Access to work in Republican China: technology, patronage and industrial conflict

A thesis submitted by

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This thesis is my own original work. No part of this thesis has been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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This thesis examines the relationship between industrial conflict and the organisation and technology of manufacturing industry in Republican China, between 1911 and 1937. It investigates the characteristics of industrial disputes and strikes in diverse industries in two economically contrasting cities, Suzhou and Tianjin. It argues that the introduction of modern manufacturing technology to China in the early twentieth century, because it made skill and experience irrelevant as criteria for employment of workers, because at that time there were no satisfactory institutions for recruitment of labour on the scale imposed by the new industries, and because of the social environment in which neither pre-modern nor state-run social welfare systems operated, gave rise to a distinctive type of workplace power relations in which the workers depended on networks of personal patronage to find and keep employment, could not move easily from one place of employment to another, and were particularly concerned with job security. It concludes that particularistic recruiting practices and native place affinity networks in Republican Chinese factories, sometimes represented as a Chinese cultural characteristic, was not an impediment to industrialisation but a consequence of it.

The first four chapters examine industrial organisation and industrial disputes in three modern factory industries: cotton spinning and weaving, flour milling and match manufacturing. Common characteristics are pointed out; significant wage diversity between factories in the same industry and the same city, which suggests that labour mobility was low; inconsistency in the way that particular jobs are rated as skilled or unskilled by the management; and the workers’ tendency to protest against sackings relatively more often that workers in handcraft industries, and to claim rights to future employment when factories closed. This is contrasted with the situation in the handcraft industries, where there was greater wage uniformity, a more mobile and independent workforce, and where wage claims made up a much higher proportion of matters at stake in disputes and strikes.

Chapter 5 examines the importance of enterprise size by investigating industrial conflict in the Tianjin carpet weaving industry and the Suzhou silk industry, both of which were established handcraft industries undergoing a transition to the factory system. It argues that these workers’ more overt hostility to foremen and supervisors arises from their comparative economic independence. Chapter 6 examines Communist and Guomindang trade union membership in Tianjin and Suzhou. It argues that the persistence of Guomindang unions in factory industries while the social policy of the Guomindang became increasingly conservative in the 1930s, when they tended to disappear from the handcraft industries, derived from the same factors - lack of marketable skill and absence of labour exchange institutions and social welfare - that caused the networks of personal patronage and dependence to exist.
Introduction.

This dissertation investigates the relationship between Chinese industrial workers and their employers, and the subjects of industrial conflict, in the years between the fall of the Qing and the Japanese invasion. I have chosen to focus on two cities, Suzhou and Tianjin, in order to bring out the contrast between factory industries and handcraft industries that forms the basis of the argument I will present. The history of labour, and particularly the history of labour in China, is a field in which the political context and meaning of historical scholarship is acutely developed. I have entered the field not at all because I think that everyone else who has written on labour in China has been led astray by politics and that I am capable of objectivity, but because the course of my own life has derived from the great meta-narrative of Cold War politics, and I am merely responding to intellectual and personal obligation by taking up the topic once again. The argument I will present is my own, and I bear the whole responsibility for its shortcomings.

Sino-Marxism

Since 1949, in China, the Sino-Marxist historiography of Chinese labour has dealt with a "labour movement". The evolution of society from feudal (to "semi-feudal, semi-colonial" in the case of China) to capitalist to socialist is taken as given. Industrial conflict is understood as part of this evolutionary movement of society. The discontent of industrial workers is a necessary consequence of their relationship to the means of production, and strikes are a more or less conscious expression of their class interest as workers. The word "movement" (yundong), coupled with "labour" or "workers" in texts and titles, implies conscious, deliberate progress towards a collectively defined goal. The "labour movement" is seen as both a result of capitalist relations of production and a legitimising cause of the victory of the Communist Party.

The conceptual framework on which the idea of the working class in China has based itself was put into canonical form in Mao Zedong's essay "Zhongguo geming yu Zhongguo Gongchandang" (The Chinese revolution and the Chinese Communist Party) written in Yan'an in December 1939. In this essay, as elsewhere, Mao took Lenin's concept of the nature and
historical destiny of the working class to be valid for all countries. The extension of the basic Marxist theory of class relations to 20th century China was problematised at the level of Chinese Communist Party strategy, but not at the level of the actual kinds of productive relations deemed to exist in Chinese society, and to give rise to a field of political conflict in which different parties and party factions stood for different classes. Also, Mao devoted rather less attention in his political writings to the problem of the representation of the proletariat by the Communist Party than Lenin did, reflecting China's greater remoteness from the western European and American traditions of representative democracy as well as Mao's own particular shortcomings as a political theorist. Perhaps this also reflects that by 1939, the Chinese Communist Party's connections with the proletariat were minimal.

According to Mao, the Chinese working class was suffering from three kinds of oppression at once: feudalism, capitalism and imperialism. Once the working class entered the Chinese revolution, it became the most politically conscious of Chinese social classes under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. It was also the most cohesively organised of social classes. It was the working class which had spearheaded the anti-warlord, anti-imperialist protests of May 4th and the 1920s and enabled them to achieve what success they had won before their betrayal by Jiang Jieshi and the Guomindang. Because the number of industrial workers in China was small, compared to the size of the total population of China, and because their revolutionary consciousness was the most highly evolved, Mao considered it was strategically necessary for them to cooperate with the peasants. Because most of the Chinese working class sprang from the bankrupted peasantry, they were the natural allies of the peasants, and it was this natural class alliance which formed the constituency of the Chinese Communist Party and would eventually enable the Chinese socialist revolution to succeed.²

Mao's views on the workers had a history behind them. The work which set the pattern for subsequent histories of labour in the People's Republic is Deng Zhongxia's Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi (Concise history of the Chinese workers' movement), written and published in Moscow between 1928 and 1930, then published again by the Renmin chubanshe in Beijing in 1953. Deng, one of the leading Communist union activists of the 1920s, was head of the Secretariat of Chinese Labour Unions (1922-23) and Secretary-General of the All-China Federation of Labour (1925). Deng's narrative moves from the "primitive labour movement" (yuanshi de zhigong yundong) to "the dawn of the labour movement" (zhigong yudong liming qi) to an account of strikes and protests between 1921 and 1926 culminating in the May 30th movement and the Hong Kong seamen's strike. The "primitive labour movement" refers to the history of Chinese workers' collective action prior to the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. The "dawn of the labour movement" describes the founding of the Party, the organisation

² Mao, 1952 pp.639-642.
of the Secretariat of Chinese Labour Unions and the Party's assumption of leadership in the labour movement.

There are two ways of viewing the "labour movement" in China, both consequences of the use of Leninist Marxism as an explanatory dynamic of universal validity, which are systematically expressed in Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi and which became characteristic of labour history in the People's Republic. One is the idea that there was no such thing as organised collective action by workers - defined as those who performed materially productive labour for a wage - before the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. The strikes and associations referred to in the "primitive labour movement" section were not part of the genuine "labour movement" because they were not strictly proletarian, either in terms of who participated or in what they aimed for. Trade guilds, native place guilds and secret societies were always dominated by employers or by people of economic substance and local influence, and they set the conditions for membership and determined the agenda of collective action. Because of this, the workers lacked class consciousness.

Deng argues that once the Communist Party established contact with the workers through the medium of workers' schools, workers' clubs or unions, the workers came to understand that they belonged to an oppressed class, and took action through the Party unions to simultaneously pursue their own class interest and China's national interest (liberation from feudalism, capitalism and imperialism). The major strikes discussed in Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi are the Hong Kong seamen's strike of 1920, the Kailuan miners' strike of 1922, the Beijing-Hankou railway strike of 1923, and the series of strikes in the Japanese cotton mills in Shanghai early in 1925 which culminated in the killing of a Chinese worker by a Japanese foreman and led to the May 30th events. They are presented as examples of the Communist Party leading the workers towards proletarian objectives defined by the Party. This makes sense if it is assumed
that the proletarianisation of artisans and peasants is historically inevitable, that only proletarian workers who are aware that they have been proletarianised will commit themselves to revolt against the capitalist mode of production, and that the ability of the Communist Party to act as the political arm of the proletariat is not in question.

The other consequence of Deng's use of Leninist Marxism is the linking of workers' protest in China with international economic and political developments. Out of the four strikes and series of strikes discussed in depth in Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi, three of them - the Hong Kong seamen's strike, the Kailuan strike and the Japanese cotton mill strikes - were directed at foreign employers, and are presented as events in which Chinese workers, driven to comprehension of the nature of imperialism by their experience of exploitation under imperialist employers, and given organisation and leadership by the Communist Party, acted to repel the imperialists and promote the liberation of China. Although the Beijing-Hankou railway was under Chinese ownership, the Beijing-Hankou railway strike is integrated, explicitly, with the October Revolution and with a broad network of revolutionary movements arising in other parts of the world in response to the October Revolution and to the imminent crisis of world capitalism. For the same reason, workers' participation in broadly based patriotic protest movements such as May 4th and May 30th is presented as an important aspect of the "labour movement", even with the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce putting money into the strike fund.

Deng's argument that the Beijing-Hankou railway strike of 1923 was intrinsically anti-imperialist, and that Shanghai workers' participation in the mass protest against the shootings in Nanjing Road was a formative episode in the "labour movement", derives from Lenin's concept of imperialism as the necessary last stage of capitalism, under which the economic and political institutions of both colonies and colonial powers belong to a single interdependent exploitative structure. In fact the anti-imperialist focus of the Chinese Communist Party's workers' movement program dates from the establishment of the Guomindang-Communist United Front and its integration with the Comintern in January 1924. Deng and his successors assume that a blow struck against any part of the structure of imperialist exploitation is a blow struck against the whole. In fact Deng asserts that it was their participation in the May 4th protests that taught Chinese workers how to strike. "But while the capitalists, by this means, were simply using the workers to strike a blow against their competitors, they also showed the workers the power of the strike. Political strikes by the Chinese working class begin with May 4th. Afterwards, it was

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largely due to the influence of these strikes that the Chinese working class was able to develop its own independent class strength, and engage in its own independent struggles.\(^5\)

The victory of the Communist Party in the Chinese civil war caused "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought" to become the theoretical base for historical scholarship in all universities and other institutions in the People's Republic. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the absence of economic and political conditions which might have preserved the independence of universities, publishers and the press meant that no public divergence from the Party's theoretical base was possible. In practice, some Chinese historians, particularly those who dealt with topics in ancient history, were able to pursue their research while confining the scope of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought to a few introductory and concluding remarks about exploitation in slave and feudal societies, but labour history, which was very closely connected with the theoretical legitimacy of the People's Republic, became standardised in all important respects. While Deng's book concluded with the May 30th movement, post-1949 Chinese labour histories dealt in the same way with the Nanjing decade and the Japanese occupation. The "yellow" Guomindang unions were not workers' organisations, and while the history of their activities might say something about the Guomindang's labour policies, it said nothing about the condition and the aspirations of the workers themselves. The workers' subjection to feudalism, capitalism and imperialism, and the historical role of the Communist Party, remained the same.

In the last fifteen years, the partial liberalisation of historical scholarship in China has not brought about a reassessment of the post-1949 Sino-Marxist tradition of Chinese labour history so much as a general loss of interest in the subject. A new ruling ideology has determined a new focus of interest for the social history of the Republican period. The proliferation of accounts of the exploitation of workers in pre-Communist society published between 1950 and 1980 has given way to a new proliferation of studies of the pioneering entrepreneurs of the Republican period. The impression I have come away with from recent visits to China is that for the younger generation of Chinese historians labour history is a subject for old Party conservatives, about which nothing of interest or value remains to be said. The idea that material progress, political democracy and personal freedom all spring from private enterprise is not conducive to interest in the history of labour, particularly since the conditions for academic independence and diversity of opinion have not improved in China to the extent that conditions for private and corporate enterprise have improved.

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The response of Western scholars to the Chinese Communist Party's historiography of labour has been a reluctance to engage with the topic. The best known and for many years the only substantial work in the field was Jean Chesneaux's *Le mouvement ouvrier chinois, 1919-1927* (The Chinese labour movement, 1919-1927), published in 1962 (in French) and 1968 (in English). While Chesneaux's book is a work of massive scale and close attention to detail, in its theoretical basis and ordering of information it differs little from the post-1949 Chinese tradition. China in 1919 was in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial condition. "The explanation for all this (the political and economic misfortunes of early twentieth century China) lies in two basic anachronisms in Chinese society ... namely, the domination of the Treaty Powers and the continuing power of a ruling class based on the exploitation of the peasant".\(^{6}\) Class struggle was the means by which China would free itself, or fail to free itself, from semi-feudal semi-colonial exploitation. "Up until 1919, the peasantry, the bourgeoisie, and the new intelligentsia had each tried and failed to solve one or the other of the two basic problems".\(^{7}\) The capacity and intention of Chinese workers to act as a class is taken on trust. The experience of proletarianisation committed the Chinese working class to revolt against the capitalist mode of production.\(^{8}\) The major events narrated by Deng Zhongxia in *Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi - the May 4th Movement*, the Hong Kong seamen's strike, the Beijing-Hankou railway strike, the strikes in the Japanese cotton mills in Shanghai in 1925 and the May 30th Movement, to which Chesneaux adds the workers' insurrections on behalf of the Guomindang-Communist alliance which accompanied the Northern Expedition in 1927 - are similarly presented as stages in the process by which the Chinese working class grew into consciousness of its role in history and fought for the liberation of China from feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.

*The Chinese labor movement* differs from the Sino-Marxist tradition in the rather greater stress on imperialism, as distinct from capitalism and feudalism. Chesneaux states at the outset "The main feature of the situation (of China at the time of the May 4th Movement) was the dominant position of the Great Powers and the foreign business interests in China".\(^{9}\) Also, Chesneaux puts much less emphasis on the role of the Communist Party in the labor movement. Although the policies and actions of the Party are present in the text and are mostly given favourable appraisal, "the working class", not the Chinese Communist Party or its members, is consistently presented as the chief conscious agent of protest and strike campaigns. This is best understood according to the political context in which Chesneaux worked and wrote. Chesneaux was a member of the French Communist Party, and the political imperative facing the French Communist Party in the 1960s was to render itself legitimate in the eyes of the public as a participant in French parliamentary democracy while continuing to work for the realisation of

\(^{7}\) Chesneaux, 1968 p.23.  
\(^{8}\) Chesneaux, 1968 pp.141-142.
socialism, in the context of the Cold War. Chesneaux underlined the impact of Western imperialism on China as a French Marxist launching an intellectual assault on the established capitalist order in his own country on the grounds of violation of the right of the Chinese people to political self-determination, as much as imperialist economic exploitation. The substitution of "the working class" for the Chinese Communist Party as the chief agent in the "labour movement" derives from the notion that "All history is the history of class struggle". Chesneaux's intent in representing the "labour movement" as a genuine, broad-based popular movement was also to provide it, and the Marxist-Leninist historical world view, with political legitimacy in the context of the political culture of Western democracy, and to counter the opposing conservative view of the Chinese workers as mere passive dupes and tools of the Communist Party.

It is small consolation that recent Western scholarship on labour in China has put forward a view of the relationship between workers and the Party that, in its representation of how much workers' protests took place beyond the control and even the comprehension of the students who made up most of the Communist Party's corps of union activists, and how ineffective the Communist Party generally was, comes closer to Chesneaux's view than to the classical Orwellism of his critics. The Chinese labor movement is the result of the belief, forged out of radical economic and political speculation into dogma to be disputed on pain of death in the catastrophic political tragedies of the Soviet Union, that the writings of Marx were not merely a body of theory to be constantly tested and reformulated in the light of events, but (after Lenin) were the final and universal scientific truth about the nature of society and the progress of history. Its application to the lives and actions of Chinese workers in the 1920s is more a work of reduction of history than a work of history. Chesneaux's involvement with China studies and with the People's Republic ended, in his own words, "pathetically". In a mixed apology, lament and plea for forgiveness published shortly after the Beijing massacre of 1989, he dismissed The Chinese labor movement with the explanation that he was made to follow the Party line. Chesneaux retired from the field of Chinese history after the repudiation of the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic, and is remembered in spite of his repudiation of his own work as an apostle of Maoist totalitarianism and a foil for Pierre Ryckmans. The effect of The Chinese labor movement was to stigmatise the subject of Chinese labour history in the West for nearly twenty years.

Chinese labour history in the West: the second phase.

The improvement in relations between China and the Western states and the opening of historical archives in the People's Republic to foreign scholars in the late 1970s set the conditions for revival of interest in Chinese labour history in the West. The work of Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter, who were able to use material collected in interviews with old workers in the early 1980s to write on the individual lives and experiences of factory workers in Shanghai and Tianjin, has been valuable in rendering the subject legitimate again. Honig's book, *Sisters and strangers: women in the Shanghai cotton mills, 1919-1949*, deals with the women and girls from Jiangsu villages who went to work in the Shanghai mills, and Hershatter's book, *The workers of Tianjin, 1900-1949*, with ironworkers, labourers in the transport industry and cotton mill workers in Tianjin. Both books, the first in a European language since Chesneaux's, were published in 1986. When compared to *The Chinese labor movement*, these works combine empirical rigour with acknowledged theoretical uncertainty. The uncertainty is about which questions to ask.

Hershatter refers to E.P. Thompson's book, *The making of the English working class*, and asks how far it is possible to describe factory workers and labourers in Republican China as a "working class". Her answer is that sometimes they behaved like one and sometimes not.¹¹ This appears to be the best answer to the question. Hershatter's and Honig's data present a picture of workers who banded together occasionally to resist layoffs or wage cuts, but whose everyday working lives were governed by intense native-place loyalties and rivalries that typically set workers and supervisors from one locality against workers and supervisors from another, and subsequent research, including my own presented here, only confirms this impression.

Why, though, is a question derived from Thompson's study of the Industrial Revolution in England applied to China, if Hershatter has not followed the Sino-Marxist tradition by treating the working class as a universal, economically determined phenomenon independent of local variables? The value of Hershatter's and Honig's studies is not that they merely refute the claims made by Chinese labour historians of the Mao era for a self-conscious and politically active working class, but that they bring to light a whole dimension of the historical experience of workers in China that is neglected in traditional Chinese Communist historiography. However, the empirical strength of these studies is countered by a certain theoretical inconclusiveness. If strikes are not the conscious expression of the workers' class interest, what are they the expression of? If loyalty to fellow natives of Tangshan was more important than loyalty to fellow workers, what made it so important? The question of the evolution of the Chinese working class into a "class for itself", in the sense used by Marx and in *The making of the English working class* by Thompson, is answered with a qualified negative, but the question of what more general conclusions about industrialisation and its economic and social consequences, workplace politics or Chinese society can be drawn from the cases of Shanghai and Tianjin is left open.

Hershatter’s and Honig’s concentration on the specific personal experience of Chinese workers at the expense of theory can be understood as a necessary, and in these cases successful and laudable, rejection of the theoretical straitjacket imposed on Chinese labour history by Chinese Communist historiography, then passed on to Western scholarship by Chesneaux. However, Hershatter and Honig were Americans writing in the United States in the 1980s. The field of debate and opinion against which they set out their narratives of what happened in Chinese factories was not dominated by Chinese Communist historiography.

Western scholars choosing to take on the topic of labour in China since Chesneaux have tended to do so in order to clear a space for Chinese workers to take on a speaking role as historical subjects independent of their inadvertent role as support for the historical legitimacy of the People’s Republic, and to defy the consequent tendency in the West to banish the workers from the discourse altogether as a social phenomenon which exists and has meaning only in Communist propaganda.

History is not written in a political vacuum in countries with elected governments, any more than it is in China. Absence of political meaning is not a very useful criterion to set for studies of events that are in themselves political, when both the authors of the historical narratives and the people whose actions they set out to explain live in the world and are separated only by the passage of time. The basic political intent from which these studies spring is not, as was the case with *The Chinese labour movement*, to reinforce the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and the global import of its ideology, but to undermine the legitimacy of the dominant and increasingly powerful conservative ideology in Western political discourse.

Hershatter and Honig avert the association with Chesneaux and establish their own implicit critique of the more overconfident sociological predictions of modernisation theory by focusing on the microcosmic level. While labour histories of the People’s Republic use individual workers’ recollections of their experiences as iconic illustrations of a single, integrated structure of truth about the old social order, these studies use them rather to point out the great diversity and “messy specificity” (Hershatter’s phrase) of workers’ lives. One cotton mill worker after another comes forward to talk about what snobs the Shanghai girls were and how the boys from Tangshan put sand in their lunchboxes. Conservative Western scholars tend not to write at length about workers as people but to focus on macro-economics, as will be discussed below.

How this relates to Western political discourse in Cold War times is best seen by considering that historiographical propositions, in the United States and elsewhere, derived political legitimacy, and therefore consideration as objective and worthy of serious attention, by demonstrating fealty to ideals of democracy and individual autonomy. Labour history, by the early 1980s, had become a difficult area, and the climate of the time discouraged attempts, however theoretically distinct from the Sino-Marxist
framework, to draw large conclusions about industrialisation from the experience of Chinese workers. Modernisation theory had become a dominant paradigm, so that the theoretical field was dominated by the idea of industrialisation as the liberating force which broke down old authoritarian social bonds and created the necessary conditions for democracy and personal autonomy, as well as being of itself the foundation of universally improved living standards, to the point where active debate was significantly depressed. Honig's and Hershatter's studies individualised their subjects, avoiding direct conflict with the dominant paradigm by moving from the general to the minutely particular. The double consequence was that they succeeded well and valuably in presenting a thorough, believable picture of the lives and thoughts of Chinese workers of the Republican period from the workers' point of view, and that the more general implications were fairly closely limited to proving Chesneaux and the Chinese Communists wrong. The extent to which Hershatter and Honig addressed the political concerns of their time and place can be seen if their work is compared to the work of Ming K. Chan, who continued to write on Chinese workers' participation in revolutionary politics and Guomindang labour policy in Hong Kong throughout the 1980s.12

Alain Roux's book, *Le Shanghai ouvrier des années trente* (published in 1993) was the first major French work on the history of labour in China since Chesneaux, and as such was of particular interest and importance. In general, *Le Shanghai ouvrier* (it has not yet been translated into English) is a work of meticulous, exhaustively researched detail and theoretical conservatism. Roux is slightly more ambitious in the direction of theory than Hershatter and Honig, but still cautious. The argument of *Le Shanghai ouvrier* is, with explicit reference to Chesneaux and to Thompson, that there was no working class in China. While Roux does not say anywhere that he considers the notion of class itself to be misconceived, he considers that because workers in Shanghai were differentiated from each other "par leur niveau de rémunération, par leur sexe, par leur âge, par leur origine géographique, par leur poste de travail"13, and because they were conscious of all the social distinctions between themselves and other workers and acted according to them not only in case of industrial conflict but routinely in their working lives, there is no sign of anything that might be called a "working class". That is, the social relations in which Chinese workers in Shanghai in the 1930s took part were not class relations.

To put the matter more precisely: Marx conceived of class as a necessary aspect of capitalist relations of production. Thompson narrowed the concept of class significantly by making class consciousness another defining factor, on the understanding that there were many

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possible paths towards the development of explicitly working-class consciousness by large numbers of people, and political, religious and geographical factors may all play their part. Alienation from the means of production is a necessary but no longer a sufficient cause of the formation of a working class. In *Le Shanghai ouvrier*, Roux formulates a definition of class that is narrower again than Thompson's: "une force cohérente, consciente d'avoir un avenir propre, organisée dans le cadre de structures qu'elle a créées elle-même pour promouvoir ses intérêts, et capable de déployer éventuellement une efficace stratégie de la grève". That is, there must be autonomous institutions constituted and staffed by workers to protect their class interest in case of conflict with employers or their representatives before one can speak of the existence of a working class.

Roux argues, convincingly, that this was not the case in China. He points to the restricted extent of (1930s Guomindang) union organisation, the persistence of native-place affiliation and secret societies beneath the veneer of modern union organisation and the workers' proclivity to act to defend the interests of fellow locals and secret society members rather than fellow workers, and the domination of the union members by foremen, contractors, Guomindang politicians and gangsters claiming to act in the workers' interests, as evidence that there were no autonomous working class organisations and therefore no working class. Chesneaux's argument in *The Chinese labor movement* was wrong because Chesneaux assumed Chinese workers joined Communist Party unions because they were conscious of their working class identity, and believed that the Communist Party was the party of the workers. Roux argues that in fact they joined in the 1920s out of basically patriotic motives; as Chinese, not as workers; that the Communist Party had been obliged to rely heavily on cultivating relations with the Green Gang to recruit members for its unions, and that the success of the legal Guomindang unions in the 1930s in attracting members and in securing real material gains for their members was possible because the workers reasoned, correctly, that their immediate best interests lay in cooperation with the foremen or gangsters to whom they owed their jobs, not in assumed solidarity with workers from other parts of China, of distinctively higher or lower social status, who perhaps did not even speak the same dialect, and with whom they shared nothing but the fact of working for wages. "Il peut, en effet, exister des sociétés où l'on rencontre des ouvriers mais non pas une classe ouvrière".

Roux's book can be considered to raise two interlinked conceptual issues. Roux argues that the "Big Seven" unions (those established by the Guomindang in the post office, the BAT and Nanyang Brothers' cigarette factories, the Commercial Press, other printing presses, the

*labour movement*, Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee, Hong Kong, 1986 pp.3-20, 36-52, 92-110.
Chinese tramways and the Shanghai-Nanjing and Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo railways succeeded to some extent in representing the real interests of the workers because the workers' real interests were not class interests. This appears to contradict what he says at the very end of the book about China's failure to modernise. "On a donc assisté, en parcourant le Shanghai ouvrier des années trente, à un processus continu d'échec de la modernisation dans la profondeur même du tissu social. On y a analysé la réalité d'un monde ouvrier amorphe, en dehors de ses microstructures traditionnelles, et en quête d'un nécessaire soutien politique pour se doter d'une ossature et s'ériger en une véritable force sociale. Ce soutien, quand il l'obtient, l'étouffe et cet étouffement est aussi celui de la modernisation".  

This last passage suggests that the workers of Shanghai did have some kind of ultimate "real interest" separate from the interests of Guomindang union secretaries and gang bosses, and that this real interest was to be realised in the process of modernisation, which failed to take place. Modernisation, unlike class, is not presented as a concept which requires discussion. This is a very slight and superficial contradiction in implied meaning, and can be resolved without violence to Roux's text by assuming different levels of real interest: immediate material necessity, and long term interest. The workers' immediate material interests were served by the Guomindang unions. But the reason it is there at all springs from the legacy of Marxism for social historians in their treatment of labour. The unrivalled explanatory force which Marxist theory originally possessed as a radical critique of western European society in the nineteenth century; the subsequent victory of Communist revolutions in Russia and China and reduction of historical materialism to gross and obvious absurdity as the legitimising creed for the Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties in circumstances of mass terror and devastation sufficient to drive convinced Marxists to religion or suicide; the Cold War, and the advantages to be gained since the start of the Cold War by those in the position to affect public opinion in the West by running all possible strains of left-wing social criticism together with Soviet and Chinese Marxism; all have worked to discourage social historians from awarding great importance to productive relations in their explanations of political and social phenomena. Because Marxist theory derives forms of political and social organisation from productive relations, the tendency has been for productive relations to drop out of the picture, while those who continue to write about labour have tended to privilege race, gender and culture as explanatory factors.

