and intervention (SHDSJ:608). On the evening of 10 December 1905, a public meeting was held in Xiyuan, where anti-exclusion meetings had been held before. According to a report to the police chief of the International Settlement, the entire meeting was controlled by the boycott activists (SMPA:28). In the afternoon of the following day another meeting of about one thousand people was held. Five out of seven speakers at the meeting were former boycott activists (SMPA:30). Several other public meetings were held in the following days by the same group of people (SMPA:30, 31-32,33,35,36-38,39-40). Anti-British posters were printed by the *Dajing* printing house,

*Sources did not indicate where she started her journey.

which had been sympathetic to the anti-American boycott (SMPA:40).

Conspicuously absent from these public gatherings were board members of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. Even Zeng Shaoqing, the famous Fujian native board member of the Chamber, did not participate in or organize any meetings. Zeng's apparent indifference to the dispute was criticized by Ge Zhong, the head of the Speech Society of Public Loyalty (SMPA:36). It may or may not have been a coincidence that Zeng Shaoqing had just been elected and confirmed by the Ministry of Commerce as the new Chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce in December 1905. At any rate, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was definitely not in a mood to start yet another popular movement it had no power to control.* If the Chamber had tried to lead the new wave of political protest, would it have had the same credibility as it had six months earlier? Since the chambers of commerce were then the most organized and powerful urban social groups, what does the boycott movement and subsequent political development tell us about the growing public sphere in China?

The rise and the fall of the boycott movement sheds much light on several characteristics of the Chinese public sphere and its transformation in the early 1900s. First of all, it

*No a single meeting was organized by the Chamber on the woman Lihuang case (SMPA:28-42).

was indeed the elite merchants, more often referred to as gentry-merchants, not the bourgeoisie (as was the case in Europe), who acted and were perceived as the leaders of the growing public sphere. Their increasing discontent with the weakness of the Qing government and their growing influence and prestige among Chinese urbanites clearly showed in their championing and leading of the boycott. The merchants' initiative on an important political issue--a foreign relations issue--was even tacitly supported by Qing officials. But what was really new about the merchant leadership as reflected in the boycott movement were two things: a) never before had the merchants and the urban public* so clearly defined what was within their rights to do; b) the merchants' leadership gained unprecedented support from the media, which introduced and publicized Western concepts of the civil society. The much-publicized concept of commercial warfare (*shangzhan*) in particular put the merchants and their organizations on the central stage.

Secondly, the merchant elites were very vulnerable to state authority, not only because they confined their power to exhortation, but also because of their declaration that the movement was to strengthen instead of contending for government power. This is particularly true for the elite

*An often-used term at the time, "merchant/people" (*shangmin*), indicated a growing tendency to identify merchants with the general public as opposed to officialdom.

merchant organizations such as the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce.

Thirdly and more importantly, as was shown in the popular movement, the presumed leaders of the growing civil society in China were not only weak vis-a-vis the state power but also vulnerable to popular upheaval. The merchant organizations had little control over urban communities.* Numerous other social organizations, especially study societies and student organizations, began to take over political initiatives toward the end of the movement and thereafter. David Strand (1989:279-283) suggests in his study of Beijing in the 1920s that society itself was divided and society itself may have generated even greater obstacles to civil society than those presented by the state (Rankin 1993:175). This study suggests that the merchant organization par excellence--the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce--probably began to lose its leadership status in the Shanghai community as early as immediately after the 1905 boycott.

In late imperial China, the development most similar to a public sphere as described by Habermas was the emergence of "new literary genres such as the novel and journals of popular taste..., as well as the 'commoditization of news and information' represented by the new commercial press" (Rowe

*This was more in Shanghai than in Tianjin and Guangzhou. Even in Tianjin, where the Chamber of Commerce had enormous power over its members, it relied heavily upon Yuan Shikai to maintain local order (see Chapter 5).

1993:145). This study has shown (Chapters Two and Three) that the boycott discourse was created above all by professional and popular writers of the commercial press not by the presumed leaders of the public sphere--the merchants. The impact of these popular writers upon urban popular minds has been enormous and persistent (Link 1982) far beyond the boycott movement itself. Even when the crackdown on the boycott was imminent a reader wrote to *Shibao* expressing optimism:

Our government and high officials have power to suppress tangible forms of [popular] movement such as public speeches but cannot suppress formless popular minds, hearts, and blood which will stick to the end. This is our people's heavenly duty (*tianzhi*) and obligation (*Shibao*, 14 September 1905).

Ironically, China experts have focused on merchants and almost totally neglected intellectuals when they study the public sphere in China. It seems to me that in order to understand the nature of the Chinese public sphere and its transformation, we should pay as much attention to the changing relationship among social groups within the civil society as to the relationship between civil groups and the state.