The ideological battles of the Cold War were fought in the field of public political discourse and in the mass media, and their influence on historical scholarship in the universities has been indirect and subtle. However, while the protective isolation of the ivory tower is rightly valued for what it has made possible, it has never been absolute. Thompson (and E.J.Hobsbawm)

have described native place loyalty, labour contracting and its abuses, the disdain of the artisan for the labourer and the emotional frenzies of evangelical Methodism (which had no parallel in Shanghai) without coming to the conclusion that there was no working class in England. This is consistent with the basic Marxist derivation of class from productive relations, though as said above, Thompson adds in the significant refinement of consciousness. Hobsbawm and Thompson have used Marx's concept of class in much of their work, and no matter how they might have defined themselves to themselves, they did not object to being described as Marxists in the context of academic debate. Roux does not consider himself a Marxist, and in the present state of debate on labour in China, particularly in France, has good reason not to wish to appear to be one. Roux states he does not consider class relationships to be a necessary consequence of industrialisation, that while Thompson found that English workers considered themselves a class apart and organised themselves on that basis, so that he was able to write *The making of the English working class*, Roux himself found that Chinese workers did not; that is, even the most carefully qualified and academically reputable of Marxist paradigms of class relations can plainly be shown not to fit the reality of Shanghai in the 1930s.

In fact, there is a subtle but important difference between the kinds of significance given to workers' participation in unions and politics by Roux and by Thompson. Thompson's narrative describes how English workers arrived at the idea that they belonged to a "working class", separate from the social class to which their employers belonged and defined explicitly by the sale of their labour to their employers for a wage, by going through a complex series of historical events in which the deskilling and loss of status of many of the English artisan trades coincided with the gradual and deliberately, explicitly selective constitution of a parliamentary democracy which enfranchised employers but not workers. Thompson did not intend his version of the rise to self-awareness of the English working class to be a universal paradigm. He states in the introduction to his book that things were different in Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and the English paradigm should not be applied to those places. "For I am convinced", Thompson wrote, "that we cannot understand class unless we see it as a social and cultural formation, arising from processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period...It is because class is a cultural as much as an economic formation that I have been cautious as to generalizing beyond English experience". Roux, in order to test for the existence of a working class in China, conceives of it as a universal paradigm and applies it to Shanghai.

Roux's empirical investigation of social stratification in Shanghai and of the working of the contract labour system succeeds convincingly in establishing that Chesneaux's identification

of the Chinese proletariat was based on unsustainable confidence in the universal validity of the traditional Marxist schema of productive relations and class conflict. His study of how the Guomindang trade union apparatus worked to accommodate the interests of political patrons and gangsters is the most valuably detailed such study yet published in any language. Yet his own application of Thompson's theory is similar to Chesneaux's Marxism in its universalism. All it establishes in its own terms is that different things happened in England and in Shanghai. The working class, as defined by Thompson, did not exist in Shanghai, because the working class as defined by Thompson was the English working class.

Roux goes rather further than Hershatter and Honig in the direction of general conclusions. Where Hershatter says that workers in Tianjin behaved like members of a working class "sometimes", Roux gives a definite negative, and presents the condition of workers in 1930s Shanghai as evidence of China's failure to modernise. But though the Chinese workers' experience of Shanghai appears to offer little confirmation to classical Marxism or to modernisation theory either, as class consciousness and embourgeoisment are equally hard to see, there is no extended theoretical speculation on what their experience does suggest. The issue of generalisable consequences of industrialisation in China, apart from those overconfidently predicted by Chesneaux, remains open.

Elizabeth Perry's *Shanghai on strike*, also published in 1993, turned from exploration and description of Chinese workers' lives toward a renewed effort to integrate what is known about Chinese workers' lives into a theoretical structure possessing explanatory force. Perry, from a background in political sociology, analyses the political dimension of labour in Republican China by examining the distribution and character of strikes in China's largest industrial city. The aim of *Shanghai on strike* is to construct an explanation of Chinese workers' protest, without recourse to working class solidarity and class interest as misused according to the Sino-Marxist model, while yet allowing that Chinese workers' conflicts of interest with their employers were real and considerable.

Perry seems at first to disagree with Thompson's (and Hershatter's) idea of class formation springing from class consciousness. Though there is no explicit definition of class in the introduction to *Shanghai on strike*, it is assumed that a social phenomenon called "the working class" existed in 20th century China, although it did not behave in the way predicted by classical Marxist theory. Perry's conclusion, however, again without declaring explicitly for the reality or unreality of the Chinese working class, dismisses it (the working class) as a factor behind China's subsequent social and political evolution by awarding sociological significance
and political effect to the differences among Chinese workers in Shanghai rather than to what they might have had in common as workers. "Different workers engage in different politics".\(^\text{18}\)

Perry proposes a three part distinction among Shanghai workers which derives political affiliation from skill level. Artisans in the skilled trades, such as printers and metalworkers, were the most militant, and were always more inclined to join the Communist Party than other workers. Semi-skilled workers, particularly those employed in large scale public utilities such as the Shanghai tramways and the post office, favoured the legal Guomindang unions. Unskilled process workers and labourers, who migrated from the country without bringing with them any token of expertise that an industrial employer would recognise as worth paying for, were politically apathetic, and their only loyalties outside their families were likely to be to sworn brothers, sworn sisters or to their masters in the Green Gang.

Perry's project was more theoretically ambitious than Hershatter's or Honig's, and therefore stood in greater danger of falling short of its own declared aims. There is an explicit and consistent pattern drawn from a good range of data on industrial conflict in Shanghai over the Republican period, and the explanatory dynamic behind the pattern is certainly Perry's own. Perry agrees substantially with Hershatter, Honig and Roux about the materially wretched living and working standards endured by most of the workers, the importance of native place and real or fictive kinship to Chinese of peasant origins looking for work in the cities, the weakness of the workers' "class consciousness" compared to their native place consciousness, and the strength of the Green Gang, and indicates that there are causal links between these factors and the pattern of industrial conflict and political sympathy that she describes. She makes the point, with reason, that previous studies of labour in China have concentrated more on what they did not find than on what they did find, attributes this to the influence of disappointed Marxists and argues that the fragmentation of the working class in China, about which so much has been written, was in fact the basis of stable and occasionally successful industrial and political action by the workers. In contrast to Roux, who found that there was no working class in China, Perry presents three "working classes", each with its own distinctive cultural character and class-specific forms of association.

To paraphrase Perry's argument briefly: the indigenous, pre-Communist, pre-Guomindang forms of workers' protest "varied along native-place lines". Subsequently, "with workers from particular geographical origins occupying specific productive niches in the Shanghai economy, identifiable political divisions developed among skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled laborers".\(^\text{19}\) As set out in the introductory chapter, the story of how workers from the country integrated themselves into the urban environment of Shanghai and attempted to protect

\(^{18}\) Elizabeth Perry, *Shanghai on strike*, Stanford, 1993, p.239.

\(^{19}\)
their interests is a story of the persistence of tradition, or failure of modernisation as Roux describes it. The ex-peasants or country-town artisans who became workers brought with them to Shanghai ideas about their place in society, habits of association and traditions of collective action which became the foundation of their participation in social networks and industrial action in the dockyards and factories. Because different occupations were practised in different localities, the workers’ identification of common interest with their fellow locals progressed, in Shanghai, to identification of common interest with their fellow workers in the trade. In this analysis, native place allegiance and tradition is the first cause of Shanghai workers’ political orientation, and social stratification according to skill level is a consequence of the social stratification of native places.

Skill is presented here as very much a social construct. Skilled trades were dominated by artisans from points south of the Yangzi, particularly Wuxi, Suzhou, Ningbo and Guangzhou, while ex-peasants from north Jiangsu (Subei) took the low-paid unskilled jobs. Skilled tradesmen were comparatively literate. They were more committed to urban life than unskilled workers (that is, they did not regard their jobs as temporary means of earning a cash income or removing themselves from the family board until they returned to farming). They were better paid, and thus more able to bear the consequences of industrial action. Unlike most unskilled workers, they tended to work in conditions that made conversation and discussion fairly easy; in smaller workshops, and under less punitive supervision. For these reasons, they were more likely than other workers to decide that their employers’ actions were morally illegitimate and to attempt to do something about them. Semi-skilled workers in large enterprises were in a much weaker bargaining position. The large manufacturing companies or public utilities where they worked were of political importance to the Guomindang and therefore were effectively unionised. Therefore the semi-skilled workers cooperated more with authority, by the means of the Guomindang unions. The difference between the situations of semi-skilled and unskilled workers was in the size of the workplace, the integration of their workplace with the Guomindang political structure and the management’s command of complex productive technology, as well as in local tradition and personal experience. Although unskilled workers drew on local practice in their use of networks of personal contacts and gang affiliation to find and keep jobs, this did not mean they were particularly well adapted to authoritarian management practices. Perry argues that “close ties to the countryside rendered the unskilled workers an unruly lot”.

One question raised by this approach is how local traditions gave rise to different forms of formal and informal association among skilled and unskilled workers. Closely related to this is the question of skill - of whether skill is a social construct deriving from the monopolisation of

trades by people from a single locality who already possessed a recognised social status, or genuine, economically valued expertise which gave skilled workers a certain leverage over their employers. Although Perry's scheme of three-way socio-political stratification among the workers of Shanghai is based on skill level, it still has to be explained why workers of different skill levels used the particular forms of organisation and strategy that they used. Perry has assumed, uncontroversially in the light of general sociological opinion and her own previous research on Chinese peasant revolts, that they derived from different pre-modern rural traditions of association and protest.

Although Perry argues in Part I that place of origin is the first cause and skill a socially constructed factor that complicated and elaborated social distinctions based on native place, it is not clear how the connection between native place, skill level and political sympathy worked. In fact the explanatory dynamic as I have paraphrased it above is rather heavily weighted in favour of local traditions of association and protest, to the point where skill is quite stripped of its connotations of productive expertise and becomes a mere function of social prestige and the political power of guilds. At various points throughout the text Perry redresses the balance. The sum effect, though, is confusing if one is trying to construct an exact synopsis of the argument of *Shanghai on strike*. For instance, "Native place identity promoted camaraderie among workers in different trades, but it did not necessarily imply loyalty to native place above or in contradiction to craft or class interests". Also, "The differences in the demands of skilled and unskilled workers were obviously linked to their respective positions in the Shanghai labour market. Aware that they were irreplaceable, factory artisans felt free to challenge their employers. By contrast, unskilled workers' wage-related protests seldom went beyond a call for modest pay increases". Most definitively, "It was not that gender, native place, or occupation in and of themselves caused a particular political disposition. Rather, these attributes were associated with different social networks (e.g. sisterhoods, brotherhoods, mutual aid societies, guilds, gangs) which in turn aligned variously with Communist, Guomindang or independent movements".

One major theoretical difficulty in *Shanghai on strike* is the articulation of the relationship between native place and skill, both of which are perceived to affect the working lives and political orientation of Shanghai workers. That there was chain migration in China, leading to monopolisation of certain occupations by workers from a particular place, is hardly open to challenge and has been described in several other parts of the world by labour historians. (I will describe it again myself in Chapter 5.) Honig has described the paramount importance of native place and the power of contractors and foremen in the circumscribed lives of girls from

Subei working in the Shanghai cotton mills, and Hershatter's and Roux's accounts of factory life are the same in all important respects. What is original in *Shanghai on strike* is the correlation between skill and militancy. It was prefigured by Lynda Shaffer in 1982 in *Mao and the workers*, but Perry generalises the relationship between skill and militancy beyond the case of the artisan weavers of Hunan to account for the fragmentation of the putative Chinese working class. However, it should not be considered that *Shanghai on strike* is a definitive statement of the social effects of industrialisation in China. What still has to be made explicit is what was included in the rural migrants' local traditions of association and protest, which themselves presumably arose in response to the economic and institutional conditions of the locality, that these rural migrants re-established in Shanghai in very different economic and institutional conditions.

It is true that peasant revolts in Qing China were led by secret societies not altogether different from the Green Gang in their manner of organisation and their ethos of loyalty. Bandit gangs - in particular the *Qiang fei*, or "Guns" - were widespread even in south Jiangsu in the unsettled years following the Taiping rebellion. However, most of the ex-peasants who worked in Shanghai had never revolted or joined the bandits. Their work was farming, and farming in Jiangsu was performed not by gangs but by small independent proprietors or tenants who worked the land alone or in family groups, dealt with landlords and local merchants on a contractual basis, and disposed of their produce themselves. Some of them were extremely poor, but the terms of their lives, by pre-industrial standards, were distinctly "modern" rather than "feudal". Jiangsu peasants did not need to obtain the patronage of the local gang boss in order to sell their rice crops. The traditions of robbery and anti-dynastic revolt are not likely to have been cultivated in the popular consciousness by the hortatory efforts of the local gentry. Neither are they likely to have figured as more than the theme of an occasional market day's entertainment for peasants whose concern was to increase their families' standing in local society by practical, achievable means.

This is the problematic of the attribution of Shanghai workers' use of brotherhoods, sisterhoods and gangs to local traditions of popular association and protest. Gang membership in rural Jiangsu at the end of the Qing was not a widespread traditional form of popular association, but a last alternative to starvation for the destitute. The operation of native-place networks in urban factories that Perry has described is quite real. All recent studies of labour in China confirm it, as does my own research on Tianjin. But some additional investigation into how the native-place networks developed, and how they relate to the skill factor, appears to be necessary to create a more complete explanation of the relationship between industrial conflict and the directions in which Chinese society was changing under the influence of industrialisation.

The tendency among economic historians of China who write about manufacturing industry, as distinct from labour historians, has been to take the process of industrialisation as given. In place of a series of transitions from feudalism to capitalism to socialism, there is a gradual, incremental progress towards "modernisation". Modernisation in industry stands for increased production and more effective distribution of a higher quality of goods and services, and for the gradual removal of physical and social barriers to increased production, effective distribution and better quality. The sources of industrial conflict are seen as low pay, overwork, personally abusive treatment and the persistence of pre-modern ideas among the workers, not the fact of the workers being employed in factories. Going beyond the factory to the level of state and society, modernisation implies progress from a condition of low social mobility and authoritarian, particularistic social relations towards a form of society which may give rise to some uncertainty among the economically unfortunate, in the short term, but provides conditions for upward mobility, relatively free and fluid social relations based on objective, non-particular criteria, and democratic political institutions.

As formulated by Walt Whitman Rostow in the 1950s and 1960s, "modernisation theory" proceeded from the basis of classical economics to argue for an interlinked progression of economic growth and social and political transformation, similar in its material determinism and universality to Leninist and pre-Leninist Marxism, in which the key to the modernising transformation was the accumulation of a certain proportion of the national product in the form of savings. For the human agent of the modernisation process, consciousness of one's economic interest plays the same role as class consciousness does in Marxist theory - the direction of progress is determined, but how quickly and successfully society moves in that direction depends on consciousness. The factors that work to bring about modernisation are rational and economic in nature, while the factors that work against it are irrational and cultural, ideological or psychological.

Because neo-classical economic theory has borne the same relationship to the possession and exercise of power, subject to the constraints of democracy and academic freedom, as Sino-Marxism has done in the People's Republic of China, it is vulnerable, in some degree, to the same faults; the confounding of scholarship and argument with the legitimation of power, the benefits in terms of personal morality, as this has been generally understood, as well as career advancement, given the world situation - of accepting it whole, the costs of not accepting. The intrusion of moral authority, or political necessity, into historical argument is most clear in the tension between the determining dynamic of capital accumulation and growth, according to which social and political consequences derive from economic causes, which is seen as both
inevitable and desirable, and the need to explain instances where the model does not work with reference to culture, ideology or psychology, according to which economic consequences must derive from social or political causes. Where labour is concerned, whether rational or irrational factors are thought to have determined relations between employers and employed sometimes appears to depend on whether or not growth has occurred. This is the main theoretical dilemma faced by modernisation theory, which all economic historians of the industrialisation process who base their work on neo-classical theory resolve in one way or another: the problem of the general explanatory dynamic that appears and vanishes according to the rate of economic growth.

The more serious revisionist scholarship of recent years on the economic history of China has assailed the Chinese Communist tradition and staked its own claim to historical legitimacy, not primarily by questioning the conceptual rigour of some Chinese studies, which is not difficult to do, but by applying classical non-Marxist economic theory to the available data on Republican China to argue for economic growth and rising living standards. The most significant recent works of this kind are probably Loren Brandt's *Commercialisation and agricultural development: central and eastern China, 1870s-1930s* and Thomas Rawski's *Economic growth in pre-war China*. Brandt argues that most or all Chinese farming households were able to benefit from the diversification of the Chinese economy and the growth of off-farm employment opportunities, so that Chinese incomes tended to become more rather than less equal. Rawski argues, with particular reference to the workers and their place in the Chinese economy, that wages paid to agricultural labourers and wages of textile and mine workers rose in linked fashion between 1914 and 1936, and that this was not because of government policy or successful industrial action but because the economy was growing and the market value of labour was rising, and the beneficial effect of this trend was being diffused across China by the natural working of the economy. In these works political, ideological and cultural factors are sidelined, and Chinese workers and peasants appear in statistical form as receivers of wages, consumers of groceries and sellers of labour.

The two sides of the theoretical dilemma implied by "modernisation" are illustrated by contrasting Muramatsu Yuji's *Chugoku keizai no shakai taisei* (The social structure of the Chinese economy; Tokyo, 1949) and Rawski's book, in which sharply contrasting conclusions are reached about the behaviour of the Chinese economy in the first half of the twentieth century. Muramatsu, who stresses the failure of the economy to grow, argues that growth was impeded by custom - by the reluctance of Chinese merchants and peasants to risk abandoning the convenience of traditional forms of organisation of production even when it was in their long-term interest to do so. That is, "custom" was or had become an irrational, economically distorting

force. Rawski, writing in a different political context, states explicitly that he has assumed that Chinese entrepreneurs, farmers and workers were as rational economic actors as any others. Therefore, growth was likely to have taken place, and the central brief of Economic growth in pre-war China is to establish that it did take place; times, places and particular industries in which growth did not take place are submerged within a proposed cross-China average growth rate of 1.8 to 2% per year between 1914 and 1936.26

Why "Access to work"?

It was Rawski’s account of the operation of the labour market in north China, presented in Chapter 6 as part of an argument for a rising standard of living in country districts 27, combined with certain features of wages in the six cotton mills in Tianjin that I had noted in the course of my own research, that formed the starting point of the argument that I have put forward in this thesis. The six cotton mills were of considerable economic importance and political interest in Tianjin, and quite a lot was written about them. In particular, there are two major book-length surveys, Fang Xianting’s Zhongguo zhi mian fangzhiye (Cotton industry and trade in China), written while Fang was director of the Nankai Institute of Social and Economic Research, and the Tianjin shifangshaye diaocha baogao (Report of investigation into the cotton spinning industry in Tianjin) published by the Bureau of Social Affairs of the Tianjin city government in 1931. Both Fang and the BSA, especially the BSA, pointed to considerable wage diversity between one cotton mill and another. That is, workers performing the same work on the same machines received different wages in different mills. I paid little attention to this, attributing it to weak organisation and unregulated competition in a new industry at a time when state function was quite limited, until I read Economic growth in pre-war China and realised that Rawski’s argument, based on a very comprehensive synthesis of economic data for the Republican period, predicted market-driven wage linkages not only between cotton mills in Tianjin, but between the Tianjin mills and the market for agricultural labour across rural Hebei. Some explanation of the Tianjin cotton mill wage figures seemed to be called for.

Since both Fang and Hershatter had noted that a good proportion of Tianjin cotton mill workers’ real incomes came from bonuses awarded by foremen, and that the foremen were also empowered to fine workers, it could be assumed that the difference in nominal wages was, in practise, evened out by the distribution of bonuses. However, there is something strongly counter-intuitive about the idea that bonuses and fines awarded on the spot by foremen, without authorisation by the management, would cause unequal wages for the same work in six factories to become equal. The impression given in Hershatter’s chapter on cotton mills is that the foremen

were petty autocrats who used their power to reward their favourites and punish the favourites of rival foremen, with scant regard for market forces. Without statistics to demonstrate that the wage disparities evened out when bonuses and fines were added, it seemed best not to take this for granted. What most needed explanation is why the workers themselves did not take account of market forces, and work elsewhere.

The existence of wage differences of up to 30% for the same work, in factories situated in the same city, is not compatible with the existence of a labour market, which would set values for labour that were fluid and moved with commodity prices but could not be ignored by employers. The explanation that occurred to me, because of what I had read in the secondary literature about the role of kinship, native place and personal fealty in the recruiting of factory workers, was that the work force was not mobile. Ex-peasants from Hebei only found work in a Tianjin cotton mill if they had a friend, neighbour or relative who was a foreman, or who was on good terms with one. It was not possible for a cotton mill worker, however competent and experienced, to move from a low-paying job to a higher-paying job in another mill, unless he or she had contacts at that mill.

It appeared, then, that the "labour market" in Republican China was the victim of particularistic recruiting practices. The sources on wages in Tianjin flour mills and match factories confirmed this impression. But when I turned from Tianjin to Suzhou, to see if there were any systematic differences in the pattern of industrial conflict and the type of demands raised by the workers in new factory industries and old handcraft industries, the picture became more complicated. The files of the Suzhou Chamber of Commerce not only demonstrate evidence of set trade wide standard wage rates to which employers were expected to keep, but show Suzhou tradesmen keeping track of wage developments in Shanghai. This not only revived the labour market concept to some extent, but contradicted the explanation for native-place networks in factories given in much of the literature, which was that this was the traditional Chinese way of recruiting workers. If it were the traditional Chinese way, one would expect it to be more pronounced in slowly evolving handcraft industries with a strong guild structure than in new factory industries, not less. The Suzhou data made no sense unless one assumed free movement of workers. Was there something peculiar about north China? The relative intransigence of the Tianjin carpet weavers, with Roux's data on the wages of cotton mill workers in Shanghai, suggested to me that what decided whether a Chinese worker depended wholly on her or his patron and protector for continued employment, or whether she or he could move from job to job as opportunity permitted, was not location north or south of the Yangzi but possession of a marketable skill.

I put together the central argument of this thesis before reading *Shanghai on strike*, but on reading Perry's book I found that her conclusions about skilled and unskilled workers engaging in very different survival strategies were quite close to mine. However, the focus of this thesis is different. Because there was some degree of direct competition between the Guomindang and the Communist Party to recruit workers for party unions in Shanghai, even after the April 12th coup, and because Perry's research interests lay in that direction, her work aimed to trace and explain the relationship between skill level and political affiliation. Compared to Shanghai, Suzhou and Tianjin were political vacuums. In Tianjin, Communist Party unions enjoyed brief and scattered success from mid-1925 to early 1926, but were suppressed by Zhang Zuolin's forces and did not emerge again until the Civil War in the 1940s. In Suzhou they did not exist. More important, my own interest was in the relationship between work and power in daily life. I hoped to measure what it was about the people who worked in factories and workshops and the kind of work they did that led to different kinds of relationships between employers and employed, what the differences were, and what conclusions could be drawn from them about the industrialisation process.

What follows is an examination of organisation of production, wages and industrial conflict in handcraft industries and modern factory industries in Suzhou and Tianjin. I consider that the demands that the workers raised in the course of disputes and strikes reflected the availability of employment and the nature of the workers' relations with employers and supervisors. Chapter 1 examines the Tianjin cotton mills, and contrasts the features of industrial conflict in the cotton mills with those in the silk-weaving industry in Suzhou. Chapters 2 and 3 seek to confirm the argument set out in Chapter 1 by investigating industrial conflict in the Tianjin flour mills and match factories. Chapter 4 seeks to confirm and elaborate it further by examining industrial conflict in other handcraft industries in Suzhou and Tianjin. Chapter 5 discusses the carpet weaving industry in Tianjin as an example of how handcraft workers responded to the introduction of the factory system, and addresses the issue of how the authority of a workshop owner over his workers differed from the authority of a factory foreman. Chapter 6 then addresses the question of what can be deduced about relations of production and power in various industries from the available statistics on trade union membership.

Chinese labour history is a field in which a lot has been written about what did not happen, and a lot more about why it did not happen. Having committed myself to the field, I was determined to see if I could trace what did happen when the factories were built in China, and what were the implications about Chinese society and the industrialisation process. The argument that I will advance in this thesis is that the terms of employment - access to work - were different in handcraft industries and modern factory industries in Republican China, and that what made the difference was the handcraft workers' possession of a marketable skill that employers were
unable to do without. Handcraft workers were more mobile, more likely to engage in offensive strikes, more exclusively concerned about wages, and - when the factory system was introduced in their trade - more likely to risk their jobs by protesting against the behaviour of foremen or the factory rules. Factory workers were exclusively dependent on relationships of personal fealty with more powerful patrons in order to find and keep jobs, were much more concerned about job security than handcraft workers, and while they might move from farm to factory and back again, they rarely moved from one factory to another.

The introduction of the factory system, in which the productive process was broken up into separate simple steps to be performed on machines by workers with no particular experience, meant that skill did not work as a criterion for recruiting workers. The absence of labour exchange institutions, for which there had been little use before the age of modern industry, left recruiting in the hands of factory staff. The absence of either traditional or modern forms of social security in the urban environment of Republican China lent emphatic material force to the power of foremen, "elder brothers" or gang bosses over the workers who owed their jobs to them. The ex-peasants who went into the factories did not work on their farms in gangs but in semi-autonomous or autonomous family units, and what compelled them to belong to factory floor gangs was not psychology but necessity. I argue in the chapters that follow that what looks like the most strikingly pre-modern and "irrational" characteristic of factory industry in pre-Communist China - personal patronage and gang rivalry on the factory floor - was not an impediment to modernisation but a result of it.
CHAPTER 1

The relationship between manufacturing technology and industrial relations.

The modern Chinese cotton industry began as an import replacement industry, using imported technology to produce for a domestic market already tested and established by imported cotton cloth and yarn. The years between 1914 and 1925, when the six Tianjin mills were founded, were the stage of most rapid growth for the industry, as imports of British cloth and yarn were affected by World War I, and private Chinese investors, who had greeted the early official initiatives with caution, took notice of the opportunities offered. After this, the cotton industry began to experience difficulties. Out of four Tianjin mills investigated in Fang Xianting’s 1932 study Zhongguo zhi mian fangzhiye (Cotton industry and trade in China), Yuyuan lost money every year from 1923 to 1928, except 1925; Hengyuan made a loss in 1923 and 1924, recovered in 1925 and 1926, then continued to lose money; Huaxin made a loss in 1926 only; and Beiyang made losses from 1926 to 1929. The financial position of the Tianjin cotton mills continued to decline through the 1930s until they were all sold or taken into receivership in 1936. Most significantly for the purposes of this study, the number of workers employed at the six Tianjin mills stayed fairly constant until 1933 and then fell. 15,338 workers were employed in 1929; 15,550 in 1930; 14,453 in 1931; 15,444 in 1932; 12,016 in 1933; 9,546 in 1934; 5,316 in 1935; and 5,286 in 1936.7

Recruiting of experienced workers from Shanghai and elsewhere was seldom practised by industrial employers in Tianjin. The cotton mills recruited workers with no particular experience from country districts within reach of Tianjin throughout most of

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7. Fang Xianting (H.D. Feng), Zhongguo zhi mian fangzhiye (Cotton industry and trade in China), Chihli Press, Tianjin, 1932 pp.96-98; Zhongguo mian fangzhi tongji shiliao (Historical statistics on the cotton industry of China), Shanghai shi mian fangzhi gongye gonghui choubeihui (Preparatory committee of the Shanghai cotton industry association), Shanghai, 1950, pp. 37, 41, 44, 48, 52, 56, 60, 64. Fang was director of the Nankai University Committee on Social and Economic Research.
their fifteen to twenty years of operation before they were closed down and sold. However, Baocheng, Huaxin and Beiyang engaged large numbers of already skilled workers from Shanghai, Hankou and Wuxi when they first began operating.8

If the experienced workers recruited by the Tianjin mills from other mills in other cities when they started production are not included, the number of workers who had any experience of work in cotton mills when they started work throughout the productive careers of the Tianjin mills can not have been large. Statistics on workers' experience were not kept by the mills, and were not tabulated by either the Bureau of Social Affairs (BSA) of the city government of Tianjin of the first Guomindang period (1928-1937) or the Nankai University Committee on Social and Economic Research in their surveys of 1929 and 1930. It is only possible to put together an impression of where Tianjin cotton mill workers came from out of anecdotal evidence and the BSA's and Nankai's statistics on workers' ages, place of origin and length of stay in the mills.

The Nankai survey of 1929 found that, out of 3,898 workers in 3 mills, 927 (23.8%) were from Tianjin, 2,155 (55.3%) from elsewhere in Hebei province, and 816 or (20.9%) from outside Hebei. A representative of the Hengyuan management told an investigator from the Bureau of Social Affairs that most of their workers came from Hebei province, outside Tianjin. The second greatest number were from Tianjin itself, and the smallest number from other provinces. Most came to Tianjin to work "because of poor harvests and consequent poverty at home". The Huaxin management said only that some workers had land and families and were not entirely dependent on their wages from Huaxin, and that others did not. The workforce at Beiyang was more urban. Out of 2,040 workers, 696 or 34.1% came from Tianjin, 688 or 33.7% from rural Hebei and 656 or 32.2% from other provinces.9 The other mills did not give details. The picture of a work force of substantially rural origin is reinforced by Hershatter’s interviews with former cotton mill workers in The workers of Tianjin.10 If rural origin is a reliable indicator of lack of experience working in cotton mills, the implication is that approximately three quarters of the Tianjin cotton mill workforce in the 1929-1930

8. Fang, 1932; Zhou Xuehui and Ma Jinggan, "Tianjin Huaxin fangzhi gongsi shimo" (The Huaxin Textile Co. of Tianjin from beginning to end), in Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji (Selected materials on the culture and history of Tianjin), vol.38, pp.43-66. Zhou was the younger brother of Zhou Xuexi, minister for finance under Yuan Shikai, model industrialist of 1920s Tianjin and founding director of Huaxin.


period definitely can not have had any experience before they started work.  

The large-scale recruiting of workers without previous experience to work in cotton mills was a widespread and in fact general phenomenon in the cotton spinning and weaving industry, both in China and in other countries. The nature of cotton spinning technology in the 1920s was such that the process from start to finish was broken down into distinct, highly repetitive machine-tending operations that could be picked up by an adolescent worker without previous factory experience in a span of time estimated by the Huaxin management in 1929 as two months maximum, and by the Hengyuan management in 1934 as five weeks. The technological character of the industry conspired with the manner of its introduction to Tianjin as a new, large scale manufacturing industry without direct antecedents to create a situation in which skill was irrelevant as a criterion for employment. This was because while cotton spinning and weaving had been (and still were) widespread domestic and handcraft industries all over north China, the gap in technological evolution between the old cotton textile industry and the new was so considerable that no cotton mill management in Tianjin ever tried to recruit workers on the basis of experience in handcraft spinning or weaving.

It will be argued below that this irrelevance of skill was one half of the relationship between the modern cotton industry and the economic organisation of the society into which it was introduced that gave rise to the "characteristically Chinese" practice of recruiting workers according to particularistic ties of family relationship or native place affinity, and to the domination of factory floor politics by native place affinity groups, or gangs, organised around vertical bonds of patronage and dependence between ordinary workers and foremen.

The Nankai and Bureau of Social Affairs surveys both stress that recruiting of workers was performed and controlled by foremen, who chose workers from their own home districts or on the basis of some kind of existing relationship between foreman and worker. This was in spite of the mill managements having quite specific criteria and procedures for the selection of workers set out in writing. Fang Xianting, director of the Nankai survey and author of the resulting monograph, Cotton industry and trade in China (Zhongguo zhi mian fangzhiye) quotes the Huaxin rules for admission of new workers. In 1929, the Tianjin cotton mill workers who were not from Tianjin or rural Hebei were nearly all peasants from Shandong. Fang, 1932 p.115.

workers, which included a trial period for inexperienced workers, a work test for experienced ones as well as age, height and health standards, with the comment: "These regulations, of course, are not strictly enforced, but represent rather the mill’s attempt to introduce a set of guiding principles upon which to determine the selection of applicants .... The applicant is customarily introduced to the mill through the medium of foremen. Whenever new hands are needed, the news spreads out immediately among the foremen, who in turn are responsible for introducing them to the management".  

The Hengyuan management told the Bureau of Social Affairs that "Most are introduced by relatives, friends or fellow locals, others are recruited by the factory". The Baocheng management, accounting for the relatively large number of women working at Baocheng, told the Bureau of Social Affairs investigator: "Many married male workers' wives work here". It was not necessary for a worker to know or be related to a foreman to get a job in a cotton mill; acquaintance or relationship with another ordinary worker would often be enough. However, the worker already employed would need the approval of the foreman to secure employment for a friend or relative. Hershatter’s interviews present a vivid picture of a world of gang rivalry, patronage and bullying, in which the protection of foremen or gang leaders was necessary not merely to get and keep jobs but often enough to get out of being beaten up. She states "It is difficult to say whether a high percentage of workers ever entered the factory by going through formal channels at all".

Tianjin in the 1920s was a city of approximately 1.3 million people, of whom the majority of the working population were employed in locally oriented commerce, handcraft industry and transport. Between 1860 (when Tianjin became a treaty port according to the terms of the Treaty of Beijing which concluded the Second Opium War) and 1929, the city grew from a population of about 600,000 to 1,391,121. Part of this growth came from immigration from surrounding country districts, by peasants and artisans and their sons looking for employment. While this migration to the cities in late Qing and Republican China can be and has been measured, there is no general agreement on what were the most significant reasons for it, and the debate continues about whether Chinese country dwellers were lured to the cities by rising urban incomes, living standards and employment prospects, were driven to the cities by

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14. Fang, 1932, p.120.
17. Zhong waijingji zhoukan (Chinese economic journal and bulletin), vol.20, no.3 (March 1937).
poverty, civil war and the exactions of landlords, or were forced off their farms by 
population pressure. What it did not spring from was generalised expropriation of the 
peasantry, or even from the destruction of existing handcraft industries by competition 
from factory made products.

Both contemporary and recent studies of industry in China have established that 
the major handcraft industries continued to exist alongside factory industries producing 
comparable products, and that in some cases they entered into economic symbiosis with 
factory industries to the benefit of both, like the cotton weavers in Gaoyang and Baodi 
who used factory yarn, or the ironworkers in Santiaoshi who kept Tianjin factories 
supplied with machine parts. There was no enclosure movement in China. The 
proportion of Chinese farmers who owned at least part of the land they cultivated in 
1937 exceeded the equivalent figure for the United States in 1945. Even in the 1930s, 
migration to Tianjin was not always permanent; many young single men working for 
wages in Tianjin came from farming families, and would regularly leave their city jobs 
to return to the farm for the agricultural busy season, as indicated by the Huaxin 
management’s comment to the Bureau of Social Affairs in 1930 that some of the 
workers in the mill were landowners.

In 1916, when the first cotton mill opened in Tianjin, there was no standing 
army of declassed, unskilled labourers available for work in Tianjin, and consequently 
no institutions for the organisation and sale of labour had evolved to profit from it. 
There was no labour exchange available for a factory manager requiring, perhaps, 3,000 
factory workers at short notice. While there were labour contractors who organised 
gangs of agricultural labourers in rural Hebei for hire during the busy season (some of 
whom, to their great advantage, had branched into the supply of labour power to the 
nearby Kailuan coal mine) the cotton mill managers found it altogether cheaper and

18. See (for example) David D. Buck, Urban change in China: politics and development in 
Tsinan, Shantung, 1890-1947, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1978, 
especially Appendix B, pp.226-236; Ho Pingti, Studies on the population of China, 
1368-1953, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1959; Philip C.C.Huang, The 
peasant economy and social change in north China, Stanford University Press, 
Stanford, 1985; Peter Schran, "China’s demographic evolution 1850-1953 
reconsidered", in China Quarterly, no.75 (1978), pp.638-646; Alden Speare, Jr., 
"Migration and family change in central Taiwan" in M. Elvin and G. William Skinner 
(eds), The Chinese city between two worlds, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1974; 
Zhao Wenlin and Xie Shujun, Zhongguo renkou shi (History of the Chinese 
population), Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1984).

19. H.D. Fong (Fang Xianting) and H.H. Pi, "The growth and decline of rural industrial 
enterprise in north China: a case study of the cotton handloom weaving industry in 
Paoti", Nankai Social and Economic Quarterly, no.3, Tianjin, 1936; Hershatter, 1986, 
ch.4, pp.82-114.

20. Albert Feuerwerker, The Chinese economy, 1912-1949, Ann Arbor, University of
easier to send foremen and other factory staff back to their home villages to recruit anyone who wanted a job.21 Because skill was not relevant, and because there was no institutional mechanism for the assembly and exchange of labour, the recruiting of cotton mill workers fell to the foremen. They recruited workers from their own native places because that was where they were known, and because those workers would do as well as any others.

Fang Xianting described the separation rates (numbers of workers leaving the factory or being dismissed divided by the average number of workers in the factory throughout the year) at the Tianjin mills as "rather low" and pointed out that it was lower than the rate in cotton mills in Shanghai. In fact the figures range (according to no obvious pattern) from 5.8% to 76.8%, presumably because of large scale layoffs of workers at some of the factories surveyed. Separation rates for four of the Tianjin mills are tabled below:

Beiyang: 76.8% (April to September 1930).

Hengyuan: 28.4% (July to December 1927), 15.7% (1928), 6.6% (1929), 5.8% (January to May 1930).

Huaxin: 42.1% (March 1929 to February 1930)

Yuyuan: 35.5% (July to December 1927), 20.8% (1928), 12.3% (January to June 1929).22

Yuyuan and Hengyuan, the two largest mills, show a declining separation rate. Fang attributes the higher separation rate in Shanghai to the presence of more job opportunities. However, out of the 3,898 Tianjin cotton mill workers counted in the Nankai survey, only 2% left their jobs in order to move to other jobs in Tianjin. Among the reasons for workers leaving or being sacked catalogued by Nankai, "long absence" was most frequent at 39.9%, and return to native place second at 12.9%. "Long absence", which implies that the workers left the mill without informing the foreman of their intentions and simply did not turn up again, is explained by Fang with the comment that the 12 hour day made the workers tired, especially in summer.


22. Fang, 1932, p.121.
"Such a phenomenon, separation on account of long absence, is a common one in Chinese mills, and is largely due to the long hours of work under the two shift system. During the summer time in particular, the workers are so tired after work that they are induced to take a few days off for rest, if not for personal affairs". 23

Monthly attendance rates at Hengyuan were measured by Nankai, showing that absenteeism was highest in February, June, July and August. "In February the celebration of the Chinese New Year keeps many workers away from work, while in June, July and August the discomfort of summer heat is responsible for the same phenomenon". For some reason, even though the rural origin of much of the workforce is attested to by both the Nankai and Bureau of Social Affairs surveys, it is not suggested that these workers were temporarily quitting their jobs in Tianjin to go back to their families' farms for the agricultural busy season, also falling in June, July and August.

If access to jobs in cotton mills in Tianjin depended on personal acquaintance or native place affiliation with a foreman, or with other workers who had the foreman's ear, it would be expected that movement of workers from one mill to another, or from any factory to any other factory, would be limited. People would only be able to get jobs in factories where they knew someone, and it would not make sense to speak of a "labour market" for factory workers.

Restricted labour mobility is reflected in the lack of uniformity in wages. If workers had in fact been able to move from one job to another as the opportunity presented, in accordance only with impersonal market forces governing the demand for labour, there could not have been substantial differences in wages between the six Tianjin cotton mills. If this were so, the mills paying lower wages would constantly lose their workers. The Bureau of Social Affairs survey demonstrates quite large wage differences. The average wages for male, female and juvenile workers at the six Tianjin mills are tabled below:

23. Fang, 1932, p.122.
The figures above are daily wage rates, though all wages were paid fortnightly. "Cents" refers to contemporary Chinese silver currency. There is a difference of 17c between the average men’s wage at Hengyuan and the average men’s wage at Yuyuan. The average children’s wages at Yuda and Baocheng exceeded the average men’s wage at Hengyuan.

Potential explanations for the size of this wage disparity might be that the Hengyuan workers on average were younger and less experienced, or that Hengyuan produced coarser yarn and lower quality cotton cloth (both these mills engaged in weaving as well as spinning), requiring less skill in the manufacturing process. In Shanghai, the Japanese-owned mills tended to produce higher counts of yarn than the Chinese-owned mills, and to pay better. However, the material available does not indicate that this was the important difference between Hengyuan and Yuyuan. There is a slight negative correlation between the percentage of children employed at each mill and the wages of adult male workers, expressed below:

### TABLE 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of children</th>
<th>Men's Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuyuan</td>
<td>53c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengyuan</td>
<td>36c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaxin</td>
<td>43c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>27c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baocheng</td>
<td>39c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuda</td>
<td>47c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If it is assumed that the mills which employed the most children tended to

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25. Honig, 1986, p.179. A "count" was the measure of the thickness, and therefore the quality, of cotton yarn. The lower the "count" was, the thicker and coarser the yarn.

26. For numbers of children employed; Wu, 1931, pp.52, 134, 166, 201, 252, 285.
economise deliberately on labour and concentrate on producing the lower grades of yarn and cloth, the wage difference can be seen as a direct reflection of the workers' worth in the labour market, and thus not inconsistent with the existence of a labour market. However, this potential version of events is contradicted by the Chinese Cotton Mill Owners’ Association’s (Hua shang shachang lianhehui) figures for 1928 on the amounts of higher and lower count yarn produced by each mill, and on the productivity of the work force as measured by bales of yarn per worker, tabled below (Beiyang did not respond to the Association’s survey):

<p>| TABLE 1.3 |
| Bales per year |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 count</th>
<th>16 count</th>
<th>20 count</th>
<th>32 count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuyuan</td>
<td>15,805</td>
<td>16,350</td>
<td>1,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengyuan</td>
<td>9,450</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>2,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaxin</td>
<td>5,320</td>
<td>4,520(9,460)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baocheng</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuda</td>
<td>2,043</td>
<td>14,860</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Huaxin, instead of producing 20 count yarn, produced 9,460 bales of "special 16", cheaper to produce than 20 count and higher in quality than standard 16 count yarn. None of the mills produced anything lower than 10 count or higher than 32. Yuyuan, which paid the highest wages, actually devoted the lowest percentage of its production to 20 and 32 count yarn. Hengyuan, which paid the lowest wages, out-produced not only Yuyuan but also the two foreign-managed mills, Yuda and Baocheng, in 20 and 32 count yarn.

Also, Hengyuan ranked highest of the Tianjin mills in terms of productivity per worker. The 1928 figures for bales of yarn per worker are as below:

27. _Tianjin Mianjian_ (Tianjin cotton yearbook), 1931, no.1, pp.2-9.
TABLE 1.4

*Bales per worker (per year)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Bales per Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuyuan</td>
<td>8.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengyuan</td>
<td>11.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaxin</td>
<td>8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baocheng</td>
<td>6.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuda</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the wage difference was not related to the skills or experience of the workers, it might have had some relationship to their age. It appears that cotton mill workers' wages were, to some extent, voluntarily indexed by the mill managements. Yuyuan awarded yearly wage rises of 3c to 10c to workers earning 45c a day or less "if they have made no serious mistakes", while workers earning 45c or more would be awarded wage rises according to no fixed schedule but if their work was satisfactory and if business conditions permitted. If this were the practice at all the mills, the ones with the older workers would pay higher wages. There appears to be a positive correlation between the average age of adult male workers and wage rates, expressed below:

TABLE 1.5

*Men's wages*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Wage Rate</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuyuan</td>
<td>53c</td>
<td>25.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengyuan</td>
<td>36c</td>
<td>22.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaxin</td>
<td>43c</td>
<td>23.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>49c</td>
<td>24.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baocheng</td>
<td>50c</td>
<td>28.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuda</td>
<td>47c</td>
<td>24.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If it is assumed that there was a standard wage scale, the Hengyuan workers' wages would have to rise 17c in 3 years to equal the Yuyuan wages, and the wages at Baocheng would need explaining. The Yuyuan management's statement to the Bureau of Social Affairs investigator indicates that indexation was linked not to workers' ages but to the number of years they had worked at Yuyuan. The Nankai survey indicates that in 1930 692 (24.9%) of Hengyuan's 2,783 workers had been at Hengyuan for 3 years or less. It does not seem possible that the same wage scale operated at Hengyuan and Yuyuan. What is more, examination of the average wages paid to male, female and child workers in each department at each mill reveals that there could be average wage differences of 15c or more for what was certainly the same work. For

example, men paid by the piece in the reeling department at Yuyuan earned an average of 57c daily, while at Huaxin they earned only 30c. Women paid by the piece in the reeling department earned 26c at Huaxin and 43c at Yuyuan. Men employed in the spinning department earned 35c at Hengyuan and 50c at Beiyang. Beiyang paid the highest average wages of all mills in the spinning department, and Yuda the lowest; 50c and 32c respectively for both men and women.30

The main question mark over the reliability of wage statistics as an indicator of labour mobility is the frequency of bonuses and fines, which made the difference between nominal wages and actual wages. The factory rules in each mill set out a detailed schedule of bonuses and fines, to be imposed at the foreman’s discretion. The Nankai survey indicates that bonuses were more frequent than penalties, so that the actual average wage would be higher than the nominal average wage. The Bureau of Social Affairs survey, from which the wage figures above are taken, gives nominal wage figures only. However the Nankai survey provides wage figures for Huaxin only in 1929 including bonuses, which are still consistently lower than the nominal Yuyuan wages for the same year. The overall average Yuyuan wages not counting bonuses were 43.4c on January 1st, 1929, and 46.8c on June 30th. The average wage at Huaxin in 1929, counting bonuses, was 39.4c.31 If the total amount of bonuses paid to Yuyuan workers had been included in the Nankai survey, and if Fang was right in saying that bonuses outweighed penalties, the differential between Huaxin and Yuyuan would have been greater still. The Bureau of Social Affairs’ and Nankai’s statistics on cotton mill wages combine to suggest that the workers did not move from factory to factory. While many of them possessed the unsatisfactory but relatively secure alternative of returning to the family farm, the alternative of moving to another factory was not open to them unless they were fortunate enough to have contacts in two factories.

Industrial conflict in the Tianjin cotton mills.

The history of industrial conflict at the six Tianjin cotton mills shows one notable characteristic, which as the section following will show is not shared by the silk weaving industry in Suzhou: the prominence of security of employment as a formal demand raised by the workers and as an initial cause of conflict.

For the purposes of this study, I have counted the following types of claims as

29. Fang, 1932, p.126.
wage claims: claims for higher wages; claims for bonuses [huahong or hongli]; protests against wage cuts; demands to be paid in silver currency instead of copper; demands for a more favourable silver-copper exchange rate from employers when they changed money for workers; protests against fines; calls for pay or a living allowance while factories were temporarily closed; and demands for final pay or travel expenses when dismissed. I have also counted claims for food and uniforms as wage claims. To class a demand to be issued with uniforms as a wage claim makes sense considering that a worker in a Tianjin cotton mill in this period might have owned a total of two sets of clothes, one for summer and one for winter. I have counted the following as claims for security of employment: protests against sackings; protests against the closing of factories; claims for first rights to employment for former workers when a factory that was closing opened its doors again; protests about discrimination against union members; and demands for hiring and firing to be approved by the union. Because both kinds of demands could quite easily be raised in the course of one dispute, and often were, I have chosen to measure the relative importance to the workers of wage maximisation and job security not by classifying strikes as strikes for higher wages and strikes for greater job security, but by counting the number of times each type of claim was made, so that some strikes and disputes are in both categories.

In the Tianjin cotton mills, using the sources available to me, I counted 62 disputes and strikes between 1921 and 1937. In the course of these 62 disputes, the cotton mill workers made wage claims in 39 disputes and job security claims in 29 disputes. In the silk weaving industry of Suzhou, a handcraft industry with a history of several centuries in which no-one could work without producing evidence of completion of apprenticeship and, in the newer factories, passing a work test, the equivalent figures for strikes and disputes between 1900 and 1935 were 44 disputes, 34 over wage claims and 5 over job security claims.

31. Fang, 1932, p.129.
33. The lists of disputes and strikes in the Suzhou silk industry and the Tianjin cotton industry on which this section is based are in Appendices 1 and 4. The major sources for information on disputes in the Tianjin cotton mills are Tianjin shi zhengfu Shehui Ju yi zhou nian gongzu bao gaogao (Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs work report for the first 12 months), Tianjin, 1929; Tianjin shi Shehui Ju mingyao shi bia nian gongzu bao gaogao (Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs work report for 1929), Tianjin, 1930; Tianjin shi zhengfu gong dao (Tianjin city government gazette), 1928-1936; Shuntian Shibaob, Beijing, July-August 1925; Wu Bannong (ed.), Shiliu nian zhi shiba nian liu yue Hebei sheng jiPing Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi (Analysis of labour-capital disputes in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province from 1927 to July 1929), Beijing Social Research Institute, Beijing, 1932; Dong Zhenxiu (ed.), Xin mingzhuzhuyi geming shiqi Tianjin gongren yundong jishi (Chronicle of the Tianjin workers’ movement in the period of the New Democratic Revolution), Tianjin shihui kexue congkan bianjibu (published by
Within the category of job security claims, the most common type of demand was for the reinstatement of workers who had been sacked. Three of the five strikes led by Communist Party activists in the May 30th period (at Baocheng and Yuda) featured demands for reinstatement of individual workers who had been sacked, at a time when the CCP's policy of union organisation work as expressed in Guangzhou and Shanghai was to link economic demands for higher wages with anti-warlord and nationalist political demands. If a count is made of the number of times different demands were raised, the result is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement of sacked workers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage Rise</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus &amp; other economic</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Pay</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No wage cuts or fines</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Closing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st rights to re-employment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union representation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline of foremen &amp; staff</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform of legal union</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of hiring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours &amp; time off</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay while factory shut</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No police in factory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax relief for factory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy strike</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of demands associated with security of employment

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34. See "Resolution on the working class and the political struggle" and "Resolution on the economic struggle", Second All-China Labour Congress, in Deng, 1953, pp.158-63.
(reinstatement of sacked workers, no closing of factories, first rights to re-employment when the factory opened again, and control of hiring by workers) reinforces the impression of low labour mobility. Because these workers’ access to alternative employment was restricted by the scope of their personal acquaintance, the loss of a job was a more serious matter than it was for workers in the silk industry of Suzhou, who were employed on the basis of possessing a marketable skill, and for whom a real labour market can be said to have existed.

The native place gang culture of the cotton mills may have appeared to contemporary and subsequent observers as an irrational, psychological phenomenon left over from the country villages from which these workers came - but not only did it trace directly from the introduction to China of modern manufacturing technology, its importance for the workers was far from psychological. Not only did they owe their jobs to foremen or to patrons more influential than themselves, to whom they were obliged (often to the extent of handing over a cut of their wages and giving their patrons presents on their birthdays) but they would also be implicated themselves if their patrons got into trouble with the management. This is reflected in the fact that some disputes involved the stopping of work over the sacking of just one or a few workers. It is likely that they were started by workers loyal to those who had lost their jobs, to the point where decisions about whether or not to take action over sackings were made according to the sacked workers’ personal standing.

At Yuyuan in August 1928, work was stopped in protest at the sacking of two workers, one an officer of the newly introduced GMD union, after the union had asked for the payment of interest on accumulated compulsory superannuation of 5%. At Huaxin in the same month, the General Union was called in after two union officers asked for leave to attend a meeting and were sacked. These events can be seen as reflections of the contest then going on between the Guomindang and the mill managements for the right to organise unions. However, subsequent disputes have no obvious relationship with Guomindang labour politics. At Huaxin in September 1929, four workers "forced their way back into the factory and continued to work" after being sacked. Because the factories were patrolled by guards, and the workers needed to present their identity cards endorsed with the foreman’s stamp in order to collect their pay at the pay office, it is hard to see how they could have forced their way in or what use it would be to them to do so unless they were under a foreman’s protection. At Yuyuan in the following November, the sacking of two workers brought on a strike lasting two weeks. Then in August 1930, over 100 workers on the night shift took

35. Dong, 1985, p.77; Wu Bannong, 1932, p.43.
part in a slowdown over the sacking of 4 people. At Hengyuan in February 1931, the whole factory went out after 7 workers were arrested as Communists and 3 were sacked. In November 1932, the reeling department at Yuyuan struck against the union’s instructions after 4 workers were sacked.

One exemplary instance of the working of gang politics took place in the Baocheng cotton mill in November, 1934. Shen Rugui, younger brother of union officer Shen Rujiang, was transferred, against his wishes, to another section of the factory by a foreman. Shen Rujiang and his gang beat up the foreman. Shen and some of his gang were arrested and charged with assault. The Baocheng union petitioned the Tianjin General Union and the Bureau of Social Affairs for their release. Baocheng then sacked 62 or 63 more workers, not necessarily union members, and called in the police, who arrested them. These workers were not charged with any criminal offence. It was not suggested that they were Communist Party members. The Tianjin Municipal Gazette [Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao] reported that the National Salvation Society had petitioned for their release, but did not report why they had been arrested.

It was not only in China in the 1920s and 1930s that large numbers of workers would strike to defend the jobs of a few who had been sacked. However, this type of industrial action is usually associated with a more highly skilled and solidly organised workforce, who enjoy a stronger economic bargaining position against their employers, and belong to a union more independent from employers and the government, than was the case with the Tianjin cotton mill workers. What seems to have operated in the Tianjin cotton mills was not offensive solidarity, as in the case of a strong union attempting to wrest the power to discriminate and punish from the hands of employers, but a species of defensive solidarity. Workers knew that their jobs were in danger if their patrons lost power. This clearly cannot have happened every time a cotton mill worker was dismissed, otherwise there would have been one continuous strike. It is likely that the workers on whose behalf the others were called out were the better connected ones, and that such industrial action fell among the duties that members of a sworn brotherhood or gang branch owed each other. Personal connections gave access to work, and provided a kind of insurance against discrimination and punishment by the

41. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, November 1934; Dong, 1985, p.178.
factory authorities. The price of this was sometimes sharing the risk, as in the strikes described above.

Organisation of the silk weaving industry of Suzhou.

In order to test the relationship between technology transfer and patronage, I have examined industrial conflict in the silk weaving industry in Suzhou, between the last years of the Qing and the Japanese invasion. I chose this industry because, as stated above, it offers a direct contrast in technology and organisation with the modern cotton spinning and weaving industry, and because the amount of material on the silk industry in the Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files now held in the Suzhou City Archives made the endeavour worthwhile. Suzhou itself was a much smaller city than Tianjin, with a population of approximately 260,000 in 1934.42 There was one cotton mill in Suzhou, and three match factories, two of them employing less than 200 permanent workers; the great bulk of the employed population, as in Tianjin, were in small scale trade and handcraft industries.43 There was no Bureau of Social Affairs to conduct surveys of industry in Suzhou, as its administrative status under the Guomindang was not that of tebie shi (special municipality), like Tianjin, but merely xian (county), so comprehensive data on where the Suzhou silk weavers came from is lacking, but what anecdotal evidence there is in the Chamber of Commerce files suggests that they were locals, from Wu county itself and the adjoining counties.