Appendix

A Brief Biography of the Boycott Intellectuals

Wu Woyao (1866-1910) was a newspaper editor and an eminent novelist. During the movement he made numerous public speeches condemning American mistreatment of Chinese. He also wrote letters to Zeng Shaoqing expressing his opinions on the issue. Wu was from a family of lower ranking officials. But his father died during Wu's childhood and left little money to the surviving family. Wu supported his mother while serving as secretary to a county official. In his twenties he went to Shanghai and earned his living by working as a clerk in an arsenal, and by making occasional contributions to daily newspapers. Between 1902 and 1905 he became the editor of the American-owned journal *Chu bao* (also called *Hankou ribao*) in Hankou. He resigned the post in 1905 in protest against the American exclusion of Chinese laborers in the United States. In 1906, Wu and his friend Zhou Guisheng established in Shanghai *Yue yue xiaoshuo* (Monthly Fiction) and worked for *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* (Fiction Illustrated), printed between 1903 and 1906. His writing career made it natural for him to become an educator when he served as the principal of a primary school for children of Cantonese families in Shanghai from 1907-10. Despite many things he did during his life time, Wu was best known as an entertainer--novelist--and most famous for his exposure novel *Ershi nian muduzhi guai xianzhuang* (Abnormal Social Phenomena Witnessed

in the Past Twenty Years) published between 1903 and 1910 (Chen 1982).

Li Boyuan (1867-1907), also a novelist, did not distinguish himself in the boycott movement, but he edited *Fiction Illustrated*, which published the anti-exclusion novel *Wretched Students* in 1905. His *Wenming xiao shi* (A Short History of Modern Times), one of his best novels, had a chapter on a traveler's experience in the United States in 1905. Li was born in Jiangsu. When he was three, his father died; he was raised by an uncle, a magistrate in Jinan in Shandong province; later he worked as a clerk for his older brother, a circuit intendant (*daotai*) in charge of the transit tax (*likin*) bureau in Chuzhou, Anhui. He left work to study for the official examinations but failed several times. He enjoyed art and poetry from childhood; by the time he was recommended to an official post in 1901, he was more interested in his career in journalism and fiction. In Shanghai he published his first newspaper, *Zhinan bao* (The Guide) in 1896. Later on he established several other papers, including the first Chinese tabloid, *Youxi bao* (Amusement News). Li made his name with the publication of a satire, *The Bureaucrats: A Revelation* (*Guanchang xianxing ji*; see Holoch 1979).

Zeng Pu (1872-1935), novelist and translator, edited *Nuzi*

shijia, which published several anti-exclusion articles and speeches in 1905. Zeng was from Changshu, Jiangsu. Born into a wealthy landowner's family, Zeng obtained his *juren* degree in 1891. In 1895 he began to study French at the Tongwen Guan (Language Institute) in Beijing as a means of entering government service. While he failed to get a position in the government, he became interested in French literature.*

Wang Xiaonong (1858-1918) was born into a Manchu family and was once a county magistrate. He was impeached while in office and decided to become a play writer and actor. He founded *Ershi shiji da wutai* (The Great Stage of the twentieth Century) magazine in 1904, which was banned after two issues. In August 1905, he organized a theatrical show *Ku luxing* (The Arduous Journey) telling the chilling story of the Polish people's suffering under foreign rule. The show was staged in the heyday of the boycott movement in Shanghai and aimed at arousing patriotism among Chinese urbanites (A Ying 1962:669).

Ying Lianzhi (1867-1926) was born into a poor Manchu family, but he was self-educated and well versed in classical Chinese. Tired of the corruption in the Qing bureaucracy, he

*Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova, ed. (1980:205-209) *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century* provides biographical information on Wu, Li, and Zeng.

took a vow not to have an official career. Having written articles supporting Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in 1898, he fled to Shanghai after the failure of the Hundred Days Reform. In 1902 he returned to Tianjin and founded the famous *Ta gong bao*. In 1905, the paper published numerous news reports on the anti-American boycott (XWZL 46:78-80).