While collecting and examining material on disputes and strikes in Tianjin, I noticed the prominence of large modern enterprises as sites for industrial conflict and supposed at first that this was because the small scale of the workshops in the various handcraft industries, along with the fact that the workers were all personally known to the manager and frequently came from the same village, made going on strike unrewarding or impossible. But this clearly did not apply to handcraft workshops in Suzhou. What I concluded about the reasons for handcraft workers in Suzhou being better organised (according to their success in conducting strikes in multiple small enterprises, and the number of times their demands were granted) and less concerned about job security than cotton mill workers in Tianjin relates less to the size of the factories than to the technological character of the industry and the effect of this on the labour market. The following description of labour-capital relations in the Suzhou silk weaving industry illustrates the converse of the relationship between technology

transfer and patronage: the relationship between the retention of late traditional manufacturing technology and the workers' relative independence.

Under the Qing, the typical enterprise form in the silk weaving industry, which had been an important household industry in the lower Yangtze valley since the Song, was the duanzhuang, or zhangfang (account house). The zhangfang was originally a type of merchant employer, who might own only ten or a dozen looms and put out both looms and silk thread to weavers who wove at home and were paid by the piece. In 1780, there were 57 zhangfang in Suzhou. The largest of these put out 200 to 300 looms. The Qing looms were wooden and of a design which permitted figured cloth to be woven, but only by means of an assistant, typically a boy apprentice, perching on a high stool or bench so that he could reach above the loom and manipulate the warp threads by hand. "Several tens of thousands of people" were said to depend on silk weaving as a supplement to their income from farming. In the Guangxu period, there were over 9,000 looms in Suzhou and over 30,000 people engaged full or part time in weaving, not counting assistant workers and apprentices. However, owing to falling demand for Chinese silk the number of looms was down to about 4,000 by 1912.

By the Tongzhi period (1862-1874), the zhangfang mostly produced under a three tiered system; the owner or "first uncle" [da shu] would contract out an amount of cloth to be woven at a set price by a "second uncle" [er shu], who in turn would employ "third uncles" [san shu] if there were not enough people in his own family to complete the work. The silk was the property of the first uncle. Some second uncles owned their looms, others rented some or all of their looms from the first uncles. There were weavers who owned looms, possibly employed one or two people apart from the members of their families, and sold the cloth they produced to silk dealers, but they were in the minority. They were called xian mai ji hu (cash sale weavers). The operations that preceded the weaving process (apart from dyeing, which was performed separately by dyers similarly hired by the zhangfang) were known as the "six steps" [liu ju]. These were plucking [qia], beating [da], draining [qu], pounding [chui], drawing [qian] and spinning [jie]. Access to employment performing each "step" was controlled by the guild and could be inherited.

Separate guilds were established in the late Qing and afterwards to represent the different classes of people occupied in the silk weaving industry. The Yunjin guild, established in the reign of Tongzhi, represented the first uncles - the owners and managers of the zhangfang. The Xiazhang guild, founded in the last years of the Qing, represented the second and third uncles, who did not own their own looms and either worked for a wage or were paid by the zhangfang. The Wenjin guild, founded in 1912,
represented the cash sale weavers, who owned their looms and sold the cloth they produced to local dealers without going through the zhangfang.

None of these guilds had jurisdiction over weavers or employers in the larger scale "silk factories" established from 1912 onwards, even though the first silk factories were founded by local zhangfang owners. The factory owners were represented by the Iron Loom Silk Weaving Guild [tieji sizhiye gonghui], later known as the Silk Weaving Guild [sizhiye tongye gonghui]. The weavers in these factories were represented after 1927 by the Iron Loom Weavers' Union [tieji gonghui lianhehui].

The first silk factories were founded "out of patriotism" by zhangfang owners in the first years of the Republic. The Sujing factory was set up in 1912 with a capital of 40,000 yuan and 100 looms. The Zhenya factory was next in 1916, also with 40,000 yuan capital and 20 looms. In 1921 there were nine factories including Sujing and Zhenya. In 1927, there were 36 factories employing over 3,000 weavers. There were two main differences between the factories and the zhangfang. One was the use of the shou la ji, or flying shuttle loom. Although these were called iron looms, they were constructed mainly of wood with some iron components. The advantage of the iron looms was that they wove more quickly and no assistants were needed in order to weave figured cloth. At first they were hand-powered, but when electricity became generally available to Suzhou factory owners in 1926 the silk factories began installing electric looms. There were 800 electric looms by 1929, and over 2,000 in 1937. However, over 500 of the old hand-powered flying shuttle looms were still in use in the silk factories in 1937, and an estimated 1,000 wooden looms were still being put out by the zhangfang. The other difference between the factories and the zhangfang was the factory system. The looms and the workers in the silk factories stayed on the premises and work was performed under supervision.

The technology of silk weaving therefore did not remain static during the period under study, and neither did the organisation of production. The existence of mutually exclusive guilds or unions (the status of Xiazhang was ambiguous, as it had characteristics of both guilds and unions) representing wooden loom and iron loom weavers emphasises the distinction between the trades. However, the Sujing factory rules make it clear that silk weavers could and did move from one to another. One rule set out that "Before starting work at Sujing, new workers must give their names,

44. The above account of the Suzhou silk industry is based on Tao Shunan, "Tantan jiefang qian de Suzhou sizhiye" (Talking about the pre-Liberation silk weaving industry of Suzhou) in Suzhou wenshi ziliao (Selected materials on the culture and history of Suzhou), vol.1-5; Zhu Hongyong, "Jindai Suzhou sichou shengchan de yange yu fazhan xingshuai" (The rise and fall of the modern silk industry in Suzhou) in Suzhou wenshi...
addresses and previous places of employment to the business office. The factory can then test them to see if they are up to standard”. Presumably Sujing was not testing people with no experience of weaving silk. This on its own does not prove that skill was an important criterion in hiring workers, as the Tianjin cotton mill regulations also included skill tests for new workers which were in fact never enforced. However, the rules of apprenticeship provide for two classes of apprentice, Class A and Class B. Class A apprentices were adolescent boys without weaving experience. Class B apprentices were adults who had never worked in a silk factory but were experienced on the wooden looms. Adults without experience on either wooden or iron looms were not employed.45 The technological change that took place in the silk weaving industry in Suzhou, unlike the introduction of modern cotton spinning technology, did not cause such a break with the existing tradition of silk weaving that the wooden loom weavers’ skills became irrelevant.

Industrial conflict in the silk weaving industry of Suzhou.

Using mainly the correspondence of the Suzhou Chamber of Commerce (as Suzhou under the Guomindang was merely a xian and had no Bureau of Social Affairs, the Chamber of Commerce played a much more important part in the settling of industrial disputes than the Chamber of Commerce in Tianjin) I have assembled an index of strikes and disputes in both branches of the silk weaving industry between 1900 and 1935. There is no particular reason for 1900 as a cutoff point other than the Suzhou archives’ Chamber of Commerce files not going further back than 1900. Duan Benluo’s Suzhou shougongye shi (History of handcraft industry in Suzhou) only cites one strike occurring before 1900 – in 1877 – but this is more likely to be because Duan read the same Chamber of Commerce files than because silk weavers’ strikes were unknown in Suzhou before 1900.46

I counted 44 strikes and disputes in both wooden and iron loom sections of the silk weaving industry (taken together) between 1900 and 1935. There was at least one incident in almost every year between 1900 and 1929, then a break of six years to 1935 which could have been due to depression of the industry, as silk production by the zhangfang had fallen and many of the factories had closed. At least part of the cause could be established in all but four of them. These are the numbers of times that the silk weavers raised the different types of demand tabled above:

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There were only six disputes in which no conflict directly related to wages could be established. One of these was a collective protest by zhangfang weavers in 1907 over the death of a weaver in prison after being gaoled for debt to the zhangfang, the result of which I did not find. None of them involved protests against sackings or claims for first rights to re-employment. When the factories started closing, because of losses, in the late 1920s, the iron loom weavers took their negotiated final pay and left without raising any claims to be employed again in future.

The Suzhou silk weavers’ lack of concern about unemployment contrasts with the Tianjin cotton mill workers’ evident preoccupation with it. It is certainly possible that, for some or all of them, silk weaving was not the only source of income in the family. But this was also the case among the Tianjin cotton mill workers. Considered with the rules governing apprenticeship and the testing of new workers, the impression is that the silk weavers were altogether less dependent on maintaining friendly relations with an individual foreman or zhangfang owner in order to stay employed. That is, access to employment was based on skill rather than contacts, and the silk weavers were relatively free to move from one employer to another.
The character of the wage claims made by silk weavers tends to confirm this. The wage disputes of which the details are recorded in the Chamber of Commerce correspondence were negotiated between the Yunjin Guild, representing the first uncles, and the Xiazhang Guild, representing the second and third uncles, across the trade as a whole. The zhangfang typically employed several dozen or (rarely) several hundred silk weavers. The factories were not much larger. However the Chamber of Commerce regularly refers to "thousands" of weavers taking part in industrial action. When a wage rise was granted, it was deemed to apply to all zhangfang.

This is made explicit by representatives of the Yunjin Guild in correspondence with the Chamber of Commerce over a wage cutting dispute in February, 1928. The Yunjin chairman wrote: "We have guaranteed that employers will abide by a certain set of conditions, but have no power to force them to do so". That is, though the Yunjin Guild had no effective power of coercion over its members, wages were normally the same in all member zhangfang; and the fact that some zhangfang had responded to the current depression of the silk trade by paying less than others had resulted in a trade-wide dispute involving the local Guomindang. The trade-wide nature of wage negotiations in the Suzhou silk weaving industry, if compared to the substantial wage differences for the same work in the six Tianjin cotton mills, suggests that the Suzhou silk weavers did not rely on the protection of a patron to find and keep employment and could move from one employer to another more or less as business conditions and their own ability permitted.

If the success rate of of the silk weavers’ and cotton mill workers’ demands is used as an index of their relative bargaining power, the silk weavers come out ahead. The Chamber of Commerce files do not specify the full result of the dispute in each case, but in 23 of the 44 cases they indicate that at least part of the silk weavers’ demands were granted. The corresponding figure for the Tianjin cotton mills is 26 out of 62.

It would be necessary to know whether or not there were other factors, such as a steeply rising or unstable cost of living in Suzhou, that made the Suzhou silk weavers particularly active in seeking wage rises. However, the data that I have looked at to date suggest that the nature of the technology, whether it evolved gradually or was introduced in a manner that effectively created a new industry, was a major influence on the causes of industrial conflict and the aims of the workers in these two industries, and that the cultural fact of native place affinity groups in Chinese factories may therefore

47. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file no.(Yi)2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.
have a material origin.
CHAPTER 2

The Tianjin flour milling industry and the meaning of "skill".

Organisation of the Tianjin flour milling industry.

The flour milling industry in Tianjin in the Republican years well illustrates the processes of introduction of imported technology and creation of new forms of industrial organisation. It was in fact two industries, old and new, as the absolute technological distinction between small old-fashioned enterprises and large modern ones did not start to dissolve until after the war with Japan. It is the contention of this paper that the different characters of industrial conflict in the two branches of the flour milling industry directly reflected the particular problems created for workers and management by the establishment of new industries using imported technology and mass production. That is, the particularism of labour recruiting, the dominant importance of personal relations in factory floor politics and the workers’ preoccupation with permanent job security, which have been described elsewhere as cultural or psychological holdovers from a disappearing traditional social order and obstacles to industrial modernisation, can, perhaps, be better explained as logical responses by workers and management to the problems of technological and organisational innovation.

In 1912, flour milling in Tianjin was an established handcraft operation catering to local urban consumers. Milling was performed by grain shops, as an adjunct to retail sale of unprocessed grains. The grain shops, or mofang, were quite small. Each one might employ from one to ten adult mill hands and a comparable number of apprentices, not counting white collar employees concerned with sales and accounting. The grain was typically wheat or maize though smaller amounts of gaoliang, millet, beans and sesame seeds were milled. Almost all was sold in Tianjin.

Before Tianjin became a treaty port, the mills used in the mofang were constructed of stone and powered by animals, usually mules. Two changes in milling technology started to take place in the last decades of the Qing. One was the import of a harder type of stone from Germany, which would be reinforced by steel. Another was the substitution of small steam engines for mules. The stone mills did not have to be discarded or substantially altered to be able to operate under mechanical power.
Electric power started to come into use in the 1910s. In 1925, 41% of mofang still used mules, but by 1930 the percentage had declined to 3.5%. From the point of view of the workers in the mofang, the coming of steam and then electric power might have meant that the mills turned faster and at a more regular speed, but as the 19th century mill design remained, the basic operations involved in mill work did not change.

All mill workers were men, and most were aged between 20 and 35. The pay was on the low side for permanent industrial work. According to statements made to the Tianjin General Chamber of Commerce by the Sanjin Mofang Guild (founded in the Qing) in the course of a mill workers' strike in 1915, there were trade-wide rates of pay for milling of wheat and maize flour; 8 copper cash per picul of maize flour, and 9 for wheat, with food and tea supplied by the shop. A study conducted in 1930 by the Nankai Economics Institute under Fang Xianting also quoted trade-wide piece rates, 28 cash or 7 cents per picul for wheat flour and 22 cash or 5 1/2 cents for maize. A post-revolutionary account confirms that trade-wide piece rates applied in the 1940s, under the Japanese occupation.

Flour mill workers were originally recruited by a complex system which bears some resemblance to labour contracting, in that the mill worker paid a commission from his wages to the "employment agency" on finding a job and lived and paid rent at a dormitory owned by the agency, but differed from the contract system in that the agency signed no contract with the employer. Mill workers were paid either by the day or bye month, in person, and could leave or be sacked at will. Following the strike in 1915, the Sanjin Guild attempted to ensure that there were no further strikes by establishing an authorised dormitory, owned by the guild and supervised by an officer of the guild, at which anyone coming to Tianjin to look for work in a flour mill could live without paying rent until he received his first pay. The authorised dormitory was founded and still existed in 1930, though it never in fact became either the sole place of residence for flour mill workers or the sole channel of recruitment for new flour mill workers as planned. The chairman of the Sanjin guild told the Chamber of Commerce in 1915 that

1. This account of the Tianjin mofang trade is based on H.D. Fong, Grain trade and milling in Tientsin, San Yu Press, Peiping (Beijing), 1934; Sun Bingru and Zhang Zihuan, "Sanjin mofang tongye gonghui" (The Sanjin Mofang Guild) in Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji (Selected materials on the culture and history of Tianjin), no.42, November 1987; Sun Bingru, "Jiefang qian Tianjin de mianfen gongye" (The flour milling industry in pre-Liberation Tianjin) also in Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji, no.42; and Li Jiesan, "Jiefang qian hou Tianjin liangshi hangye gaikuang" (The Tianjin grain trade before and after Liberation) in Tianjin gong shang shiliao zongkan (Sources on the history of industry and commerce in Tianjin), no.6, April 1987.

2. Tianjin shanghai dang'an (Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file) 3/242, Tianjin City Archives; Fong, 1934, pp.602-603; Sun and Zhang, 1987, p.181.
most mill workers came from Yanshan, a county on the Bohai coast just south of Tianjin, "and other counties outside Tianjin".

The comparatively large-scale modern flour mills established after 1916 using entirely imported power-driven milling equipment, after the example of mills founded in Shanghai and Wuxi which were already returning good profits, were so different from the mofang in scale and organisation of production that they are best described as a new industry. There were never more than eight modern flour mills in Tianjin. The Shouxing mill was established in 1915 by former Changlu salt commissioner Zhu Qingzhai. In 1925, due to severe losses complicated by a badly managed transfer from steam to electric power, it went into partnership with the Sanjin Guild, whose members put up additional capital and were represented on the board of directors, and continued production under the name "Sanjin Shoufeng mill" until the Japanese occupation of Tianjin. The Fuxing mill opened in 1919, founded by former Fengtian Bank director Liu Heling and the grain merchant Zhang Liangmou, with capital subscribed mostly by Fengtian officials. Fuxing continued to operate until 1953, when it was reorganised as a state run co-operative enterprise.

Other flour mills were shorter lived. The Dafeng mill opened in 1921 on capital suscribed by private grain merchants. In 1926, due to losses, it was bought out by the Sanjin Shoufeng mill, and from 1929 was known as Sanjin Yongnian, a branch of Sanjin Shoufeng. The Yuhe mill was founded in 1921, also on private capital, but folded a few years later. The machinery was bought by a mill in Nanjing. The Minfeng Tianji mill opened in 1923. The initial founders, the Mo brothers from Guangdong, went out of business quite quickly and the factory was taken over by former Hubei salt commissioner Sang Tieshan and Zhang Liangmou from Fuxing. In 1933 it too was bought out by Sanjin Shoufeng.

The Jiarui mill was established in 1924 by three major grain merchants, a yarn merchant and the Chinese compradore of the Japanese (Zhengjin) Bank. It was bought by Fuxing in 1933. The Qingfeng mill was founded in 1924 on capital raised by former Jiangxi military governor Cai Chengxun and former Hubei military governor Wang Zhanyuan. It stayed in business until 1928, when the factory building was severely damaged in the fighting between the Fengtian and National Revolutionary armies as the Guomindang advanced towards Beijing, and did not reopen under the Guomindang. The Sanxing factory opened in 1925 on capital raised by Beijing police commissioner Wu Quansun and his brother, former presidential secretary Wu Jisun. It stayed in

business for just two or three years before the building was gutted by fire.4

By 1934 there were only two modern flour mills left in Tianjin, Shoufeng and Fuxing. The Shoufeng mill operated three factories, its own original factory and the former Dafeng and Minfeng factories. The Fuxing mill had two factories, its own original factory and the former Jiarui. When Shouxing was reorganised as Sanjin Shoufeng in 1925 with capital suscribed by the Sanjin Guild, the bargain was struck between Sanjin and the Shoufeng management that from then on the mofang would mill maize and other grains only, and leave the milling of wheat to the modern mills. Following this agreement, the mofang tended to become agencies for the sale of flour milled by Shoufeng and the other modern mills successively bought out by Shoufeng, and milled less grain themselves.5

Scale was not the most important difference between the mofang and the modern mills. The milling machinery used in the modern mills was imported from the United States; that used by Shoufeng and Fuxing was manufactured in the United States by the Wolf and Robinson companies; and was priced beyond the reach of mofang operators.6 Some idea of the comparative cost of local and imported flour milling machinery can be gained from what information is available on the capitalisation of the modern mills and the mofang. Fuxing opened with initial capital of 300,000 yuan. Dafeng had 400,000, Jiarui over 500,000 and Qingfeng 300,000. Fang Xianting reported in the Nankai survey of 1930 that it was hard to be definite about the capitalisation of the mofang, both because the owners’ statements about current capitalisation tended to refer to initial capital at the time the mofang was founded, and because of pervasive under-reporting of capital to avoid taxation. Fang’s best estimate of average capital, allowing for under-reporting, was 3,680 yuan per mofang.7

This difference in the scale of capital was not reflected in the number of milling machines in the modern mills and the mofang, but in the number of workers employed by modern mills and mofang and the productive capacity of the machinery. The modern mills were not large factories by contemporary Chinese industrial standards. Fuxing started production with 15 milling machines, Shouxing also had 15, Dafeng had 23

5. Fong, 1934, p.553; "Tianjin mianfenye jinkuang" (The current state of the Tianjin flour industry) in Jianyan yuekan (Monthly investigator, journal of the Ministry of Industry’s Tianjin Bureau of Inspection of Commercial Produce), June-July 1934.
6. "Jin shi" (The Tianjin market), Jianyan yuekan, June-July 1934, p.3; Sun Bingru, 1987, p.192.
7. Fang, 1934, pp.557-559.
1/2", Minfeng had 18, Jiarui started with 24 and bought six more between 1924 and 1929, Qingfeng had 18 and Sanxing had 7. The *mofang* had from one to eight stone mills each as of 1930, with an average of 3.8. Shouxing in 1934 had 253 workers between 3 factories, or just over 80 in each factory. Fuxing had about 150 at each of its two factories. In 1932 before the remaining mills amalgamated with Shoufeng and Fuxing, Shoufeng had 137 workers, Fuxing had 152, Yongnian had 147, Qingfeng had 148, Minfeng had 142 and Jiarui had 158. The *mofang* employed one to ten mo guan each as of 1930, with the majority employing only one or two; before the 1925 division of the trade the numbers were evidently higher. "Over 1000" took part in the strike of 1915, while the total number of mill hands employed at the *mofang* in 1930 was 272.9

The Nankai survey claimed that a *mofang* worker could produce about 4 *shi* (piculs) (or 600 *jin*, catties) of wheat flour or 5 *shi* (700 *jin*) of maize flour per day. The modern mills turned out between 700 and 6000 40 *jin* sacks of flour per day.10 A large proportion of the founding capital of the modern mills was invested in the milling machinery. An account published in 1979 by a descendant of one of Fuxing’s founding investors declares that "Fuxing’s founding capital of 300,000 yuan was just enough to buy the machinery and finance the construction of the factory building. The land on which the factory stood was rented".11

It was only during the Japanese occupation of Tianjin that the technology gap between large-scale modern mills and *mofang* began to disappear. This took place as engineering shops in Tianjin began to produce flour-milling machinery of the type until then exported from the United States, and the two surviving Tianjin flour mills began of necessity to install locally made machinery. The cost of modern milling machinery fell, and small-scale entrepreneurs including many *mofang* owners began buying the locally-produced modern milling machines in ones and twos. More than forty of these "middle-sized" flour mills existed by the end of the Japanese occupation.12

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8. Sun Bingru, 1987; Fong, 1934, pp.563-564.
10. The weight of a sack of flour and the number of *jin* per *shi* (catties per picul, which varied according to the type of grain being measured) are specified in Li Jiesan, 1987, p.137.
Wages and the organisation of production in the modern flour mills

Pay and other conditions in the modern flour mills, as in the cotton mills, varied from mill to mill; there were no standard rates. A Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs study published in 1932 contains information in some detail on wages and organisation of production at the six modern flour mills then in existence; Shoufeng, Fuxing, Yongnian, Qingfeng, Minfeng and Jiarui. Comparison is difficult, because each mill used slightly different terminology for the same processes and ordered its information in different ways, and the Bureau of Social Affairs investigators did not insist on uniformity. Overall average wages are not obtainable from Fuxing and Yongnian, but the figures from the other four mills indicate absence of trade-wide pay rates.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Average wages} & \text{Cents per day}^{13} \\
\hline
\text{Shoufeng} & 46c \\
\text{Qingfeng} & 59c \\
\text{Minfeng} & 55c \\
\text{Jiarui} & 43c \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

The Bureau of Social Affairs survey indicates that though there was no regular schedule by which wages were indexed according to seniority at any of the flour mills, there may have been some correlation between age and wages. The section dealing with Fuxing states that "Though there has never been a schedule of wage indexation, workers who have been with the factory for several years, who are skilful and experienced and maintain a high standard of productivity may be granted a wage rise if they ask for one".\textsuperscript{14} If this were the case at the other mills, one would expect wage levels to creep up slowly with the passing of time and with occasional granting of wage claims linked to the cost of living or to less predictable factors, as at the cotton mills.

Unfortunately other sources which would give some indication of wage movements between 1915 and 1937 are hard to come by. The statistical compilation \textit{Tianjin Industrial Statistics} (volume 2), compiled by the Bureau of Social Affairs in 1935 after Fuxing had taken over Jiarui and Shoufeng had bought Minfeng, does not provide statistics of flour mill workers’ wages. Neither does the \textit{The Tianjin grain

\textsuperscript{13} \ Wu Ao, 1932, pp.12, 40, 50, 60.
industry study published by the Kincheng Bank in 1937. The Bureau of Social Affairs' all-industry survey of 1930 says only that the highest monthly wage was 82 yuan at Shoufeng, the highest wage at the other factories was 80 yuan and the lowest wage anywhere was 13 yuan; both maximum and minimum wage figures are exceeded by the figures provided in the more detailed survey published by the same Bureau in 1932.\textsuperscript{15}

The \textit{Chinese labour yearbook} figures on flour mill workers' wages, with one exception, are as fragmentary and contradictory as those on cotton mill workers' wages. The first yearbook, published in 1928, quotes an unspecified "survey of 1926" which found that process workers and technical workers were paid "up to 70c" daily, and labourers 30c to 40c. The second Yearbook, published in 1932, quotes the Bureau of Social Affairs' 1st year (1928-1929) Work Report which gives flour mill wages as "10 to 60 yuan per month". Average wages are provided for Shoufeng, Minfeng, Dafeng (bought by Shoufeng in 1929), Jiarui and Sanxing (destroyed by fire in 1928), the only specific wage figures outside the BSA 1932 survey. These are the 1928-1929 average wages:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Factory & Average wage \\
\hline
Shoufeng & 75.8c \\
Minfeng & 62.2c \\
Dafeng & 67.2c \\
Jiarui & 62.6c \\
Sanxing & 99.0c \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The lowest of these figures is 3c higher than the highest average wage (at Qingfeng) quoted by the BSA 1932 survey, and 9c higher than the highest average wage earned by adult male cotton mill workers (at Yuyuan) in 1930.

The second yearbook also quotes the Journal of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Tianjin, which claims that the average flour mill wage remained unchanged at 30c per day in 1928, 1929, 1930 and 1931. This is 13c per day lower than the lowest average given in the Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1932. The 1932 yearbook provides unattributed figures from the Nanjing Ministry of Industry (for Tianjin) of 107c per day maximum, 35c minimum and an average of 77c, 18c higher than the highest average in the Bureau of Social Affairs survey of the same year. No

\textsuperscript{14} Wu Ao, 1932, p.25.  
\textsuperscript{15} Wu Ao, ed. \textit{Tianjin zhi gongshangye} (The industry and commerce of Tianjin), Bureau
information appears in the 1933 Yearbook. The 1932 BSA survey appears to be the only accurate source of wage statistics available.

Though it is not possible to trace wage movements to see if they did tend to rise over the years in question, the BSA 1932 survey recorded the ages of the workers in each factory, which can be compared with the wage figures for that year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Average Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoufeng</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>46c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuxing</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongnian</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingfeng</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>59c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minfeng</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>55c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiarui</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>43c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no visible correlation between the average wage and the age of the work force.

It should be possible to establish how much pay for the same jobs varied from factory to factory, as the 1932 survey provides information from each factory on the wages paid for all types of work in the flour milling process. The way the Bureau of Social Affairs conducted the survey actually obscures the picture and creates severe confusion about which workers were in fact doing the same work. What the BSA investigators appear to have done is gone to each factory in turn and taken down information as provided by the management without trying to order the information into categories which would permit comparison between factories.

The investigators’ lack of professionalism is aggravated by the fact that flour milling was a new technology in which there were no standard Chinese terms for the imported milling machines, much less for the various operations performed with them. For instance, in the mofang two types of reinforced stone mill were in use, known as mo and nian. Mo were used to mill wheat and maize, and the more complex nian to mill...
gaoliang and millet. The terms were never confused. The Wolf and Robinson-made milling machines in the modern mills are described by different authors as either mo or nian.

The terminology of the 1932 survey for the machinery used in the six mills is consistent up to a point. It lists the machines used in the processing of wheat prior to milling at Shoufeng as mai shai (sieves, of several kinds), caozi ji (grass seed machine), xi mai ji (wheat washing machine), run mai gui (press), da mai ji (beating machine, for removing the bran), jian mai ji (selecting machine, by which grains still in the husk were removed), shua mai ji (wheat scraper, which removed dust and bran from the crease down the middle of the wheat grains), and the pen qi ji (steamer, which added moisture to the wheat according to its optimum weight before milling). The milling machines are called mo ji. After milling the flour was put through a qing fen ji (flour cleaner, which sieved out the still intact grains so they could be put into the mo ji again) and then through a piao fen ji (bleaching machine). Then it was packed. The English titles given to the machinery above are literal translations.

The account of the machinery at Yongnian also includes mai shai, does not mention a caozi ji, says there were two xi mai ji, does not mention a press, mentions the da mai ji and the shua mai che, calls the milling machines mozi and includes qing fen ji and piao fen ji, but does not refer to the jian mai ji or the pen qi ji. Yongnian also used machines described as gun long shai (rolling basket sieve; they should probably be classed with Shoufeng’s sieves), jiao long (cranked basket, probably another sieve) and feng xiang (wind box).

Minfeng used the same sieves, caozi ji, xi mai ji, run mai gui, da mai ji, jian mai ji, shua mai ji, pen qi ji, mo ji, qing fen ji and piao fen ji as Shoufeng. In fact the description of the milling process at Minfeng follows the description of the process at Shoufeng word for word. Records kept by the Ministry of Industry in Nanjing indicate that the takeover of Minfeng by Shoufeng began in September, 1932. If the BSA survey overlapped with the takeover (the survey report is dated merely "1932") the identical descriptions of the milling process at Shoufeng and Minfeng may follow from one Shoufeng engineer, or his subordinates, taking responsibility for both factories and

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17. Wu Ao, 1932 pp.12, 39, 50, 60.17
18. Fong, 1934 p.561.
19. In the Bureau of Social Affairs’ general industrial survey of 1930, written up as Tianjin zhi gongshangye, the milling machines are called "nianzi" (Shipin gongye, p.18). In the 1932 survey they are called "mo ji" or "mozi". They are also "mo" in the Jianyan yuekan report of 1934.
speaking to the BSA investigators on behalf of both factories.

The milling process is not described at all in the section on Qingfeng. At Jiarui, the machines listed, excluding the generator and accessory equipment, are shaizi, xi mai ji, da mai shai, shua mai che, mozi, qing fen ji, piao fen che, gun long shai, feng xiang, jiao long (these last three part of the process of preparing the wheat for milling, as at Yongnian), fupi che (bran machine), feng xiang (again), chang banlian (long board chains?), chang ban si (long board threads?), and xi fen che (fine flour machine), all of which were used after the wheat had been ground to flour. While there is some difference in terminology, the general outline of the process can be made out in each case.

However, even this level of uniformity is not maintained in description of the workers’ duties. In most of the factories, a distinction is made between skilled workers and unskilled workers. At Shoufeng the difference is expressed as between ji gong (machine operators) and labourers. There is no explicit connection with pay rates or employment status. At Fuxing the distinction is between da gong and xiao gong, literally "big workers" and "little workers". The da gong were "skilled in working with machinery" and were permanent employees. The xiao gong were temporary, were hired and fired as needed, and "needed only an introduction; they did not sign a contract".

At Yongnian no explicit distinction is made; there is only a statement that foremen, mechanics and workers in the engine room were entitled to slightly better rooms in the workers’ dormitory. At Qingfeng the distinction was between "machine operators" and "factory workers" (ji gong and chang gong). "Machine operators are responsible for minding the machines, adding oil, repairing the machines, stoking the furnace, pulling the cables and milling the flour. Factory workers are responsible for carrying wheat, flour and coal, and for general labouring work in the silos and elsewhere". There was no difference in terms of employment, but "factory workers" were given coal and hot water by the factory, while "machine operators" received an equivalent cash payment with their wages. Further on, the duties of ji gong and chang gong are set out more specifically. "Machine operators are in charge of generating power for the factory machinery and of the use, lubrication and maintenance of the machinery. Their duties include maintaining the furnace, stoking, lubricating, controlling the power supply, hauling the cables, metalwork, carpentry, repairing the machinery and supervising the electric milling machines [kan mo dian ji]. Factory workers are in charge of the manufacture of flour [mianfen zhizao], and the transport

20. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.
The distinction at Qingfeng is not very clearly expressed and appears to apply more to rank in the factory hierarchy than to the exact nature of the work. For instance, machine operators "supervise the electric milling machines" and factory workers are "in charge of the manufacture of flour". The distinction at Fuxing is explicitly between workers who used the milling machinery, whatever their rank, and workers who carried the wheat and flour in and out or kept the floor swept. Some of the "factory workers" at Qingfeng would be classed as "big workers" at Fuxing.

At Minfeng there was a distinction between "manufacturing" and "mechanical" workers [zhizao gong and jiqi gong]. Terms of employment differed. "Mechanical" workers belonged to a jiqi bu (machinery section), headed by a foreman. "Workers in the machinery section are employed by the foreman, who apportions their wages. Their wages are higher than manufacturing workers’ wages". Their duties are listed as follows: "Workers in the manufacturing section are in charge of the manufacture of flour, and the transport of raw materials. They include removing the finished flour from the milling machines [jie mian], removing the bran [jie fupi], sweeping the floor [sao di], removing the dirt and grass stalks [jie tu caogun], minding the machines [kan jiqi], sewing sacks [feng madai], adjusting the wheat and flour processing machinery [fen che, mai che zhengli], numbering the sacks [ma bao], working the scales [da bang], and carrying coal [tai mei]. Workers in the machinery section are in charge of the generator and of repairing the machinery; their duties include lubricating, stoking, mechanical repair, carpentry, metalwork and maintenance of the motor". The category of "mechanical workers" is therefore narrower at Minfeng than at Qingfeng; they are not responsible for "supervising the electric milling machines".

At Jiarui, there was a three-way distinction between "mechanical workers" [ji gong], "ordinary workers" [putong gong jiang] and "little workers" [xiao gong]. Some were permanent employees and some were casual. Their exact duties were not specified.

The variation in description of factory work is pronounced in the parts of the survey which set out the pay rates for different jobs. At Shoufeng, workers operating the various wheat processing and milling machines are differentiated according to whether they work in the "wheat building" [fenlou] or the "flour building" [mailou], and according to whether they work on the first, second, third or fourth floors of the wheat building and the flour building. At Fuxing a similar distinction is recorded with the addition of separate pay rates for workers who "watch the machines" [kan che] and "add
oil" [jiǎ yòu]; this is not observed at Shoufeng. At Yongnian the "wheat building" and "flour building" are not distinguished. At Qingfeng the categories are "wheat machine" [mai che] and "flour machine" [fen che] among the "factory workers", and che gong among the "mechanical workers". All work unconnected with the processing and milling machines is classed as "general labour", while at Shoufeng and Fuxing the jobs are distinguished into seven or eight different sets of duties with different pay rates. At Minfeng the pay rates are not analysed at all. At Jiarui, though there are eighteen kinds of jobs listed among the "little workers", most of them different from the ones at Shoufeng and Fuxing, workers operating the wheat processing and flour milling machinery are all classed together. In view of all this, any comparison between pay rates for specific jobs at the Tianjin flour mills should be treated with some caution.

Stoking the furnace [shào guōlu], a job description which did not vary much, paid 40c a day at Shoufeng, 10.5 to 11 yuan per month (35c to 37c a day) at Fuxing, 38c to 72c at Yongnian, 21 to 34 yuan per month (70c to 113c) at Qingfeng and 12 to 32 yuan per month (40c to 107c) at Jiarui. Jīgōng or the equivalent in the flour milling department earned 38c to 56c daily at Shoufeng, 16 yuan per month (53c) at Qingfeng and 15 to 22 yuan per month (50c to 73c) at Jiarui. Jiémìnián workers, who took the finished flour from the milling section, earned 38c to 40c daily at Shoufeng and 42c at Jiarui. Jièfū workers, who removed and disposed of the bran, earned 38c daily at Shoufeng, 10.5 to 12 yuan per month (35c to 40c) at Fuxing and 12 to 14 yuan per month (40c to 47c) at Jiarui. Workers engaged in sewing up the flour sacks [fēng mǎdài] earned 45c to 62c at Shoufeng, 10.5 to 13 yuan per month (35c to 43c) at Fuxing, 9.15 yuan per month (31c) at Qingfeng and 10.5 to 11.5 yuan per month (35c to 38c) at Jiarui. Mechanics [jījiāng] earned 50c to 80c at Shoufeng, 65c to 76c at Yongnian and 18 to 30 yuan per month (60c to 100c) at Jiarui. The variation in pay suggests that the flour mill managements did not worry seriously about losing their workers to higher paying competitors or even about catch-up wage claims.

What is said about flour mill workers’ place of origin and means of recruitment indicates that workers were introduced to the mills by foremen or by other workers already employed there, as in the cotton mills, and that personal contact of this kind was necessary to secure a job in a flour mill. At Fuxing, the "big workers" in the engine room and the flour milling department "were mostly natives of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and were experienced in the use of the machinery". The "little workers" "needed only an introduction, and signed no contract of employment with the factory".21 At Jiarui
the factory representative who spoke to the BSA investigators had more to say: "Most workers come from either Tianjin or Qinghai xian; these two places account for about half the workers between them. The reason for this is not hard to see .... Most of the shareholders are Tianjin natives and the factory is situated in Tianjin, so it is natural that there should be a large number of workers from Tianjin. Moreover the foreman of the engine room and the foreman of the 'little workers' are natives of Qinghai, and that is why there are so many workers from Qinghai". The others came from a wide assortment of places in Hebei and Shandong, with a handful from Jiangsu and Zhejiang. "All workers, whether casual or permanent, require an introduction by someone known to the factory, and must sign a pledge and provide a guarantor before starting employment".22

At Shoufeng, "when the factory opened, skilled workers from the south were brought in to assemble the machinery and retained after production started. Only a few casual workers were northerners. Afterwards the number of northern workers gradually increased. Dong Defu also gradually increased the number of northerners among the lower level staff, and got rid of the southerners one by one".23 (This refers to an intra-management conflict taking place as a result of the May 4th Movement. Dong Defu was part of the clique led by former Changlu salt commissioner Li Binsi which bought out the Japanese share of the founding capital, which had caused severe problems for the company since May 4th. The workers' security of employment could be affected by factional conflict among the directors, as at the Huaxin cotton mill.)

Industrial conflict in the modern flour mills.

The content of industrial conflict in the modern flour milling industry resembles that of the cotton milling industry and differs from that of the Suzhou silk weaving industry in the relative importance the workers give to wages and to security of employment. I have found reference to ten flour mill disputes in contemporary Guomindang and other sources, all of them occurring between 1931 and 1935. It is possible that this is an accidental reflection of the limitations of the sources, as strikes and disputes were not systematically recorded by any government or private agency before the establishment of Guomindang government in the summer of 1928. However it is possible, particularly if an analogy is drawn with the temporal distribution of strikes and disputes in the cotton mills, that there were few or no disputes before this time.

Despite the large size of the cotton mills, which according to standard theories of industrial relations should have made it relatively easy for the workers to organise and increased the frequency of industrial conflict relative to smaller workplaces, there were almost no disputes in the cotton mills before the Guomindang period except for a brief series of strikes for wage rises and union recognition in 1925, led by Communist Party activists who succeeded in mobilising the cotton mill workers in the aftermath of May 30th. The effect of the Guomindang's establishment of a formal conciliation and arbitration system and of Guomindang unions was not only that spontaneously arising conflicts were more likely to be recorded, but that an institutional mechanism existed which for the first time made it worthwhile for the workers to try to improve their conditions by organised, collective action, rather than by the non-institutionalised and rarely recorded individual strategies of factory-floor gang politics which characterised the early years of the cotton mills and which continued to dominate workers' relations with the management and each other under the Guomindang.

I have argued when discussing the cotton mills that the work force was not "free" in the sense that the workers chose their place of work and the management chose their workers according to the market value of their labour, but that the cancelling out of "skill" brought about by the introduction of modern manufacturing technology and organisation created a type of employment relationship in which personal connections were the only guarantee of employment and protection against abuse. In the absence of legal channels of industrial arbitration such as those set up by the Guomindang, the workers' individual dependence on their patrons and the lack of mobility created by technology transfer made organised industrial action unlikely and, from the workers' standpoint, too risky.

Another factor (acting against workers' "freedom") is that supervision in the modern flour mills appears to have been very strict. The BSA survey indicates that the workers lived in factory dormitories, which, unlike the cotton mill workers' dormitories which were used only by a minority of the workers and made little difference to the workers' freedom of movement at least before the Japanese occupation, were inside the mill gates, and that their freedom of movement in and out of the factories when they were not at work was restricted.²⁴ At Shoufeng, workers leaving the factory without a pass would be fined one to three days' pay. At Qingfeng, workers wishing to leave the factory to go shopping or for any other reason had to apply for an exit pass from the accountant's office; if they left the factory without a pass, they were sacked. At Minfeng the penalty for leaving without a pass was one to three days' pay, as at

Shoufeng, and the penalty for stealing out of the factory by climbing the wall was expulsion. (One strange feature of the Minfeng rules was that workers could be sacked for clandestinely working at another factory while pretending to be on holiday.) At Jiarui, "workers must not come and go as they please, but must apply for an exit pass from the factory office if they wish to go outside the factory".25

It is probable that the factory rules quoted to the Bureau of Social Affairs investigators were unsystematically and capriciously applied. However the fact that restriction of the workers' freedom of movement was repeatedly set out as a rule to be imposed suggests a climate of close supervision which would have discouraged organised industrial action.

The formal union organisation was slightly different in the cotton mills and the flour mills. Because of the large number of people employed in the cotton mills, the workers at each mill were represented by a separate union. In the flour mills, there was one Mianfenye chanye gonghui representing all flour mill workers, with branches at each mill.26 However this did not make any obvious difference to the conduct of the official unions. In the cotton mills, the union would contact the Bureau of Social Affairs if workers were dismissed or the factory announced it was closing. In the flour mills, the branch union contacted the general union, which then contacted the Bureau of Social Affairs. The smaller size of the flour mills did not make a significant institutional difference. The important factor was whether or not the workers were able to join one of the official unions.

None of the flour mills appeared more obviously dispute-prone than the others. There were three disputes involving the Bureau of Social Affairs at Minfeng, two at Jiarui, and one each at Qingfeng, Fuxing, Shoufeng and "Chia Lung"; this last mill was not listed in either the Bureau of Social Affairs survey or Sun Bingru’s Tianjin wenshi ziliao article of 1987, from which most of the data on the size, equipment and history of the mills is taken, but the dispute is referred to in the files of the Ministry of Industry in Nanjing and the monthly report to Beijing of the United States consul-general in Tianjin in February 1935, so I have assumed that the mill existed, though it might have been short lived.27 In each case, the conflict was confined to a single mill, and the terms of settlement drawn up by the Bureau of Social Affairs, in all cases where they were made

26. "Tianjin ge ji gonghui diaocha gaikuang" (The state of trade union organisation in Tianjin), Shehui yuekan, Tianjin, December 1929, pp.3-5, 8.
27. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives; United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939; file
public, applied to that mill only. There was also one joint wage claim and sacking protest at Jiarui, Fuxing and Minfeng, in June to July, 1932.

The cause of one of the incidents, at Jiarui in December 1931, was not specified by the Bureau of Social Affairs. The Bureau recommended only that "The actions of workers on their way out of the factory should be watched".28

Of the other nine, there were two instances in which the official union protested against workers being sacked while the mill was still operating. In one case, at Minfeng in March 1932, various factors seem to have been at work at once. The mill had been making a loss for some time; Sun’s account implies it lost money every year from 1927 to 1933, when Shoufeng bought it; and the management decided to cut production by abolishing the night shift and dismissing half the workers. The account of events published by the Bureau of Social Affairs at the end of the month in the Tianjin Government Gazette (Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao), which reproduces statements from the union and the management, implies that the union’s protest, which included the claim that Minfeng was trying to break the union by demoting all the workers still employed to casual status, was essentially a reaction to a decision taken by the management for business reasons. However the management’s statement complicates the picture with the claim that 16 of the sacked workers were "disorderly elements" [daoluan fenzhi].

The account presented by the Bureau to the Ministry of Industry in Nanjing in its end of year summary of disputes and strikes says that the workers raised six demands; for a wage rise, Sundays off, compensation for anyone injured at work, huahong (a share of the profit, which in the case of Minfeng they would have done better without) at the New Year, no sackings at the New Year, and "snack money" for night shift workers. It was said that "The Factory Law had still not been implemented at Minfeng, and the workers considered that they were being deliberately oppressed". The Ministry of Industry report does not mention that any workers were sacked, and the Tianjin Government Gazette does not explain why the disorderly elements were sacked, but it is likely that the sackings were brought on by officers of the recently established Guomindang union trying to make the management comply with Factory Law conditions, and that the sacking of the night shift which followed was a business decision unconnected with industrial politics. The limit of the Guomindang industrial
apparatus’s power can be seen in the fact that the sackings were upheld.²⁹

Another such incident, at Jiarui in the following June, is a clear case of sacking of union members following a wage claim. Fourteen were sacked, but after mediation from the Bureau of Social Affairs seven returned to work, on the minimum wage. The sacking of the Jiarui workers brought about sympathetic action from the Fuxing and Minfeng workers, through the agency of the Mianfenye chanye gonghui, which represented workers at all factories. The wage claim was partially successful. Workers on the minimum wage were given a rise of 1 yuan per month. At Jiarui in January 1933, eleven "mechanical workers" (jijiang) and 30 "workers" (gongren) were laid off due to poor business. There was no suggestion here of conflict over wages or Factory Law provisions.³⁰

In the Minfeng dispute, the night shift workers claimed, and were given, first rights to employment when the factory increased production again. The disorderly elements were not offered future employment. In the three-mill dispute of June-July 1932, there is no mention of the workers who were sacked from Jiarui after the wage claim being awarded first rights to re-employment. At the subsequent Jiarui dispute in 1933, the "mechanical workers" asked for and were given first rights to re-employment, but nothing was said about the "workers".

In December 1933, there was a conflict at Shoufeng in which some workers were sacked and others were given a wage rise, but the relationship, if any, between these events is impossible to establish from the Ministry of Industry report. "Eighteen workers were sacked for failing to come to the factory when required, and the others took advantage of this to claim a wage rise." Workers still employed had their wages raised by at least 2c per day. This could have been either another case of an employer’s action against Guomindang union activists, or it could have happened for a less institutional and more particular reason. There is no reference to the issue of future employment.³¹

There were four cases in which the Bureau of Social Affairs was involved in setting terms for dismissing the workers when mills shut down to cut losses. In two of them, at Qingfeng in March 1932 and at Minfeng in September 1932, the workers asked

²⁹ Sun Bingru, 1987 p.197; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1932; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.
³⁰ Ministry of Industry files 711 (4) 05511, 422 (6) 639, 722 (4) 450, Second Historical Archives.
³¹ Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, December 1933; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639,
for, and were given, first rights to future employment when the mill opened again. In another, at Minfeng in November 1933, the workers, evidently without success, asked to be employed at Shoufeng when it took over Minfeng. In the last, at Jialong in February 1935, no details are recorded.32

There is only one instance recorded of a wage claim initiated by flour mill workers which was not directly associated with sackings, at Fuxing in July 1932. It was successful.33 However, the Fuxing workers’ wage claim was part of a multiple enterprise dispute caused by sackings at Jiarui.

The impression of relations of employment in the Tianjin flour mills provided by the data on disputes and strikes resembles that of the Tianjin cotton mills rather than the Suzhou zhangfang. Security of employment was a more serious concern for the workers than the size of their wages. Wage claims met with mixed success, though the smaller number of recorded disputes does not permit a reasonable comparison against the relative success of the Suzhou silk weavers in keeping their wages up, and those who made the wage claims tended to be sacked. Whether or not dismissed workers were given first rights to re-employment, which they tended to ask for, appeared to depend on whether they had been sacked merely to save the company the cost of their wages, or because they had been identified by the management as disorderly elements, either because they belonged to Guomindang unions or for more particular reasons.

I have found only two references to industrial disputes in the mofang, the first in 1915 and the second in 1935. In both cases, the workers claimed trade-wide wage increases, on their own initiative. In 1915, rejection of the wage claim led to a strike lasting five days. Two foremen [toumu] led and organised the strike, which affected 17 mofang. "Over 1000" mofang workers took part. The two foremen were questioned by the police and first released, but after repeated urging by the Sanjin Mofang Guild they were arrested and given two weeks' gaol. The wage rise was granted, but it was granted to a substantially new work force, as the mofang owners with the approval of the police and the Chamber of Commerce had hired new workers during the strike. Unlike the Suzhou silk weavers, the Tianjin mofang workers had no guild of their own. There was an incident at one mofang in which striking workers tried to beat up strike breakers. The Sanjin Mofang Guild responded to the strike by establishing the supervised mofang.

Second Historical Archives.

32. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2 pp.186-187; United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939, files no.893:00 (Tientsin) 66, 81; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, December 1933.
workers' dormitory referred to above. In 1935, the mofang workers "appointed four representatives" (it is not clear how, or who they were), to negotiate with Sanjin for a trade-wide wage rise as the value of copper was falling. It was given.

There is not much data from Suzhou with which to compare the Tianjin data, as wheat and maize were much less important food grains there than rice. There is a report of a strike in August 1921 in miandian, or flour shops, which appear to be the equivalent of the Tianjin mofang. Those involved are described alternately as both huoyou (shop assistants) and gongren (workers). They struck for a wage rise to follow the cost of living. Several were arrested. The shop assistants or workers demonstrated in the streets for their release. Representatives of the shop owners came forward to negotiate and they eventually awarded a wage rise of an unspecified amount. The post-revolutionary author Liao Zhihao wrote in 1980 that workers in one or more flour mills (mianfen chang) in Suzhou took part in May 4th strikes, but none of the series of Chinese yearbooks published in the 1920s and 1930s, including the Chinese Labour Yearbook, mention any modern flour mills existing in Suzhou before 1935.

The difference between the Tianjin mofang and the Suzhou zhangfang in terms of organised industrial conflict reflects the different "status" of flour mill workers and silk weavers, which itself was a practical expression of the difference in resources and bargaining power commanded by workers in the two trades. Flour milling in Tianjin certainly predated the arrival of 20th century milling technology, but it had always been a low status occupation, open to those without other means of earning a living. Fang Xianting quotes a saying "No mofang worker ever gets rich" [Moguan bu fu], and comments that "milling is not an enviable occupation desired by new hands with some skill or education". The findings of the Nankai survey that only 10 out of 83 mofang workers had been to school (for 3 years maximum) and only 42 of the 79 who were over 20 had married, and the evident ease with which the mofang owners found new workers during the 1915 strike, seem to confirm that flour milling in Tianjin was a low status.

33. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.
34. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 3/242, Tianjin City Archives.
low paid, unskilled occupation.\textsuperscript{38}

The relationship between "skill", in the sense of the difficulty of any type of manufacturing work and the amount of time required to learn it, and the workers' bargaining power is not always uncomplicated. Factors such as unreliability of the supply of labour or control of the labour supply by contractors or gang bosses may work to strengthen the position of the apparently unskilled. However, flour milling in Tianjin was not a long-established domestic craft developed and expanded, like silk weaving in Suzhou, but a "modern" handcraft industry which had sprung up in the later half of the 19th century to meet the needs of the fast-growing population of Tianjin. There was no tradition of organisation for the mofang workers to join or imitate. Even the technology of the trade worked against the mofang workers' ability to organise. A loom or a knitting machine could be dismantled and put out, but a flour mill was immobile, requiring the workers to work and often live under the employer's direct supervision. In the circumstances it was not surprising that industrial action by mofang workers was almost unheard of.

Even so, it appears that mofang owners, unlike the managers of the modern flour mills, were not able to set their own wages. The only likely explanation for this, given the ease with which the striking mofang workers were replaced in 1915, is that the wage rates were kept uniform by the Sanjin Mofang Guild in the interests of eliminating cutthroat competition. The Sanjin Mofang Guild, founded in the reign of Tongzhi, was an unusually well organised and long-lived guild; its contribution to regulating the supply and price of flour in pre-1949 Tianjin has been written about favourably by contemporary Chinese authors.\textsuperscript{39} The managements of the modern mills were not bound by any sort of guild charter. Wage uniformity therefore need not always be seen as an indication of successful labour militancy, and does not of itself imply that the workers were in any position to move from one place of work to another regardless of who they knew. However the absence of uniform wages, as in the modern flour mills and the cotton mills, when considered with the workers' manifest concern with security of employment, is best taken to mean that they were not.

\textsuperscript{38} Fong, 1934, p.599.

\textsuperscript{39} Sun and Zhang, 1987, pp.175-186.
CHAPTER 3

The match industry and the meaning of "skill".

Organisation of the match industry in Suzhou and Tianjin.

Apart from the cotton mills and the flour mills, the other large scale manufacturing industry using introduced technology in Tianjin and Suzhou was the match industry. The cotton and flour industries were based on the production by means of the new technology of consumer articles which had a tradition of domestic manufacture; unlike them, match manufacturing was an altogether new industry. Matches were first imported and sold in China in the Guangxu period, and the first Chinese match factories, founded by entrepreneurial officials once the market for the new product had been proved by sales of imported matches, were established in Chongqing and Shanghai in the 1880s.

The first match factory in Tianjin was the Beiyang Match Company, founded in 1909. The Huachang factory was founded in 1910 and merged in 1918 with the Danfeng match factory in Beijing to form the Danhua company. A branch factory of Beiyang, also in Tianjin, was founded in 1917. The Japanese owned Toa factory, a branch of the Toa factory already open in Changchun, was founded in the same year. The Japanese Zhonghua factory was founded in 1920. The Chinese Rongchang factory was founded between 1920 and 1927, and the Japanese Sanyou factory in 1927. In Suzhou, the Hongsheng factory was founded in 1920 by the Shanghai industrialist Liu Hongsheng. It merged in 1929 with the Linchang factory in Shanghai, the Linchang branch factory in Zhenjiang and the Zhonghua factory in Nanhui to form the Da Zhonghua company. Two much smaller factories, Minsheng and Zhongnan, were founded in Suzhou in 1931 and 1932. ¹

The process of match manufacturing was as follows. The matchstick timber arrived at the factory already semi-processed, in the form of geng pian (slivers). At

Hongsheng in Suzhou, however, the wood was evidently cut into slivers on the factory premises. First, a *zheng ban ji* (sorting machine) sorted out the crooked and broken *geng pian* from the good ones, and placed the latter on a large rectangular tray ready for the next step. Then the *pai ban ji* (matchstick cutter) forced the *geng pian* through "innumerable small holes", from which they emerged as square sided matchsticks. These were fixed vertically by the action of the machine in a steel tray-shaped frame. In the frame, they were conveyed to the *shang yao tai* (phosphorus bench). The "bench" was a type of machine, though the action it performed was done by hand in all but the large factories. One end of each matchstick was first dipped in tallow, then in a phosphorus based chemical mixture (contents varied) bound with glue, then compressed so that the match heads were an even shape. Still in the frame, they were conveyed to the oven in the drying room. The ovens were "the kind ordinarily available on the market", not made specially for match factories, and cost only 30-60 yuan each, so that even the smallest factories had at least one. Finally a *xie geng ji* or *zhe geng ji* (unloading machine) removed the matches from the frames and arranged them parallel in divided wooden trays, ready to be packed. Packing was done by hand. Other types of machine were used only in the largest factories, to grind the phosphorus to powder and to prepare the matchboxes for packing.