Bao Tianxiao joined the editorship of *Shibao*, one of the most articulate newspapers during the boycott movement, in the spring of 1906 when the movement came to its end. However, his involvement with the boycott was evident in his novel *Bixue hun* (The Soul of the Blue Blood) which described, among other things, the patriotic activities of Shanghai prostitutes during the boycott movement (Bao 1906). More importantly, his life and career trajectory paralleled many other lower quasi-intellectuals active in the entertaining and educational business, as well-recorded in his autobiography (Bao 1971). Bao was born in 1875 into a small and declining merchant family in Suzhou. Physically fragile in his childhood, he chose (or rather his family chose for him) one of the two career possibilities of his family background when he reached his teens--to study the classics and eight-legged-essay composition in order to pass the civil service examinations--rather than to enter the competitive business world of his father. In his late teens (1894) he became a *xiuca*i. For a while it appeared he was doomed to life

as a poor teacher in a still-prosperous but lusterless city. When the air of reform breezed into this worry-free and old-fashioned city in the early twentieth century, Bao tried to run magazines and a vernacular newspaper--*Suzhou baihua bao*--without much success. Later he tried his fortune as a school master in Shandong, and eventually settled down in Shanghai in 1906 as a professional writer. As a petty intellectual, he was neither profound nor scholarly, but had an easy-going writing style attractive to petty urbanites. Politically, he was too mature to be a revolutionary in the early twentieth century. As Perry Link (1981:181) points out, in education and temperament he belonged to the "old school" writers. Later he would demonstrate a "growing remoteness from the Westernized elite of May Fourth," but a "corresponding closeness to the less articulate but 'still Chinese' majority of the urban populace" (Link 1981:181). In the early twentieth century, however, Bao was part of what I call the "incidental cultural avant-garde" (as were many people like him) who dabbled with the translation business (Bao 1971:250).

Peng Yizhong (1864-1921) founded *Jinghua ribao* in 1904, which published anti-exclusion materials in 1905. Like Bao, Peng was also from Suzhou, but he was from an official family. He had taken the civil service examination seven times without success. He worked as a low-ranking official and sold flour and fruits. In 1902 he sold family belongings for the money

to publish a newspaper (XWZL 46:92-93).

Lin Shu (1852-1924) was famous for his copious translations of Western novels into Chinese classical style. His contribution to the boycott started as early as the summer of 1901 when he translated Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with the help of Wei I, a young man who was working at the time for the Translation Bureau of the Board of Education. The novel was adapted into a stage show in Tokyo in 1903 by Chinese students there. Lin Shu constantly compared Chinese laborers' fates in the United States with that of slaves written about by Ms. Stowe. On 23 June 1905 when the boycott movement started he published a letter in *Shenbao* to Shanghai Chamber of Commerce complaining that: "Since the death of Lincoln, Americans go so far as to treat Chinese as black slaves. What you are doing is to rescue our brethren from the bitter sea." Lin was born in 1852 in the village of Nan-tai, Min County, not far from the city of Foochow in the coastal province of Fujian. Coincidentally, the neighboring county of Houguan became the birthplace in the following year of Yan Fu, the man who in later years was to be paired with Lin as the two great translators of Western thought and literature into Chinese. None of Lin's direct ancestors had managed to gain an official position or pass the examinations. Lin's father had various occupations and Lin's childhood was troubled with family misfortunes. In

1862, the same year that the family fortunes began to improve, Lin began his first formal schooling with a local tutor at the age of ten. In 1882, he earned the title of *juren*, and later tried seven times with no success to pass the metropolitan examination. His name was destined to be associated with the literary translation history of China. In 1897, Lin earned his fame nationwide with the translation of *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas earned. He started a career of professional translation in 1901 with the translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In the meantime, however, Lin also taught school in Beijing and many other places (Compton 1971).

Zhang Zhujun and Wu Huaijiu were educators. Zhang made and organized several speeches during the anti-American boycott. However, we know very little about her except that she was from Guangdong and was the teacher and the head of several women's schools in Shanghai during the movement. Wu Huaijiu was the head of the Wuben Female School (*Wuben nushu*) when the boycott broke out in Shanghai. Many anti-American meetings were held in the school, one of the few Chinese women's schools in Shanghai at the time. About Wu little biographical information is available, except that he was a Shanghai native and one of the first in Shanghai to establish modern schools for women. Wuben Female School was founded by Chinese, located outside of the International Settlement, and

was very popular. According to Bao Tianxiao's reminiscences, in order to send their children to this school, many families moved to Ximen, where the school was located. Wu Huaijiu was a friend of Ding Chuqing and a frequent visitor of *xilou* (resting house), a sort of intellectual saloon in the building of *Shibao* (Bao 1971:331).