There was much more diversity in the degree to which the new technology was applied in match factories than there was in cotton mills and flour mills. Of all these types of machine, only the *pai ban ji* (matchstick cutter) and the *xie geng ji* (unloading machine) were indispensible. Human labour could be substituted for all the others, and often was. Because of the specific raw material needs of the match industry, the high cost of transport both of timber and of the finished product, the comparatively low minimum cost of the required machinery and the fact that matches could be profitably sold almost anywhere, the match industry developed a wide range in scale of production from very small factories using one *pai ban ji*, one *xie ban ji* and one oven, with capital of a mere thousand yuan and employing several dozen people, to factories like Hongsheng and Danhua, with several hundred thousand yuan capital, fifty or more *pai ban ji* and a work force of over a thousand, not counting outworkers. The small factories tended to be in remote areas, where timber was available and the cost of transport made it not worthwhile for the large factories in the coastal cities to ship matches there for sale. With the exception of the two small factories in Suzhou, Minsheng and Zhongnan, the factories named above belonged to the elite section of the

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2. Ministry of Industry file (Yi)2-1 1449, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing, China. Text of settlement between Hongsheng and the match workers' union on the closing of the factory.
match industry, and made use of all the technology available, differing only in the number of machines and the number of workers employed.

The cycle of prosperity and decline in the match industry paralleled those of the cotton milling and flour industries, with a sustained boom period yielding profits of up to 100% net even in the larger factories until the mid 1920s giving way to a period of uncertainty and decline in the 1930s, with some factories selling out or closing down. The progress of the Chinese match industry has been outlined by Thomas Rawski in *Economic growth in pre-war China*, and I will not comment on it further here. What is important for this study is the significance of the match factories as employers, and the degree to which they were obliged to cut production in the more difficult times.

In 1924, Beiyang employed 1350 workers, not counting outworkers. In 1927, Beiyang employed 3400 at its two branches, and Danhua had 890; Zhonghua, which also operated two branch factories, had 1200, and Sanyou had 300. Another source indicates that there were 1000 workers at Danhua and 1700 at Beiyang No.1 in December 1926. In October 1929, the Nankai Statistical Weekly (*Nankai tongji zhoubao*) recorded that a total of 1769 men and 108 boys worked in Tianjin match factories. A Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1931 reported 588 workers at Beiyang and 234 at Rongchang. The Ministry of Industry in Nanjing reported in 1932 that 1518 men, 344 women and 524 children worked in Tianjin match factories, and that 879 workers of unspecified age and sex worked in the Hongsheng factory in Suzhou. In 1933, it reported that 2,286 workers were employed in 4 factories in Tianjin. A 1935 survey by the Guomindang’s National Economic Council listed 879 workers at Hongsheng, 78 at Minsheng, 543 at Beiyang, 966 at Danhua, 450 at Zhonghua and 256 at Sanyou.  

Reports of settlements of strikes and disputes by the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs and the Suzhou city government and Guomindang Party branch, which could usually be trusted at least to give accurate figures of the number of workers involved, provide the following figures: at least 400 at Zhonghua in August 1926; 300+ at Beiyang in August 1932; 968 or 595 in March to May 1933 according to conflicting sources; 220 at Rongchang in September 1933, 270 in April 1934 and still 270 in June.

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The Suzhou match factory workers’ union claimed 1000 members in March 1927.5

If all statistics on the number of workers employed are accepted at face value, this table can be made of them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1935</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tianjin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>1700+</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>300+</td>
<td>968</td>
<td></td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danhua</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>595</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongchang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>234</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanyou</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhonghua</td>
<td>400+</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>2386</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzhou</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongsheng</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>879</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minsheng</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhongnan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the unreliability of the figures for cotton mill workers’ wages in the 1933 Chinese Labour Yearbook (the source for the above number of match factory workers in Tianjin in 1933) it seems best to suppose that "2,286" is a misprint for "2,386" and ignore it. The figure "879" for the number of workers at Hongsheng in 1935 provided by the National Economic Council is almost certainly also a duplication of the 1932 Chinese Labour Yearbook figure. The match factory employment figures are too few and too inconsistent to be usefully related to pictures of the rise and decline of the industry given by Chinese and non-Chinese economic historians. At most, they suggest that among the larger factories in Tianjin and Suzhou, Danhua and Hongsheng survived

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5. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, pt.2, p.246; Ershi yi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.185-186; Ershi er nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.127-129; Ministry of Industry files 711 (4) 05511, 422 (6) 639, 711 (2) 450 and 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939; Consular despatches, Tientsin to Peking, 893:00 (Tientsin) 73, 893:00 (Tientsin) 77.
more or less intact until the Japanese invasion while Beiyang and Zhonghua had to make major cuts in production. Conditions in the 1930s then were those of restricted production and static or declining employment.

Wages as an indication of skill in match factories

What information there is on wages in the match factories indicates that separate rates applied at each factory, as in the cotton mills and the flour mills. According to the Baogong huikan survey of December 1926, wages at Danhua, Beiyang and Toa were "equivalent". Workers paid by time, who (according to a Bureau of Social Affairs survey made in 1931) were the specialists employed in printing matchbox labels, maintaining the machinery and mixing the chemical compound, were paid an average of 15 yuan per month. Adult workers paid by piece earned 14-15 yuan per month, and child workers, who packed the matches, earned 5-6 yuan per month. At Zhonghua, workers paid by time earned 50c per day, and child workers 35c per day. That is, adult wages at Zhonghua were close to or the same as those paid at Danhua, Beiyang and Toa, but children’s wages were roughly twice as high.

If it is assumed that wage differentials from factory to factory were more pronounced in the new industries because recruitment as it was practised on the shop floor restricted labour mobility, we would expect the greatest variation both in wages and in general conditions of employment to apply to child workers. Thirteen-year-old boys possessed little social influence compared to adults, were less likely to be members of the Green or Red Gangs, and at many factories tended to have followed their fathers or older siblings into employment, so they were the least likely of all workers to leave to look for higher pay elsewhere.

Also in 1926 the Nong Shang Bu (Ministry of agriculture and commerce) conducted a survey of industry in Tianjin, but only Danhua and Beiyang submitted wage statistics. At Danhua, foremen earned 14-40 yuan per month, adult workers 8-10 yuan, and boys 6-7 yuan once they started to "show results". On starting work they were given food only. At Beiyang No.1, all the workers were "apprentices brought up in the factory". The basic wage was 5 yuan per month with food. With bonus payments it could reach 20 yuan. Women packing matchboxes earned 70c-1 yuan in copper per day. Apprentices were given only food and 10c dim sim money. This implies that they worked without pay until they completed a term of apprenticeship, not merely until they

started to "show results" as at Danhua. What was more, adults' wages at Beiyang appeared to a great extent to be at the discretion of the foremen, who granted bonuses on the basis of productivity or favouritism, and could be considerably lower than wages at Danhua.  

The 1st yearly Tianjin Guomindang Bureau of Social Affairs work report, spanning the period from July 1928 to June 1929, gives the following average wage figures: Danhua, 7.84 yuan per month; Beiyang, 3.48; and Rongchang, 5.81. These figures certainly refer to wages without bonus payments, but there is no reason to assume that the bonuses, paid in an irregular and presumably capricious way, would even out the 4.36 yuan difference between Beiyang and Danhua. They confirm that Beiyang paid less than Danhua, and place Rongchang somewhere in the middle.

The Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1931 quotes wage figures from Beiyang and Rongchang. At Beiyang, packing workers paid by the piece earned "up to 50c" daily. Workers using the matchstick cutter, who were paid by the piece, earned "up to 70c" daily. Casual labourers employed by the month earned a fixed wage of "up to 50c" daily. All these workers were given food as well. Specialist workers such as printers and mechanics were paid daily, were not given food and earned an average of 39.4c, the only mean as distinct from maximum wage figure provided by Beiyang.

At Rongchang, workers who pasted the sand mixture onto the sides of the matchboxes, who were among the permanent workers paid piece rates, earned at most "more than 50c daily", and at least 40c. Ma ban workers, who put the slivers into the steel trays to go through the matchstick cutter, were mostly children and earned 30c daily at most, and 13c at the lowest. Workers operating the matchstick cutter are classed as "upper hands" and "lower hands". Upper hands could earn up to 75c daily, lower hands at least 58c. Workers operating the unloading machine earned 55c to 70c. Workers paid by the day earned 35c to 50c, with an average of 38c.

It is not clear from the Rongchang account whether these were skilled workers, casual workers, or both. Annoyingly the organisation of the 1931 survey makes direct comparison between Beiyang and Rongchang wages almost impossible - even more

10. Tianjin shi huochaiye diaocha baogao, p.46.
11. Tianjin shi huochaiye diaocha baogao, p.55.
difficult than in the Bureau’s flour industry survey of 1932. Again, the Bureau’s investigators seem to have gone into the factories and asked an accountant or foreman to supply average wage figures, without trying to order the information offered in a way that would permit comparison. The wage figures can be tabulated as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. **Baogong huikan, 1926**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults (time rate)</th>
<th>Adults (piece rate)</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang 15 y/m</td>
<td>14 - 15 y/m</td>
<td>5 - 6 y/m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danhua 15 y/m</td>
<td>14 - 15 y/m</td>
<td>5 - 6 y/m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toa 15 y/m</td>
<td>14 - 15 y/m</td>
<td>5 - 6 y/m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhonghua 15 y/m</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.5 y/m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Nong Shang Bu, 1926**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang 5+ y/m</td>
<td>All apprenticed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danhua 8-10 y/m</td>
<td>6 - 7 y/m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Bureau of Social Affairs, 1929**

Average (all ages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>3.48 y/m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danhua</td>
<td>7.84 y/m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongchang</td>
<td>5.81 y/m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Bureau of Social Affairs, 1931**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pai ban</th>
<th>Day workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>&lt;70c/d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongchang</td>
<td>58-75 c/d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no more evidence of standardisation of wages than there is in the flour mills and cotton mills.
Both Chinese and foreign writers make the point that the technology of match manufacturing was relatively simple and no high level of skill was required of the workers.\textsuperscript{12} Compared to other types of factory industry introduced to China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, match manufacturing was simple in that the number of operations to be performed on the raw material were few and not very elaborate, and that all but two of them (cutting the slivers into matchsticks and the following unloading operation) could be performed by hand (though this was not done in Tianjin) as a low cost, low yield alternative to factory machinery.\textsuperscript{13} But to the extent that machines were used, there was little difference in ease or difficulty of operation, between match factory machinery and machinery anywhere, from the point of view of the workers using it. In effect, apart from jobs requiring relatively specialised skills (such as mechanics or carpentry) and those requiring great physical strength, jobs in the new factory industries were close to interchangeable. Each consisted of the constant repetition of a series of actions, requiring a certain minimal level of manual speed and dexterity, which could be learned to the common standard by an adult or adolescent in a few weeks. If this were not the case, the particularistic recruiting practices used in Chinese factories and reported extensively by Hershatter and Honig could not possibly have persisted for decades.

The factory personnel who spoke to the Bureau of Social Affairs investigators in the course of the Bureau's various industrial surveys can not have had much systematic understanding of what they themselves meant by "skill" in workers. Women were considered and spoken of as less skilled than men, and were paid less because they were less skilled than men; however, they were employed in the packing department at Beiyang "because their hands are quick".\textsuperscript{14} Women in the Tianjin factories were employed only as packers and at home as outworkers pasting the labels on the matchboxes, on the grounds that these jobs were simple enough for women to perform. However, the Hongsheng factory in Suzhou, a highly automated factory, employed an entirely female workforce.\textsuperscript{15} At Rongchang, "very few of the workers have had any education. But because the factory is still basically a handicraft enterprise, the workers use their strength much more than they use their intelligence, so they are able to

\textsuperscript{12} For memoirs of Chinese entrepreneurs involved with the match industry see Su Liandi, "You 'jie huo' tan dao 'huo hua', Tianjin wenshi cong kan, vol.6, pp.198-203 and Zhang Xinwu, "Danhua huochai gongsi yan'ge" in Wenshi ziliao, vol.19, pp.124-144.

\textsuperscript{13} Rawski, Economic growth in pre-war China, ch.3; Zhongguo jindai gongye shi ziliao, vol.1, pp.638-640.

\textsuperscript{14} Tianjin shi huochaiye diaocha baogao p.45; Zhang Xinwu, "Danhua huochai gongsi yan'ge" p.140; Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, pt.1, p.?.

\textsuperscript{15} Zhang Xinwu, p.140.
Two assumptions about "skill" can be read from this last statement. One equates proficiency in manufacturing work, or the capacity to reach proficiency, with whatever degree of elementary formal education potential factory workers might be expected to have. The other assumes that work in which machines are used is inherently more difficult than work in which no machines are used. (Rongchang was a much smaller factory than Beiyang and Danhua, and probably used less machinery.) However, Zhang Xinwu, former manager of the Beijing branch of the Danhua factory, reported that the decision to use electric power throughout in the Tianjin factory "made it easy to recruit workers", implying that the operation of power driven factory machinery was less difficult for the workers than processing the matches by hand. The apprenticeship served by juvenile workers, during which they were given food and accommodation but no regular wage, could last 4 years, far in excess of the time needed to learn to operate the factory machinery. Terms of apprenticeship of this length were also reported in the Tianjin cotton mills. The new manufacturing industries' use of the institution of apprenticeship may have been useful in securing cheap labour, but it had no real relationship to the acquisition of skill.

In the flour mills, "skill" was clearly thought of as an important consideration when recruiting workers. The Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs' survey of the flour mills gives a consistent impression that there were two classes of flour mill workers, skilled and unskilled. The distinction is reiterated in each section dealing with each flour mill, in language that stresses the difference between the two classes of workers in terms of education and personal cleanliness. At Fuxing, the 24 workers in the mechanical department and the 27 in the flour milling department, who were all *dagong* (literally, "big workers"), had mostly been recruited from Jiangsu and Zhejiang and "were experienced in the use of machinery". All other workers were *xiaogong* ("little workers"). Living conditions in the "*dagong* dormitory" were "quite healthy". The "*xiaogong* dormitory" was "crammed full of stuff of all kinds, with insufficient attention to hygiene". This was not explained as being because the *xiaogong* lived 12 or 13 to a room, while the *dagong* had only 3 to 5 to a room, even though Fuxing gave these occupancy figures to the Bureau of Social Affairs. It was because "(their) cultural level is low, and they do not know to pay attention to cleanliness. Also, they are insufficiently provided for by the factory, with nobody to supervise them".

17. Zhang Xinwu, p.133.
Yongnian's account was less detailed, saying only that "foremen and leading hands, workers in the machine room and those in the machine repair division" were given slightly better rooms than the others. At Qingfeng, the distinction (here between "machine operators" and "factory workers") is expressed more precisely than elsewhere. "Machine operators" were the workers who actually laid their hands on the machinery, and "factory workers" were all the others, whether they carried coal to the furnace or sewed flour sacks. The machine operators' dormitory was "clean and orderly", while in the factory workers' dormitory "their clothing lay around in no particular order, and they paid not the slightest attention to hygiene". At Minfeng the distinction between workers who maintained and repaired the machinery and workers who processed the wheat and flour, whether they operated machinery or not, cut across the distinction expressed by Fuxing and Qingfeng. Here, the "machine room workers" and the "process workers" had separate dormitories. In the machine room workers' dormitory, "enough care is taken so that the air and light are satisfactory". In the process workers' dormitory, "the air does not circulate and the light is poor. Moreover the rooms are crammed with all sorts of objects, and filth and rubbish litter the floor. There is a great contrast with the machine room workers' dormitory". At Jiarui there was a three way distinction between "mechanics", "ordinary workers" and "little workers". Here the mechanics were clean and the ordinary workers and little workers were unhygienic.

Jiarui was the only factory which gave the Bureau of Social Affairs any information on the recruiting of workers. "All the shareholders are natives of Tianjin, and the factory is situated in Tianjin. So it is natural that the majority of the workers should come from Tianjin. Because the foreman of the engine room and the foreman of the little workers are natives of Jinghai county, there are also a good many workers from Jinghai...". 

22. *Tianjin shi mianfenye diaocha baogao*, p.60.
The Jiarui account also suggests that the native place composition of the board of directors had some influence on the composition of the work force. This appears unlikely at first sight, but it corroborates Zhou Xuehui’s Huaxin memoir, which recounts how a "Wuxi gang" on the board of directors engaged foremen and engineers from Wuxi, who in turn brought workers from Wuxi to Tianjin and engaged in a cross-class power struggle with the Zhou brothers’ Anhui faction that ran for over a decade.23

The more the concept of "skill" in the new industries is examined, the more it tends to disappear. Some jobs were certainly more difficult than others, and it can be assumed that some workers were more skilful than others. But the gradations of skill talked about by members of the management and the Bureau of Social Affairs do not reflect the actual level of difficulty of the work performed so much as the status conferred on workers responsible for using or maintaining the still little understood factory machinery. The effect of introduction of the new manufacturing technology was to create a working environment in which there were no fixed and universally accepted "rational" standards by which the difficulty, importance or even the cost to the employer of the many component tasks which made up the new, complex manufacturing process could be decided.

Industrial conflict in match factories

The files of the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Chamber of Commerce in Tianjin and Suzhou give some impression of the nature of workplace politics in the match factories. I have found records of eleven match factory strikes and disputes in Tianjin and two in Suzhou. If these conflicts are classed according to their cause or the workers’ demands, it appears that security of employment was as important to match factory workers as it was to workers in the cotton mills and flour mills. Five of the thirteen disputes began with the workers claiming higher wages or an increase in the end of year bonus, or in one case, a living allowance while the factory was temporarily closed.24 Five were protests against factories closing.25 One was a protest against the

24. For details of the wage claim at Beiyang, August 1932, see Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing, Ershi er nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.185-186; for Rongchang, September 1933, see Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; for Rongchang, June 1934, see Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939 despatch 893:00 (Tientsin) 73, ; for Danhua, January 1935, see United States Department of State despatch 893:00 (Tientsin) 80; for Beiyang, January 1935, see USDS despatch 893:00 (Tientsin) 81, 893:00 (Tientsin) 82.
25. For factory closing at Beiyang, March 1933, see Ershi er nian Zhongguo laodong
sacking of a Chinese foreman and his replacement by a Japanese at Zhonghua. One (at Hongsheng, in Suzhou) was a May 4th protest which was not linked to employment conditions at Hongsheng. If this last incident is treated as an instance of match factory workers protesting as Chinese citizens against the government of China and other governments, rather than as workers protesting against the factory which employed them, and if the Beiyang workers’ claim for living expenses while the factory was temporarily closed in January 1935 is treated as a "defensive" demand in the context of their well-founded anxiety about finding other employment rather than an "aggressive" demand for better conditions, then that leaves four "aggressive" and seven "defensive" demands out of a total of eleven.

The remaining dispute, commencing with a protest by the Beiyang union that the management had failed to keep to an agreement on wages and conditions which had been accepted some months before by both parties and by the Bureau of Social Affairs, was in fact part of a long running dispute between Beiyang workers and management which began in 1932 with what looks like an attempt by the Guomindang union at Beiyang to achieve wage parity with workers in other match factories. It ended two years later with an agreement stating "Events at other factories are of no relevance", which was upheld by the Bureau. This dispute, or series of disputes, is worth looking at in some detail, because it suggests that the workers at Beiyang not only knew that Beiyang paid less than other factories but also took industrial action to try to force parity on the management, in the manner of the silk weavers in Suzhou.

The first recorded dispute at Beiyang took place in August 1932. The Guomindang union presented a list of 13 demands to the management. These demands were not enumerated precisely in either the Dagong Bao or the Nanjing Ministry of Industry strike report, but there were three differentiated wage claims for workers on

\[\text{mianjian, vol.2, pp.} 127-129, \text{Ministry of Industry file 711 (2) 450, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing, Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; for Rongchang, February 1934, see United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939, files no. 893:00 (Tientsin) 68, 893:00 (Tientsin) 69, 893:00 (Tientsin) 72. Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; for Beiyang, February 1934, see Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1934; for Rongchang, October 1934, see United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no. 893:00 (Tientsin) 77; for Hongsheng, October 1935, see Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (yi)2-1 1449, Suzhou City Archives, Suzhou.}\]


29. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; \textit{Ershi yi
different pay rates, three claims concerning running expenses for the union, four for "workers’ welfare" - probably such items as sick pay and maternity leave - two concerning the powers of the union and one for pay during the strike period. Following arbitration by the Bureau of Social Affairs a wage rise was given (but the fate of the other demands is not clear). The management then declined to pay the wage increase. The workers protested to the Bureau of Social Affairs again. On August 29th there was a fight at the factory between two ill-defined factions of workers in which people were injured and 10 were arrested. The management closed the factory. The match industry union and the General Union petitioned the government and Party for •) the Tianjin Party branch to inform the court (before which the workers arrested for fighting were going to appear) of the facts behind the fight •) the management to be instructed to open the factory again and implement the wages and conditions agreed on, •) release of arrested union members and •) wages to be paid while the factory was closed.

The city government and Party branch appeared to endorse the Beiyang workers’ claims. The management countered with its own claims:

•) reorganisation of the match industry union,

•) only workers with a guarantee signed by a person of the status of an independent business proprietor or employer to be hired, and

•) sacking of 15 workers, not to be rehired under any circumstances.

After much discussion, the city government, Party branch, general union and Beiyang workers revised their terms to the following:

•) payment of wages for the period the factory remained closed,

•) re-employment of all workers except the ones the management had used to start the fight,

•) reorganisation of the union under the joint authority of government and Party, and

•) all other terms to be reserved for discussion after the factory opened, with any agreement between workers and management requiring the approval of the

nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.185-186; Dagong Bao, 1 September 1932.
relevant government and Party authorities.

The director of the Bureau of Social Affairs and a representative of the Party branch went to the factory and discussed terms with the management there. Six weeks after the dispute began, the following terms were accepted by all parties:

- The workers were to return in separate shifts; first the workers "who had lived in the factory dormitory", then those "paid by the fortnight", then those "paid by the day" under GMD supervision on September 30th, October 15th and October 16th. Whether this was for accounting or security reasons was not made explicit.

- Ten of the 15 workers who had previously been refused employment under any circumstances; that is, the ones arrested after the fight; were to be rehired if the court found them not guilty, and the other 5 were to be rehired after reorganisation of the union.

- Wages for the six weeks to be reserved for future discussion, but guaranteed by the GMD.

- The union to be reorganised by the Party branch.

The terms above are those reported in the Dagong bao; the Ministry of Industry strike report, which was written up at a later date, adds details of wages:

- Contract workers paid "high wages" [gaoji gongzi] to continue to receive the usual wage.

- "Ordinary workers" [putong gongren] paid at the low (minimum?) rate [diji gongzi] to be paid the same rate as workers doing the same work at Danhua.

- This agreement to apply to "all workers in the packing department" [baozhuang ge gong] paid at piece rates from October 13 and to neigong (non-contract workers) paid by time from October 15.

The Dagong Bao assumed that the faction of workers who were in the fight with the union representatives were acting on instructions from the management, who hoped to break the influence of the union by having its representatives at Beiyang arrested for brawling. The match industry union [Huochai ye chanye gonghui] was established within the first year of Guomindang government in Tianjin. Two branches existed by
December 1929, the first at Danhua, founded in June 1929, and the second at Rongchang, founded in October 1929. Beiyang was therefore the last Chinese-owned match factory in Tianjin to be unionised. (There is no record of the workers in the Japanese-owned match factories ever joining unions.) The branch union at Beiyang was not organised until shortly before the conflict of August 1932. At Danhua, the union presented a list of claims soon after it was founded. These were mostly concerned with wages and working hours (but included the clause, "The management must consult the union before engaging or dismissing workers") and were evidently granted by the management without a strike or prolonged dispute. Both Danhua and Rongchang branch unions were partly funded by the factories, to a cost of 100 yuan per month at Danhua and 20 at Rongchang. The lapse of time between the founding of the Danhua and Rongchang branches and the Beiyang branch suggests that the Beiyang management, which had tended to economise on wages since the factory opened, held out against unionisation deliberately and, for a time, successfully.

The demands presented by the Beiyang union were essentially the same as those presented by the Danhua union, though the Beiyang management reacted with much more determination. However, the text of the wage agreement submitted to the Ministry of Industry suggests why the conflict at Beiyang was so much more protracted and intense. The stipulation that non-contract workers earning the minimum wage should be paid the same rate as at Danhua implies that the Beiyang union members were aware of the different pay scales at different match factories and were making a catch-up claim. That is, they were acting as if wage uniformity were attainable and enforceable.

On March 13th, 1933, the Beiyang management announced the closing of the factory for economic reasons. The statement to the Bureau of Social Affairs cites overcrowding of the industry, dumping of imported matches, taxation, debts and the wage rise granted in 1932 as the factors responsible. The Beiyang union again petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs, claiming that there could be no need for the factory to shut because it had been making profits of several hundred thousand yuan per year and expanding the scale of production, and that the management had disobeyed the Factory Law and the Union Law in closing without obtaining permission from the

32. Ershi'er nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.127-129; Ministry of Industry file 711 (2) 450, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing.
necessary authorities.

The Bureau called a conciliation meeting but the management declined to send anyone. With the statement "At this time of national crisis it is important that there should be no more unfortunate incidents in Tianjin", the Bureau drafted alternative terms for either paying a living allowance to the workers for a fixed period of time if the factory closed temporarily, or paying them off and granting first rights to re-employment if it shut down indefinitely. Several rounds of discussions were held on this basis and the factory opened on March 24th once the following conditions were met:

•) Workers to work as directed or be sacked. No illegal interference by the union.

•) 20 days' work for 20 days' pay per month.

•) All payments to workers apart from wages to be reduced by 1/3 except for weekly food subsidies totalling 60c.

•) No pay for holidays if they fall on a non-working day.

•) The previous pay schedule to come back into effect if business picks up. If it deteriorates all workers will be dismissed. No illegal interference by the union.

•) Workers to be paid 10c per day for the time that the factory was closed.

The March agreement appears to regain for the management the ground lost in the agreement of October 1932. Without access to the Beiyang bank balance it is not possible to be definite about whether the closing of the factory was a lockout or a business decision. The tariff on imported matches rose from 7.5% to 40% in December 1930 with the establishment of tariff autonomy in China, and match imports from Japan and Sweden quickly fell to insignificance. The Nankai wholesale price index records steep increases in the price of matches in 1930 and 1931. The wholesale price of Rice Bowl brand matches, made by Beiyang, remained at 64 yuan per case from May 1931 to April 1934, when the product line was stopped.34

Neither fact reconciles easily with the Beiyang management’s statement that the

34. Nankai zhishu ziliao huibian, Tongji Chubanshe, Beijing, 1958, pp.82, 111-113.
match industry was in bad shape overall. Of course Beiyang could have been uniquely indebted, or genuinely affected by mismanagement. However it was still in existence and producing matches by the time the Japanese army occupied Tianjin in July 1937. The cutting of working hours, wages and bonuses implies non-political cost cutting, but the repeated, and by the terms of the Factory Law, questionable categorising of the union’s actions as illegal and the management’s refusal to attend the first round of talks called by the Bureau of Social Affairs favour the lockout hypothesis. If the factors controlling access to employment and security of employment in the match industry were the same as those operating in the cotton and flour industries, it would be expected that managements should use the lockout strategy often and successfully.

If there were a functioning labour market, and if it were open to the locked-out workers to work somewhere else, the management would gain nothing by shutting the factory doors, particularly at a time when other factories in the same industry in the same city were investing in new imported machinery and raising the prices of their products, and would merely put itself to the inconvenience of having to engage dozens or hundreds of new workers. If recruiting factory workers were simply a matter of hiring anyone who turned up at the factory and could prove minimal competence at using the machinery, managements would tend to respond to strikes and insubordination by hiring strikebreakers, not by locking the workers out. But the record of industrial conflict in the modern factory industries in Tianjin is full of cases in which the management closed down the factory for "economic reasons" and was persuaded to open doors again by the Bureau of Social Affairs days or weeks later, while the hiring of "scabs" is unheard of.

Later in 1933, there were complaints to the Bureau of Social Affairs that the Beiyang management had failed to implement the terms of the March agreement. It was the match industry union [huochaiye chanye gonghui] which contacted the Bureau, not the Beiyang branch union, which could mean that the Beiyang branch had declined in influence. There was no strike. Wages, food subsidies and bonuses were stopped for a period unspecified in the report submitted to the Ministry of Industry, though sick workers continued to receive a 17c per day allowance. Following arbitration by the Bureau of Social Affairs, the following agreement was signed on November 16th, to come into effect on December 1st, 1933:

* Following the signing of this agreement, all agreements previously fixed between workers and management are invalid. All future matters between

35. Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing.
workers and management are to be settled according to the terms of this agreement. Events at other factories are of no relevance.

•) From the signing of this agreement, all previous demands concerning food subsidies and bonuses raised by the workers are voluntarily withdrawn and will not be raised again.

•) From now on workers must be aware of business conditions faced by the factory and strive for improvement of the product and increase in output.

•) From now on, the union and other workers will not intervene against the factory’s freedom to employ workers of its choosing as set out in the Factory Law.

•) In order to improve and restructure existing work practices, all workers proven to be unproductive or of bad character, or to have broken the rules of the factory, are to be dismissed. The union will not protect or assist them.

•) Apart from piece rate workers, from now on permanent and casual workers will be paid according to the new calendar.

•) Workers on sick leave who have the approval of a factory supervisor and a certificate from a doctor will be given 17c per day sick pay. No other medically related expenses will be borne by the factory. Workers who pretend to be sick in order to receive sick pay will be dismissed.

•) Piece rate workers will continue to be paid at the old rate. Pay will be reckoned in copper cash.

•) Workers who die of illness while employed will continue to be dealt with as before, as the factory has no funds to set up an insurance scheme.

•) Payment of the huahong (the end of year bonus) will depend on the year’s profit. The factory will be obliged to pay a bonus if profits are high enough. The amount and distribution will be decided by the management. If profits are not high enough the workers are not to demand the huahong bonus.

•) The end of year bonus will be paid regardless of the profit or loss incurred by the factory. Time wage workers will be paid 2, 3 or 4 yuan according to their
diligence or laziness as determined by the supervisor. Piece rate workers will receive 1 yuan. Workers under 16 will receive 50c.

- In the hottest part of summer, if less than 30 machines are in operation in the machine room due to lack of demand, workers there will receive a supplementary payment of 10c per day.

- From now on work will stop every Sunday to allow the workers to rest. Piece workers will receive 10c food money. Time wage workers will not receive food money unless they have been at work for less than a week and their absence was for a reason approved by the factory.

- All time wage workers who work two weeks without a day off (not counting Sundays) will receive a bonus of a day’s pay. Piece rate workers will not receive the bonus.

- In the New Year holiday, piece rate workers will receive 16c food money for one day off, or 32c for two days off. Time wage workers will receive one day’s pay for one day off, or two days’ pay for two days off. However, workers who fail to start work on time after the holiday will not be paid the food money. Casual packers also will not be paid food money.

- This agreement is to be in force from December 1st, 1933.

- This agreement is made with the consent of both parties. Both parties must abide by it. If the factory infringes the agreement, it will be corrected and penalised according to the Labour Disputes Law and the matter referred to the courts for appropriate action. If the workers infringe the agreement, those involved will be dismissed, and any workers who have broken civil or martial law will be handed over to the police or the courts for appropriate action. If the union, regardless of the facts of the case, attempts to protect them, except by the measures described above, the union will be ordered to suspend activities.

From the Beiyang workers’ point of view, it was a sadly unsuccessful result to an appeal to the Bureau of Social Affairs to get the factory to implement the terms of a previously signed agreement. The Ministry of Industry summary does not indicate what were the terms the union wanted implemented. In fact most terms of the agreement of March 1933 limited pay and conditions at Beiyang and set bounds to the union’s sphere of activity, and it is not easy to see anything that the union or its members at Beiyang
might have wanted to petition the Bureau of Social Affairs for. But the language of the report is unambiguous; the workers petitioned the Bureau on the grounds that "the management had broken the terms of a previously signed agreement" [changfang weifan lao zi xieding].

The text of the March 1933 agreement offers only two slight possibilities. Either business had in fact picked up after March, sales had risen but the factory continued to work a 20 day month in defiance of the fifth clause of the March agreement. It is not a convincing response to improving trade conditions, however determined the management might have been to break the power of the union. Alternatively, business had picked up and the factory had gone back to full-time production but had not reinstated the old wage scale. A Ministry of Industry survey comments: "In north China, the Beiyang and other match factories have suffered repeated strikes and disputes caused by the management stopping bonuses and delaying payment of wages". The agreement of November 1933 suggests that the Beiyang management, which had always economised on wages, found itself vulnerable to catch-up wage claims after the Guomindang set up its industrial arbitration system, but eventually succeeded in enforcing the principle of enterprise-level autonomy and having it recognised by the Tianjin Party branch and the Bureau of Social Affairs.

In February 1935 there was a further dispute, similar to that of March 1933, concerning payment of living costs to the workers while the factory was temporarily closed over the New Year period. It was reported rather sketchily in the United States consul-general’s monthly despatch to Beijing and the course of events is harder to establish than in the conflicts which were reported by the Bureau of Social Affairs. However the time of year, and the fact that the wholesale price of Beiyang’s Gold Cup brand matches dropped from 60 yuan per case in December 1934 to 58 yuan in January 1935 to 56 yuan in February, suggest that the management closed the factory for economic rather than political reasons. The Beiyang workers presumably petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs after the factory shut. The Bureau called a meeting on February 12 at which the management agreed to pay a living allowance from 10c to 25c per day. They then failed to keep to the agreement. The workers marched to the offices of the Party branch where their demands were rejected. They staged a three day hunger strike in the factory. The response of the Bureau of Social Affairs and Party branch is unclear but the management agreed to pay the living allowance on March 12.

37. United States Department of State, 1930-1939, files no. 893:00 (Tientsin) 81, 893:00 (Tientsin) 82.
There was a dispute at Rongchang beginning in February 1934 that may have involved a lockout. Rongchang closed on February 7th. The usual negotiations and petitioning of the Bureau of Social Affairs took place until a settlement was reached in May, of which the terms included a 50c per month wage cut and no sackings. However, since Rongchang went out of business later in 1934 and was eventually sold, the decision to close could well have been for business reasons only. In all other cases where match factory workers protested against factories closing, the factories stayed closed.

I have proposed an argument in which the unprecedented large scale of the new manufacturing industries, as well as the unfamiliarity of the technology, created a situation in which factory managers were unable to resolve the problem of recruiting workers by any means but the "irrational" means of sending factory staff back to their home villages to recruit anyone who wanted work, and of continuing to delegate the duty of recruiting to foremen. I have argued that lack of wage uniformity among different factories in the same industry in the same city implies that the work force was not mobile, and that the workers' reluctance or inability to move from job to job was as much a function of the restricted access to industrial work caused by personalistic recruiting practices as of their poverty. The cotton and flour mill workers' concern for security of employment is in line with the hypothesis of an "unfree" labour market.

Of course, neither technological change nor increase in enterprise scale was unique to China. The same phenomena occurred across the world. What caused the personalising of access to work in China was not the mere fact of change but its suddenness. In other countries, the introduction of quite new kinds of manufacturing industry has been associated with new kinds of relationships and conflict between employers and employed. Chakrabarty's study of jute milling in Calcutta under the Raj, which used a quite simple technology and required no particular background of the workers but posed new problems of organisation and recruitment, reveals a situation of highly personalised control of recruitment by sirdars and gang rivalry on the factory floor which recalls that described by Hershatter (1986). Shorter and Tilly's *Strikes in France* (1974) points out different patterns of industrial conflict in "old" industries (such as glassblowing and furniture making) which were subject to a gradual process of technological change tending to deskill the work and dequalify the workers, and "new"

38. United States Department of State, 1930-1939, files no. 893:00 (Tientsin) 68, 893:00 (Tientsin) 69, 893:00 (Tientsin) 72; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing.

industries (such as the chemical industries) which either represented an abrupt transition from handcraft to factory production or had no traditional antecedents at all. Workers in the French "new industries" were not particularly security-conscious, and in fact confined themselves more than workers in the "old industries" to making economic demands.40

However, French craft workers’ and factory workers’ modes of industrial action relate directly to the opportunities open to them and the forces acting on them in the political and economic context of 20th century France, all of which were very different from those in early 20th century China. It is not necessary to point to the same things occurring across the world to argue for a theory that derives different patterns of industrial conflict in different industries from social, or political factors with their roots in material necessity, and not from psychological factors such as alienation or the shock of migration to the cities. It is to be expected that the workers’ power to survive an employer’s hostility or improve their earnings by moving to another job or going into self-employment, the employers’ power to set terms for the workers within their own factories without the intervention of a trade guild or the government, and the existence or nonexistence of state welfare, would vary quite a lot from one country to another, and that this would show itself in comparative statistics on industrial conflict. It is necessary to establish that, within China, within the same social and political context, old industries and new industries form two distinct family groups with respect to industrial relations.

As indicated by the Bureau of Social Affairs’ strike reports and other sources, the match factory workers’ manifest concern for security of employment resembles that of workers in the other new manufacturing industries, cotton spinning and flour milling, and contrasts with the narrowly economic concerns and relative militancy of the Suzhou silk weavers. The workers behaved as if they were aware that access to employment was difficult. The managers of the Beiyang factory behaved as if they were aware of this too, by their use of the lockout as a bargaining tool. The three factory industries studied above do appear to form a kind of family group. The Beiyang workers’ wage claim and its eventual repudiation suggests that, if wages and conditions were different in every match factory, it was not because the workers were lacking in political sophistication and organisational ability. Rather it was because, even under the relatively favourable conditions offered by the Guomindang’s official arbitration

system, they lacked the power to force wage parity on the management. Their failure to win concessions from the factory was not because they lacked understanding of their situation, but because the conditions of restricted and personalised access to employment, along with the workers’ low level of basic economic security, lack of savings and the absence of either traditional or new urban forms of social welfare, worked against them.
CHAPTER 4

The character of industrial conflict in handcraft industries.

Introduction.

This chapter is a study of patterns of industrial conflict in diverse handcraft industries in Suzhou and Tianjin. The industries studied are those which existed in the pre-modern period (before the treaty ports) in a form little different, if at all, from the form in which they existed in the 1920s and 1930s, in which the introduction of imported technology was either gradual (as in the silk filatures discussed above) or absent. The major sources, as in the studies of factory industries above, are Bureau of Social Affairs work reports and Chamber of Commerce files.

The issues which will be examined are: the question of the uniformity of wages in the handcraft industries, and whether the workers’ wage demands reflect a normal state of affairs in which wages were uniform? Were disputes and strikes in handcraft industries normally confined to one shop, or did they spread? To what extent did handcraft workers agitate for security of employment? To what extent did employers use lockouts? Did handcraft workers ever take industrial action in protest against the sacking of one or a few of their colleagues, as occasionally happened in the Tianjin cotton mills? If handcraft workers, and employers, can be shown to have acted differently from workers and employers in the factory industries in each of these respects, I consider that there is a good case for the abrupt introduction to China of the new industries as the major factor in creating a new and distinctive type of labour-capital relations in Chinese factories.

1. Security of employment versus wages as a cause of contention

Chinese social scientists of the time and members of the Guomindang administration concerned with labour issues, when explaining conflict between workers and employers, tended to classify industrial disputes and strikes into broad but distinct categories based on cause of conflict, that is, on what the observer considered the dispute or strike to be about. By this means they meant to illustrate the comparative importance to factory workers of the various possible causes of conflict. The basic
concepts used in the contemporary sociology of Chinese industry by the first generation of Chinese social scientists to have received higher education in Western traditions of social science were those used by European and American sociologists and economists. Scholars such as Chen Da and Fang Xianting were not naive about the existence of important differences between the social setting of industry in China and in the states of western Europe and north America. However, they did not seem to consider that these differences affected the universal explaining power of the received conceptual framework of Western industrial sociology. It was understood that there was a small and finite number of things that an industrial dispute or strike could be about.

The annual work reports of the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs, established by the Guomindang in 1928, ordered industrial disputes and strikes into "those caused by dismissals" [youyu wanquan jiegu], "those caused by demands for better treatment" [youyu yaoqiu gailiang daiyu] and "those caused by working conditions, wages and other factors" [youyu gongzuo, gongzi ji qi ta]; the initial 1928-1929 work report rendered this last category as "those caused by working conditions, wages, factories closing and other factors" [youyu gongzuo, gongzi, ting ye ji qi ta].1 At first sight the Bureau's classification of industrial disputes was extremely rough and ready. Some of those in the category of "demands for better treatment" involved wage claims, and the exact logic of the distinction between the second and third categories is hard to perceive from the titles given to these categories. In fact the Bureau appears to have distinguished two categories of industrial dispute according to whether they apparently began with a set of demands for better wages and conditions presented by the workers (usually, though not always, through the Guomindang union), without reference to any action by the management, or whether they began in response to an identifiable action by the management, such as cutting wages or discriminating against union members. That is, there were offensive disputes and strikes, defensive ones, and sacking disputes, which were in a separate category from defensive disputes. All three categories were mutually exclusive.

Fang Xianting, in *Cotton industry and trade in China*, divides disputes and strikes in the Tianjin cotton mills into two broad categories, "disputes related to collective bargaining" and "disputes not related to collective bargaining". Within the "collective bargaining" category, there are those "concerning trade unions or collective agreements" and those "concerning conditions of work", divided further into "wages",  

"hours of labour", "engagement or dismissal of workers", "treatment", "factory regulation", "system of work" and "others". "Disputes not related to collective bargaining" included "sympathetic disputes", "political disputes" and "others". Again, all categories were mutually exclusive.\(^2\)

The sociologist Chen Da, in *Problems of Chinese labour*, expresses a greater awareness of the conceptual difficulties associated with trying to impose order on industrial conflict by categorising strikes and disputes. "What are the standards by which we should classify strikes?" Chen wrote. "Our classification is based, generally speaking, on the nature of the strike [bagong de xingzhi], but there are several difficulties with it. (A) The distinctions between causes for strikes are not clear. It is easy to confuse 'strikes caused by low standards of living' with 'strikes caused by demands for higher wages'. Some strikes can be put into both categories. (B) The distinctions between ways that strikes proceed are not clear. Some strikes can be put into many categories at once. But for the sake of simplicity and clarity, we have used the following two methods: when classified by causes, strikes are put into a single category according to what is the most important cause, and when classified by results, because the results of industrial action are often complex, one strike may be put into more than one category."

Chen gives the possible causes of strikes as "economic pressure", which is subdivided into "impoverishment" (divided further into "increase in the price of rice", "general price increase", "currency fluctuations", "rising living costs" and "competition", by which he appears to mean competition for goods and services used by workers), "wage claims", "opposition to rent increases", and "opposition to increased charges" (such as superannuation); "working conditions", subdivided into "working hours", "opposition to mistreatment or injustice by the employer", "claims for, or opposition to, production reforms", "opposition to particular decisions by the employer or a branch of government", "opposition to a member of management" (not necessarily the same as opposition to mistreatment or injustice), and "demands for bonus payments"; "popular movements", subdivided into "patriotic or anti-foreign movements" and "movements caused by the influence of new political ideas or agitators" (presumably any strike involving Communist Party members); "union organisation", subdivided into "demands for the establishment of a union", "demands for the recognition of a union", "demands for the union to recommend workers for employment", and "demands for the union to be authorised to negotiate with management"; "conflict with outside parties", subdivided into "conflict with the army or..."
One shortcoming of the schemes outlined above is the unproductively rigid distinction they impose between one category of industrial dispute and another. They obscure the complexities of industrial conflicts which begin as wage demands but turn into sacking protests after the workers identified as ringleaders are sacked, or begin as wage demands and turn into closing down protests when the management meets the wage demand with a lockout, or begin when a newly organised Guomindang union presents a detailed log of claims to the management, including both wage claims and claims concerning rights to employment, and the management reacts by sacking the bad elements and giving everyone else a wage rise. Not all of the disputes and strikes which I have information on are "ambiguous" in this way. Subject to the amount of information on each strike, nearly all of them can be put into one category or another under each of the above schemes according to what appears to be the original or most important cause. However, the effect of the separation of disputes and strikes into discrete categories, with the intention of sorting out the order of importance of causes or results, is always to obscure or lose a certain amount of information. These are some "ambiguous" instances.

Suzhou, October 1926. Over 300 cotton carders struck after a colleague was handed over to the police by his employer for asking for a wage rise. The police called a conciliation meeting between representatives of labour and management. The employers granted a rise in the piece rate of 2.5c per jin of cotton and offered to supply food. The First yearbook of Chinese labour, from which this account is taken, does not specify how many cotton carding shops were involved, what demands the cotton carders put forward at the conciliation meeting or what happened to the one who was arrested. This could be treated as a wage claim, though it could also be regarded as a solidarity or sympathy strike.

Suzhou, March 1919. This was a rather more complex series of events. Over 1,000 tailors struck for ten days in protest against the imposition of a work pass [yingye zhizhao] system, according to which all tailors seeking work would have to bring their guarantee (a guarantee had been required before the yingye zhizhao was introduced) to a police station and have it signed by the police at a cost of 1 yuan. The Wuxian daoyin [ ] said that the system had been introduced on the instructions of the civil governor of
Jiangsu, in which case it would have applied to other trades as well. The tailors unsuccessfully petitioned the county office before striking. They claimed some master tailors [hangtou] had taken the opportunity to monopolise the issue of work passes to "fish for profit". The Chamber of Commerce advised the county office not to charge the tax for the time being. The county was still holding to the new system and some tailors were still on strike by April 4th, 1919, after which nothing further appears in the Chamber of Commerce files. A hangtou was beaten up during the strike. Because the tailors' aim in striking was to relieve themselves of an added cost, it could be included with the wage claims, but the tailors' main adversary was the local government and not an employer or employers.

Tianjin, November 1928. This was a still more uncategorisable series of events involving Chinese pharmacies or medicine shops and the recently established Guomindang union. The new union, then representing 670 pharmacy workers at 92 shops, presented a list of claims to shop owners, including a wage rise, an allowance for apprentices, shorter hours, and hiring and firing to have the approval of the union. The employers protested that they could not afford a wage rise and that the hiring and firing clause attacked their autonomy. The Bureau of Social Affairs called a conciliation meeting at which the union dropped the hiring and firing clause, and the employers granted a wage rise and an allowance for apprentices and for the first time set out formal limits to working hours. Whether this is called a wage claim, a dispute over working conditions or a dispute over job security depends on whether one assumes, with Richard Hyman, that grievances about job security or conditions tend to be translated into wage claims because the latter are easier to express and to achieve, or with K.G. Knowles that the only "basic" claims are those concerning wages and the amount of work done for them.

Following on from this in January 1929, the pharmacy workers’ union protested to the Bureau that the shop owners had held a secret meeting in one of the foreign concessions, and made an agreement to sack union members. 56 were sacked on January 2nd and others between January 3rd and 6th. "Several dozen" who were not union members were also sacked. It was the custom in Chinese pharmacies in Tianjin and elsewhere to hire and fire employees at the Chinese New Year, but these sackings took place a month before the New Year holiday and the Bureau advised the Tianjin

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5. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 669, Suzhou City Archives.
6. Tianjin shi shehui ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, p.305; Wu Bannong, Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozhi zhengyi di fenxi (Analysis of industrial disputes in Beiping, Tianjin and Hebei province), Beiping shchui diaocha suo, 1930, p.44.
city government and Guomindang Party branch that some employers were using the New Year as a pretext. The shop owners told the police, when they were sent to investigate, that the workers had been sacked because business was bad or for disobeying shop rules. The Bureau called a second meeting at which the following terms were accepted: those who had done nothing wrong to have their jobs back, those who had made minor mistakes to be paid off with 2 months’ wages, those who had made serious mistakes or found new jobs not to be compensated. Only 4 got their jobs back, and another 4 received 2 months’ wages. In March, when the Tianjin city government passed legislation on shop employment, it proposed the deregistration of the pharmacy workers’ union, on the request of the Merchants’ Federation [shangmin xiehui], but this was successfully opposed by the Bureau of Social Affairs.

The list of claims initially put forward by the pharmacy workers’ union included both economic demands and a demand which would have limited the employers’ power over hiring and firing. The dispute then escalated into a protest against sackings, and involved the Tianjin city government in a political conflict with its own Bureau of Social Affairs. The pharmacy workers would not have presented the list of claims if not for the changed political conditions brought about by the establishment of Guomindang government in Tianjin. It is not easy even to assess the severity of the eventual decision against the pharmacy workers without knowing how many still wanted or needed their jobs back. To describe a dispute like this one as a conflict over wages obscures more than it reveals. By strict historical logic, the first cause of the dispute should be recorded as "Defeat of Zhang Zuolin by Yan Xishan and Guomindang", the issues under dispute as multiple, and the result as defeat both for the Merchants’ Federation and for many of the more politically active pharmacy workers.

Suzhou, June 1934. This began as as a contest for control of the tailors’ guild [chengyi ye tongye gonghui] between Chen Yulin, the sitting chairman, and the guild officer Chen Ding. On June 1st, "several thousand" tailors surrounded the Suzhou Guomindang Party branch and petitioned for Chen Ding to be prevented from founding a rival guild to the Chengyi guild. What had evidently happened was that the journeymen tailors suspected that the chengyi guild would be abolished and they would have to pay fees to Chen Ding’s guild. There was a mass brawl between rival guild

supporters outside the office of the Party branch, in which several were injured. Some tailors were arrested, and Chen Yulin, who appeared to have the backing of most of the tailors, was arrested and examined on suspicion of belonging to the "Axehead Gang" [*futou dang*], a name for the Communist Party. "Several thousand" tailors struck in protest. The theatrical costumers’ and jewellers’ guilds petitioned the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of Chen Ding. Some tailors returned to work on June 3rd and the strike was over by June 14. The tailors petitioned the Party branch for the dissolution and reorganisation of the chengyi guild on June 7th and 22nd. Chen Yulin was committed for trial on July 17. What happened to Chen Ding and the chengyi guild is not stated by the sources (*Laodong jibao* and Chamber of Commerce files).  

The tailors’ strike of June 1934 was not directed against an employer, or employers as such, but against a faction within the tailors’ guild. I have considered it as a strike against discriminatory treatment, on the grounds that the tailors considered Chen Ding to be opposed to their interests, and in spite of the theatrical costume guild’s statement that the tailors mistrusted Chen Ding because they expected he would demand a higher guild fee, but it might equally well be described as a political strike, though it was very different from the May 4th and May 30th protests which have typically represented the political strike in China for both Chinese and Western historians.

Tianjin, January 1936. There was a street fight between building contractor Liu Changgui and his friends, or gang disciples, presumably, and 27 building workers to whom he owed over 1,000 yuan of unpaid wages. After the fight Liu agreed to pay them, collectively, 42 yuan per week but failed to do so. The building workers initiated legal action. The result was not reported in the *Yishi bao*, from which the account comes. The practice, at first sight strange, of resorting to formal legal action after failing to settle a dispute satisfactorily by violence, was not unknown in Tianjin. Neither the Bureau of Social Affairs nor the police took any action. This was purely and simply a wage claim, though it took place in a different world of relations between workers and employers from that of the pharmacy dispute described above.

The examples above illustrate the difficulty of trying to order Chinese strikes and disputes (or strikes and disputes anywhere) into categories to assess the relative

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importance of different aims and causes. No scheme of categories can hope to do perfect justice to the data; there will always be events that fit awkwardly into any category, or appear to belong equally to two or more. However, to abandon the attempt to impose any classification on the data is to abandon the effort to explain it. As a partial way out, I have chosen to measure the relative importance to the workers of wage maximisation and job security by counting the number of times workers in different industries claimed wage rises, and the number of times they made demands concerned with security of employment, without regard to other demands made in the course of the same dispute. This means that one dispute may be counted in both categories, and the problem of having certain points of contention between employers and workers disappear from the statistics because others are considered more basic or important is avoided.

The problem of classification is not the only difficulty to be surmounted in using the records of the Suzhou and Tianjin Chambers of Commerce and Guomindang local governments, the files of the British and United States consulates, and the works of Chinese Communist historians since 1949 to construct a description and explanation of the relationship between industrial employers and workers. The trouble with writing a history of strikes is that the strikers did not write records of their aims and methods and leave them with the local government for safekeeping. The lack of records of industrial action left by workers themselves is a universal problem of labour history but is acute in republican China, where the character of the base-level political organisation of society, in which the extents of state function and of institutionalised popular political activism were both limited, conspired with the unusual difficulty of learning the written language. It could be said, for the sake of dramatic illustration, that there are no primary sources. Nearly all the accounts of industrial conflict which now exist are those of contemporary observers and conciliators, who either were in regular working and social contact with employers and tended to share their ways of thinking, or were themselves employers, and those which have been written to legitimise the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party by emphasising its role as the vanguard of the proletariat.

These are the materials that exist, and all the present-day historian can do is be aware of their lacunae while using them for all they reveal. But it can never be assumed that any account of a strike from any source is a complete account by present sociological standards. It can not even be assumed that all the demands made by the workers have been listed. In some cases, for instance in the Tianjin Chinese pharmacies dispute described above, they are explicitly not all listed: "The union raised ten demands for improved conditions, of which the most important were (1) shorter hours,
(2) higher wages, (3) a subsidy for apprentices, and (4) hiring and firing of workers to require the approval of the union. This is the text of the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs’ report of the settlement of the dispute, and the Beiping-based sociologist Wu Bannong’s Analysis of labour-capital disputes in Beiping, Tianjin and Hebei province, January 1927 to June 1929 (Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi lao zi zhengyi di fenxi) repeats it word for word. To state "In 100 recorded disputes and strikes there were 75 wage claims" can do no more than approximate the trend of events. It might legitimately be asked if there is any explanatory value at all in assembling such a statistic. Though I have assumed here that there is a close enough correspondence between the number of wage claims and demands of other types recorded in the sources and the number of demands actually made to make the exercise worthwhile, the doubt concerning the degree to which the sources represent their subject matter must continue to stand.

Another important question is what is a wage claim, exactly, and what is a demand for security of employment. There is no unanimity on this issue among historians of labour, in fact unanimity is not possible, because as implied above, whether or not a particular demand or action by workers is regarded as a wage claim may depend on whether the writer assumes that other types of grievance may be "translated" into wage claims, or that non-wage based grievances are really "about" wages. After sifting through all available information on each strike and dispute recorded in Suzhou and Tianjin, I have decided to count demands raised by workers in the course of disputes and strikes as wage claims or as claims for job security according to whether or not they would directly and necessarily affect the income or job tenure of one or more workers, and to take the workers’ demands at face value only.