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GLOSSARY

aihua 哀华
 baihua 白话
 baixing 百姓
 baolan 包揽
 baozhang wenti 报章文体
 bashi 罢市
 Beiyang 北洋
 buyong zhuyi 不用主义
 Chubao 楚报
 cizi gui 茨子鬼
 Cen Chunxuan 岑春煊
 Dagong bao 大公报
 Dalu 大陆
 Daotai 道台
 datong 大同
 Defahang 德丰行
 dinghuo zhidu 定货制度
 dizhi 抵制
 dizhi zaishang 抵制在商
 duizi 对子
 fanai 泛爱
 Fangzu hui 放足会
 fazhan shi 发展史
 Fudan gongxue 复旦公学

Ge Zhong 戈忠
 gongbu ju 工部局
 Gongdang 工党
 gongfa 公法
 gongli 公理
 gonglie 公例
 Gongshang xuebao 工商学报
 gongsheng 贡生
 Gongsuo 公所
 Gongzhong yanshu hui 公忠演说会
 guanghuodian 广货店
 Guangzhao gongsuo 广肇公所
 Guangzhou 广州
 guocui pai 国粹派
 guojia 国家
 guoquan 国权
 guoti 国体
 Haifang 海防
 Hangzhou baihua bao 杭州白话报
 hequn 合群
 houbu dao 候补道
 huagong jinyue ji 华工禁约集
 Huangdi neijing 黄帝内经
 huaqiao 华侨

huayi zhi bian	华夷之辨	meihang	美行
huiguan	会馆	meihuo	美货
Huxue hui	沪学会	meilie	美例
Jianchao bang	建潮邦	minbao wuyu	民胞物与
Jianding huiguan	建汀会馆	minben	民本
Jiangnan shangwu bao	江南商务报	minquan	民权
Jiangsu xuehui	江苏学会	minzu zichanjieji	民族资产阶级
Jiaobinlu kangi	校邠庐抗议	minzu	民主
jie tuanti	结团体	minzu zhuyi	民主自由
jingguang zahuodian	京广杂货店	Nanhua	南货
jinghuodian	京货店	Nanhuohang	南货行
jingzheng	竞争	Nanyang	南洋
jinhua	进化	nitian zhe wang	逆天者亡
jinhua shi	进化史	pifa shang	批发行
jinshan guo	金山国	qiangquan	强权
jinshi	进士	qianzhuang	钱庄
jinyong meihuo	禁用美货	Qingxin shuyuan	清心书院
ju ren	举人	quanluan	拳乱
kebang	客邦	qun	群
Li Hongzhang	李鸿章	Renjing xueshe	人镜学社
Lindong ribao	岭东日报	Rensheng yanshe	人声演社
Lishi yanjiu	历史研究	renyan	人演
luyuan zhifang	颅圆趾方	Sanyi huiguan	三邑会馆
Ma Xiangbo	马相伯	Shang Bu	商部
maiban	买办	Shanghai shangye huiyi	上海商业会议
Meifu	美孚	Shanghai shangxue hui	上海商学会

Shangwu xuyan	商务续言	weixin dang	维新党
Shangwu yinshu guan	商务印书馆	wen you yiqi	文有逸气
Shangwubao	商务报	wenming	文明
shangzhan	商战	wenyan	文言
shantang	善堂	wujin	物竞
Shenbao	申报	wujin tianze yousheng	物竞天择
		luebai	优胜劣败
shengyuan	生员		
shengzhuang	申庄	xiangjie buyong	相戒不用
shenshang	绅商	xiaosheng	小生
shi	史	xieli	协理
Shiji	史记	xilou	息楼
shilun	时论	Xin jingshan	新金山
shizhe shengcun	适者生存	Xindalu youji	新大陆游记
shuntian zhe chang	顺天者昌	xingqing	性情
silang	侍郎	Xinwen bao	新闻报
Siming gongsuo	四明公所	Xinzheng	新政
Subao	苏报	xiuca	秀才
Taishan xianzhi	台山县志	xixue weiyong	西学为用
tian	天	xiyang	西洋
Tianjinshi Zongshanghui	天津市总商会	xuejie	学界
tianyan	天演	xueqi	血气
tuanti	天体	yangbu shang	洋布商
tuzhi	对子	yangguang zahuodian	洋广杂货店
Wai wu bu	外务部	yanghang	洋行
Waijiao bao	外交报	yanghuo hang	洋货行

- yangwu 洋务
 yangyou 洋油
 Yangzhou yueshu she 扬州阅书社
 Yi Jing 易经
 yidong 议董
 ying 阴
 yiyuan 议员
 yiyue zaiguan 议约在官
 you gong ji shang 由工及商
 youxue 游学
 Yuan Shikai 袁世凯
 yuanyang hudie pai 鸳鸯蝴蝶派
 zaishang yanshang 在商言商
 Zeng Shaoqing 曾绍卿
 Zhang Zhidong 张之洞
 zhengyue 争约
 zhichun 志群
 zhong 种
 zhongban 总办
 Zhonghua zonghuiguan 中华总会馆
 zhongxue weiti 中学为体
 zhuquan 主权
 ziqiang 自强
 zongdong 总董
 zongli 总理
 zongshanghui 总商会