I have counted claims for wage rises, claims for bonuses (huahong or hongli), protests against wage cuts, demands to be paid in silver instead of copper, demands for a more favourable silver-copper exchange rate from employers, protests against fines, calls for pay or a living allowance while factories were temporarily closed to cut costs or in response to industrial action, and demands for final pay and travel costs when dismissed, as wage claims. I have also counted claims for food, for uniforms, and for cheap access to basic services provided by the employer, such as the demands for cheap electricity or tram passes occasionally made by employees of the Belgian tramways and electric power company in Tianjin. To class a demand to be issued with uniforms as an economic claim makes sense considering that a worker in a factory might own a total

13. Dong, 1985, pp.147-148, 172; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, November 1932, pi (authorisation), no.622, April 1933, gonghan (public notice), no.123; Ershi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, pt.2, pp.206-209; Ministry of Industry file 711(4)05511, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; Tianjin di yi zuo fadianchang (Tianjin No.1
of two sets of clothes, one for summer and one for winter.14

Protests against sackings, protests against the closing of factories, claims for first rights to employment for ex-workers if and when a closing factory started production again, protests against discrimination against union members, demands for hiring and firing to be approved by the union, and protests against the employment of apprentices instead of adults, or women instead of men, are counted as claims for security of employment.

If a factory closed and the management then proposed opening again on condition that the workers took a wage cut, and the workers eventually accepted, this is counted for the purpose of the argument presented here with the disputes over security of employment and not with the wage disputes, on the grounds that the economic initiative came from the employer, while the workers chose to keep their jobs at lower pay rather than risk unemployment to look for work at higher pay. What is at issue in the assembling of these two sets of statistics is, on the one hand, how often workers were prepared to risk unemployment, or at least the displeasure of their employer, in order to gain a higher income, and on the other hand, how often they were moved by the fear of unemployment to take action against their employer. Demands for the release of workers arrested for taking part in industrial action have been counted with the job security demands if they were potentially self-employed handcraft workers, but not if they were factory workers, unless their colleagues explicitly asked for their reinstatement at work.

The ordering of information about disputes and strikes set out above has been devised in order to illustrate one particular contrast between the trends of conflict in different kinds of industry. A complete account of all strikes and disputes on which this chapter is based, and of the sources of each, appears in Appendix S, so that they can be compared to the accounts of disputes in the cotton mills, flour mills and match factories appearing in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. My interpretation of the extent to which the demands made in each strike and dispute fit into the scheme will thus be made plain.

The total number of disputes and strikes in small scale, partially power-driven or non-power-driven handcraft industries in Suzhou and Tianjin between 1906 and 1937 to which I have found reference is 171. In the course of these 171 disputes and strikes, the
workers involved made 131 wage claims and 40 job security claims. The corresponding figures for strikes and disputes in the three modern factory industries I have examined are 62 disputes and strikes, 39 wage claims and 29 job security claims in the Tianjin cotton mills; 14 disputes and strikes, 10 wage claims and 11 job security claims in the Tianjin flour mills; and 19 disputes and strikes, 11 wage claims and 10 job security claims in the Suzhou and Tianjin match factories.

The 171 handcraft industry disputes and strikes can be tabled industry by industry as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Pay Claims Suzhou</th>
<th>Pay Claims Tianjin</th>
<th>Job Security Claims Suzhou</th>
<th>Job Security Claims Tianjin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brocade weaving</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brushes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buckets &amp; bowls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Candles</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Charcoal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton carding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton Weaving</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cupboards &amp; benches</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dyeing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gold &amp; silver</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incense</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron-working</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jade carving</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paint &amp; lacquer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper &amp; cardboard</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pastry</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pipes</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silk bordering</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stocking knitting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stone masonry</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Towel knitting</td>
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</table>

The distinction between factory and traditional industry, though it is a useful and, I have argued, necessary distinction to make in order to reach an understanding of Chinese industrial relations in the Republican period, is not perfectly clear-cut. It can not be expressed as a simple distinction between new, large-scale, automated factory industries using unskilled labour and established, small-scale handcraft industries using
skilled labour. Though new technology and steam or electric power tend to correspond to large-scale industry, and old technology and human or animal power to small-scale industry, there are enough exceptions to the tendency to require some attention to be paid to the origins and history of each industry before attempting to generalise about the effects of scale and technology transfer on industrial relations.

The study of the match industry in the previous chapter indicates how the technology of production in what is usually regarded as a modern factory industry could vary all the way from full automation to extensive use of manual labour. Among the small-scale workshop industries, which both contemporary Guomindang and subsequent Communist authorities classed as "handcraft industry" [shougongye] as distinct from "industry" [gongye], there were some which were no more "traditional" than the factory industries, which like the factory industries used technology imported from the West or Japan, or produced for a market created by the establishment of the treaty ports and their new industries.

The industries in the table above, in contrast to the factory industries examined in the preceding chapters, were conducted in workshops or small factories employing, at most, several dozen workers. However, as stated above, some industries classed by the Nanjing Ministry of Industry as handcraft industries on the basis of scale relied on imported technology. The Tianjin brocade weaving industry, which has been included in the table above, was one of these. This industry, in which there were over 500 shops in Tianjin in the 1920s, owed its existence to the introduction of Jacquard looms by the Industrial Training Institute founded by Yuan Shikai in 1906. The average size of the work force was 24.15

The hosiery knitting industry, which was the next most important handcraft industry in Tianjin after carpets and brocade with 154 shops in 1929, began when a British trading company started to import knitting machines in 1912. The average size of the work force was 10.8 workers per shop.16 Towel knitting, which has been included in the table above, was a branch of the hosiery knitting industry.

Paint and paper manufacturing, like cotton spinning and weaving, comprised technologically and organisationally distinct old and new industries. In the case of paint manufacturing, any reference in Chinese to paint factories or workshops has to be treated with caution, because the same term, youqi, is used both for lacquer based on

16. H.D. Fong (Fang Xianting), Hosiery knitting in Tientsin, Chihli Press, 1930, pp.22-24,
tung oil made in a manner which had changed only slowly over several centuries, and "chemical paint", first made in Shanghai and Tianjin in the 1920s.17

The difference between the products of the old and new industries is less absolute in the paper industry. However, as in flour milling, a distinction can be made between traditional paper manufacturing and paper manufacturing by factories using imported presses, like the Yuji factory in Tianjin.18 Inclusion of "new handcrafts" with "old handcrafts" on the basis of enterprise size, in the manner of the Guomindang "Factory Law" of 1931 which classed all manufacturing enterprises employing 30 or more workers as "factories" and all employing less than 30 as "handcraft workshops", may have simplified the work of Guomindang Party branches and Bureaus of Social Affairs all over China, but it obscures understanding of the relationship between technology, skill and workplace politics.19

If disputes and strikes taking place in factories or workshops that, regardless of the number of workers they employed, were based on technology not used in China until it was imported directly or indirectly from Europe or North America in the 20th century are subtracted from the table above, this will account for all 29 of the brocade factory disputes, both towel factory disputes, one of the paint and lacquer industry disputes (at the Dongfang paint factory in Tianjin) and three of the paper factory disputes (at the Weiyi and Yuji factories in Tianjin).20 The revised figures for pay claims and employment claims are then 109 pay claims and 32 employment claims out of a total of 136 strikes and disputes.

Even this is a less than totally satisfactory way of distinguishing between types

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17. Wang Shaosheng, "Chen Tiaofu yu Yongming youqichang" (Chen Tiaofu and the Yongming paint factory), Tianjin wenshi ziliao, vol.6, pp.144-145.


20. For brocade weaving factory disputes, see Tianjin shi shenhui ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, pp.300, 301-302, 309-310, 323-324; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, February 1929, p.126, April 1929, pp.193, 195; Dong, 1985, pp.88, 89, 91, 103, 104; Wu, 1930, pp.55, 62, 64, 65; Tianjin shenhui ju mingruo shibao nian gongzuo baogao, pp.74-83. For towel knitting, see Tianjin shenhui ju mingruo shibao nian gongzuo baogao, p.68; Dong, 1985, pp.95, 172; Ministry of Industry file 422(6)639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing. For paint, see Dong, 1985, p.153. For paper, see Tianjin shi shenhui ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, pp.318-319; Wu, 1930, pp.53, 58; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1929, pp.130, 195-196; Dong, 1985, pp.88, 169.
of industry on the basis of technology and skill. Although brocade weaving was a new trade, it was apprenticed, and only weavers with certificates of apprenticeship could work. In this respect it appears to belong with the handcraft industries. However, the very high proportion of apprentices to adult weavers, 65% to 35%, suggests that the classification of brocade weaving as practised in Tianjin in the 1920s and 1930s as a skilled trade may be forced. The hosiery knitting industry was similar, only more so. The proportion of apprentices to qualified adult hosiery knitters, according to the Nankai study of the trade, was 72% to 28%. There is no evidence that workers in modern paint or paper factories completed apprenticeships. The distinction between skilled labour in established handcraft industries and unskilled labour in new factory industries is best understood as gradual rather than absolute.

I consider that no matter how the data are categorised, the relative frequency with which workers in the new and the old industries claimed higher wages, and the relative frequency with which they made claims related to job security, lends support to the idea that workers in the old industries were less dependent on the patronage of their seniors and better able to move from job to job than workers in the new industries.

2. Wage uniformity.

Though the same qualifications apply as to data on wages of workers in the factory industries, there is no shortage of data on wages of workers in handcraft industries. If the argument that the introduction of new manufacturing technology and new forms of industrial organisation led to a rise in the importance to the workers of relations of patronage and dependence, with associated loss of mobility and increased concern with job security, is to stand when factory wages are compared with workshop wages, the workshop wage data would have to demonstrate a significantly higher level of uniformity than the factory wage data.

Between 1928 and 1937, the Bureau of Social Affairs in Tianjin collected and published information on wages of workers in both factory and workshop industries. *Tianjin zhi gongshangye* (Industry and commerce in Tianjin), published by the Bureau in 1930, provides figures for numbers of workers, numbers of apprentices, maximum and minimum wages, and in some cases type of product and enterprise type in each individual factory or workshop in a range of industries. Further information appears in the Bureau’s monthly publication *Shehui yuekan* (Social Affairs Monthly) and in the independent commercial publications *Gongshang xuezhi* (Industrial and Commercial Intelligence), *Jianyan yuekan* (Monthly Investigator) and *Guohuo yanjiu yuekan* (National Produce Monthly Review). However, apart from the straw mat [liangxi]
weaving establishments, the wage figures do not generally give an impression of trade-
wide wage uniformity. These are the Tianjin wage figures that I was able to collect 
from the sources above while in Tianjin:

### 1. Cotton mats (xian tan): Tianjin

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<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>High Wage</th>
<th>Low Wage (y/m)</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>7 (men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>64c (mdpr)</td>
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<td>66c</td>
<td>43c (fdpr)</td>
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Source: Wu Ao (ed.), *Tianjin zhi gongshangye* 1930, "Fangzhi gongye" (Textile industries), p.128.

### 2. Soap: Tianjin

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<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>High wage (y/m)</th>
<th>Low wage</th>
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</thead>
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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*, Huaxue gongye (Chemical industries), p.31.
3. Glass: Tianjin

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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 (m)</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.8 (b)</td>
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<td>3 (m)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>0.5 (b)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35 (f)</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 (m)</td>
</tr>
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<td>3 (m)</td>
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<td>1 (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiuji</td>
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<td>(m)</td>
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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*, "Huaxue gongye" (Chemical industries), p.66.

4. Straw mats (liangxi): Tianjin

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*, "Riyongpin gongye" (Miscellaneous light industry), p.17.

5. Ironworking & machine mending (Tianjin)

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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye, "Jiqi gongye" (Engineering industries)*, pp.26-29.
6. Caps: Tianjin

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<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*, "Fuyong gongye" (Clothing industries), p.11.

7. Wooden and bamboo articles: Tianjin

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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*, "Qiju gongye" (Hardware industries), pp.17-20.
8. Bricks and tiles: Tianjin

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Source: *Tianjin zhi gongshangye, Jiankong cailiao gongye* (Building material industries), p.4.

9. Gold and silver articles: Tianjin

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Two kinds of objection can be raised to the use of these figures as indicators of real wage diversity in workshop industries. One is that as indicated in the previous section, many of the industries practised in small workshops were based on recently imported technology. In the cotton mat [xiantan] factories, the Bureau of Social Affairs survey states that 'Apart from the workers at Shengsheng, they are all handcraft workers' and adds that 39% of them used machines. This implies that the 270 adult male workers, who comprised, strictly speaking, 38.8% of the total workforce, used a form of carpet loom, and that the Shengsheng looms were power driven while the looms in the other factories were not. Cotton mat weaving cannot be considered as an established handcraft predating the treaty port era. In the soap factories, Wang Jingming commented in 1934 that wages varied with skill and seniority. "Because machinery is used very little in soap making, wages are lower than in the textile

Source: "Tianjin shi ciqiye diaocha" (Investigation into the Tianjin porcelain industry), Shehui yuekan, March 1931, pp.1-9.
industries. However, they are higher than in the old-fashioned handcraft industries.\textsuperscript{21} The \textit{Jianyan yuekan} stated in April 1934 that the first soap factory was established in Tianjin in 1908, that common soap was the major product and scented soap a subsidiary product, and that some of the materials were imported.\textsuperscript{22} Wang added that 10 of the 25 soap factories in Tianjin were modern factories using power-driven machinery; also, "Because the workers are mostly peasants from the country, they are in good health".\textsuperscript{23} Soap making in Tianjin therefore bears more of the characteristics of a recently evolved industry than a traditional one. Caps were sewn on sewing machines, then pressed in a power driven press.\textsuperscript{24} Within such industries, the relationship between the perceived difficulty or importance of a set of operations with the machinery and the wage paid can not be expected to have become standard throughout the trade. However, genuinely pre-treaty port industries such as ironworking, porcelain and gold and silverware also display diversity in maximum and minimum wages from one shop to another.

Another possible objection may be based on diversity within each industry. Ironworking shops, in particular, did not turn out constant amounts of an unvarying product or products, like the cotton mills, flour mills and match factories, but turned out machine parts and replacement machinery to order, as they were required by local industrial customers. Hershatter points to considerable diversity within this industry: "different shops specialised in single products for which they became well known; De Li Xing in printing presses, and other shops in papermaking machines, looms, dyeing machines, or knitting frames".\textsuperscript{25} The same specialisation and constant variation of product can be expected to have taken place in the wooden and bamboo article workshops, which supplied local factories with reels, spindles and loom parts,\textsuperscript{26} and in the gold and silversmiths' workshops. That is, wage diversity in these industries is more likely to be due to diversity of work than it is in the factory industries, in which there is clear evidence of diversity of wages without diversity of work. But the Tianjin wage statistics above do not confirm that there were trade-wide wage rates in any of the handcraft industries.

Suzhou, under the Beiyang and Guomindang governments, did not have the

\begin{enumerate}
  \item Wang Jingming, \textit{Tianjin zao yi gongye gaikuang} (The soap making industry in Tianjin), Institute of Industrial Economics, Hebei Institute of Technology, 1935, pp.43-44.
  \item \textit{Jianyan yuekan}, March-April 1934, pp.11-12.
  \item Wang, 1935, pp.31, 46.
  \item Wu Ao (ed.), \textit{Tianjin zhi gongshangye}, 1930, "Fuyong gongye" (Clothing industries), p.10.
  \item Hershatter, 1986, p.89.
  \item \textit{Tianjin zhi gongshangye}, Qiju gongye (Hardware industries), pp.17-20.
\end{enumerate}
administrative status of a city but was under a county government (Wu county). The administrative structure was much smaller and there was no Bureau of Social Affairs. Therefore there is no body of information on wages, numbers of workers, forms of enterprise organisation or other specifics of individual workshops comparable to that which exists for Tianjin. However, what material there is, in the form of wage statistics compiled by the Ministry of Industry in Nanjing, also tends to quote low, high and average wage figures for workers in the various handcraft industries in Suzhou. These are the Ministry of Industry's *Zhongguo laodong nianjian* (1932) wage figures for Suzhou. Where more than one wage figure is given for male, female or juvenile workers in any one industry, (h) stands for the highest wage, (a) for the average wage and (l) for the lowest wage. An asterisk denotes food supplied by the shop. Wages are expressed in cents per day.

### TABLE 4.2

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<td>*3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*47 (a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The impression of wide diversity in handcraft workers’ wages given by the statistics quoted above not only contradicts the persistent references to what appear to be trade-wide piece rates in the less systematic but more detailed conciliation and arbitration files of the Suzhou and Tianjin Chambers of Commerce, it also gives the opposite impression to that given by Fang Xianting in the Nankai Institute series of single industry studies. Duan Benluo’s *Suzhou shougongye shi* (History of handcraft industry in Suzhou) of 1986 quotes uniform trade-wide piece rates for weaving of different types of plain and figured silk in the late Qing. Duan cites these as evidence of protectionist guild regulation acting with "feudal" land ownership relations and international economic pressures to retard the growth of Chinese capitalism.27
However Zhu Hongyong, writing in *Suzhou jingji shiliao* in the same year, quotes trade wide piece rates for weaving of figured silk in 1916.28

When wage figures appear in the Suzhou and Tianjin Chambers’ correspondence on disputes and strikes in handcraft industries, they are invariably not ascribed to a particular shop or shops but by implication to all workers in the trade. Whenever a wage rise was granted, the same amount was granted to all workers in the trade. It is possible, though unlikely in view of industrial bargaining practice in other times and places, that workers earning different amounts were awarded wage increases of the same size. The examples quoted below are only those in which the sources make some reference to existing wages, as distinct from the size of the increase asked for or awarded.

In the course of a Xiazhang-Yunjin wage dispute in 1909, for instance, in which "several thousand" silk weavers took part, the zhangfang, represented by the Yunjin guild, offered to go on paying the workers their existing wages in copper cash but to fix the copper-silver exchange rate (workers could exchange their copper for silver at the zhangfang if they wished) at a uniform 5 cash below the market rate.29 In November 1911, shortly after the Wuchang uprising, the rate per foot of plain silk was raised by six cash, and the rate for figured silk by ten cash.30 In June 1920, Wu county offered striking silk weavers "a temporary rice subsidy over the basic piece rate".31 In April 1927, immediately after the Guomindang established control in Suzhou, an agreement between Yunjin and the new "wooden loom weavers’ union", which had replaced Xiazhang, gave wooden loom weavers an across the board 20% wage rise. Shortly afterwards, an agreement between the new iron loom weavers’ union, representing weavers in the newly established powered filatures, and the filature guild [*tieji sizhi gonghui*] awarded a 30% wage rise to weavers and a 40% rise to auxiliary workers.32 Early in 1928, a zhangfang owner reported in response to enquiries from Yunjin: "This year changes in silk products have been made .... The workers find the improved products harder to make than the old ones. So the high quality products are paid for at a higher piece rate".33 In February 1935, the accepted rate of pay for *ling ji zhi hu*, silk

28. Zhu Hongyong, "Jindai Suzhou sichou shengchan de yange yu fazhan xingshuai" (The origin, rise and fall of modern silk production in Suzhou) in *Suzhou jingji shiliao* (Sources on Suzhou’s economic history), published by the *Suzhou wenshi ziliao* Committee of the Political Consultative Committee of Suzhou as *Suzhou wenshi ziliao* (Suzhou Historical Records of Past Events), no.18, p.20.

29. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi)2-1 251, (Yi)2-1 300, Suzhou City Archives.


31. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi)2-1 659, (Yi)2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.
weavers who did not own a loom but rented one from the zhangfang for which they wove to order, was 30c silver per standard foot. When some zhangfang responded to a market slump by paying less, the weavers assembled in a teahouse and voted to accept a cut to 27c, but no less.34

In 1919, following a wage dispute in the lacquer industry, the Danhuo lacquer dealers’ guild changed the currency in which wages were paid from copper to silver, and the standard daily wage of 260 wen became 25c da yang.35 In March 1924, the Danhuo Guild proposed that all lacquer workers in Suzhou should be paid by weight of lacquer sold, at 20c per jin. The Danhuo Guild added that this system of payment was used in Hangzhou, Jiaxing, Huzhou and Wuxi. In the course of a further wage dispute three months later, the guild protested that "... lacquer workers' wages have always been more or less the same as bricklayers' wages. Now they are paid 28c (daily, in silver), and the bricklayers only 23c. Industrial conflict in other trades will follow ...".36 Though the Danhuo Guild's expressed fear of causing a bricklayers' strike may have been specious, the statement indicates that standard wage rates operated in both the lacquer and construction industries, that these wage rates were generally known even to people outside the trades concerned, and that deviation from the standard wage by employers could be expected to cause industrial conflict.

In 1920, as a result of a wage dispute in the building industry, wages for bricklayers and carpenters [shui mu liang zuo] were fixed at 260 cash in both xiao hang and da hang.37 In October 1932, workers in several wooden bucket and bowl shops in Tianjin petitioned their employers for a wage rise, saying that workers in other branches of carpentry earned 60c-70c per day but they earned only 35c. They asked for a 10c rise.38 In January 1926, 600 or so candle makers struck for a wage rise from 9.6 yuan per month to 10 yuan.39 The number of shops involved in the strike is not specified, but there were over 100 of them in Suzhou in June 1935.40 In April, there was a two day tailors' strike for a 25% wage rise. They were offered 10%.41 The schedule of the silk

32. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.
33. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.
35. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 855, Suzhou City Archives.
36. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi)2-1 854, (Yi)2-1 855, Suzhou City Archives.
37. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 658, Suzhou City Archives.
border guild (sibian gongsuo), as of 1928, contained a scale of piece rates to be paid "for work on large and small machines".\textsuperscript{42} The same appears to have been true of the tailors' guild [cheng yi ye gongsuo] in 1921, and trade-wide piece rates for Tianjin tailors are quoted by the Bureau of Social Affairs in 1929.\textsuperscript{43}

In the Chinese pharmacies in Suzhou, an agreement between the pharmacy workers' union and the Taihe pharmacist's guild in 1928 refers to a standard wage settled in February 1927.\textsuperscript{44} A similar agreement between the pharmacists' and pharmacy workers' associations mediated by the Bureau of Social Affairs in Tianjin early in 1929 sets out a scale of wages and increments to apply in all shops.\textsuperscript{45} A contract signed in 1931 between Suzhou incense workers and dealers fixed the piece rate at 30c for a tray [luo] of 27 sheets [zhang] of incense.\textsuperscript{46} During a dispute in Tianjin shoe shops in August 1921, three shop owners whose workers were on strike protested to the Chamber of Commerce that wages should be uniform in all shoe shops and could not be raised without the consent of the Shoe Merchants' Study Society.\textsuperscript{47}

Most significant in this context is the remark of the chairman of the Yunjin zhangfang guild in February 1928, "We have guaranteed that employers will abide by a certain set of conditions, but have no power to force them to do so".\textsuperscript{48} This meant that it was accepted that all employers in the silk trade paid standard wages, and that this took place not because of active policing by the Yunjin guild, which had no effective power to enforce wage levels, but because the practical social conditions under which the manufacture and sale of silk cloth took place actually favoured a standard wage rate against free variation of wages by zhangfang owners.

The conciliation and arbitration files of the Suzhou and Tianjin Chambers of Commerce and the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs give an impression of wage uniformity that contradicts the available wage survey statistics. One possible explanation is that the figures from Tianjin for wages in individual shops do not reflect

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42. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1442, Suzhou City Archives.
43. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 669, Suzhou City Archives; \textit{Tianjin shi zhangfu gongbao}, March 1929, p.193; \textit{Tianjin shi shehui ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao}, pp.307-308.
44. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1448, Suzhou City Archives.
46. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1450, Suzhou City Archives.
47. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.
48. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.
a fixed, monthly wage but the workers' earnings for the month in which the survey was taken, which if the workers were paid by the piece would vary according to the amount of business done in the shop. Another is that these figures represent wages paid to workers in different occupations within the trade. If one or both of these hypotheses were true, it would be possible for substantial variation in workers' actual monthly incomes, as expressed in the Tianjin wage survey figures, to coexist with effective uniform rates of pay for all occupations in the trade. As neither the Bureau of Social Affairs nor the business journals indicate how their wage statistics were assembled, a certain degree of doubt must remain about wage uniformity in the handcraft industries.

Fang Xianting's Nankai series of single industry studies, which by way of welcome contrast make clear exactly what is meant by tables of wages, offers support for the idea that what is in fact measured in the Bureau of Social Affairs' wage tables and those published in the business journals (some of which quote the Bureau) is not wages but earnings. In Rayon and cotton weaving in Tientsin (1930), for example, a table is provided of standard, differential piece rates for weaving of 18 types of cotton and rayon cloth. However, the next table, a survey of the monthly wages of 301 weavers chosen at random, shows monthly earnings ranging from 8 to 20 yuan. Fang states that these 301 workers "are mostly paid on [the] piece rate basis, although a small number are paid under the mixed system of time and piece rates". 49

The pay system in the old fashioned flour mills or mofang was similar. Both the Nankai study of 1930 and the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce files quote trade wide piece rates per picul [jin] for milling of wheat and maize, and workers’ earnings varied not with the generosity of the employer but with the amount of business done in the shop. 50 In each of these industries, food and sleeping quarters, though sleeping quarters might amount to a space on the shop floor, were provided by the employer, so that the workers’ subsistence was formally guaranteed if there was no work to be done, though workshop owners did not support unemployed employees indefinitely. Though the Nankai studies do not confirm that variation of workers’ monthly wages from shop to shop in all handcraft industries was caused by difference in the amount of work done, not different rates of pay, they do indicate that variation in the monthly wage could and did coexist with effective trade-wide piece rates.

In The Tientsin carpet industry, while Fang indicates that the carpet weavers were paid by the gong, or standard day's work, and that the gong consisted of a

49. H.D. Fong (Fang Xianting), Rayon and cotton weaving in Tientsin, pp.56-58.
50. H.D. Fong (Fang Xianting), "Grain trade and milling in Tientsin", in the Nankai Institute of Economics Industry Series Bulletin no.7, p.602; Tianjin Chamber of
uniformly defined area of carpet of a particular number of threads per foot: 9 inches x 1 foot of 90 thread carpet, for instance; there is no indication of whether or not there were trade-wide rates of pay. Carpet weavers’ monthly earnings varied from 4 to 11 yuan. Fang does state that some factories surveyed (about one-third) paid their weavers full or part wages during national holidays while the others did not, and that there was some variation in the amount of money paid to apprentices on their graduation. In the brocade weaving workshops, though it is stated clearly that trade-wide piece rates applied, there was some irregularity in working hours and holidays. In terms of the variation in working conditions apart from wages and of lack of formal organisation, which will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter, the Tianjin handcraft industries surveyed by Nankai fall between the more economically important of the Suzhou handcraft industries and the factory industries. This is most likely to be a consequence of these industries being new industries in a rapidly growing city, industries in which the great majority of both workers and owners came from elsewhere, in contrast to the state of affairs in Suzhou. As suggested at the close of Chapter 2, trade guilds, with their regulatory capacity, have some influence over wages paid by guild members. However, the power of guilds to regulate wages, or prices, is dependent on stability in business conditions. Rapid growth of an urban centre, in the same way as technological or organisational change in industry, tends to make regulation of wages and prices both unnecessary and unenforceable, and Suzhou was a much more stable business environment, in this sense, than Tianjin. Of the Tianjin handcraft industries in which there is the most indirect evidence of trade wide wage rates, one - traditional flour mills - had an unusually active guild, and the others - brocade weaving and carpet weaving - had the greatest number of industrial disputes. This point will be developed further in Section 3.

3. Number of factories or shops in each dispute.

The argument outlined in the introduction to this dissertation would predict that strikes and disputes in the factory industries, in which the work force was not highly mobile, access to employment was restricted by "traditional" requirements of personal familiarity and loyalty, and different wages and conditions applied in each factory, would tend to be confined to single factories, while in the handcraft industries, in which the reverse conditions obtained, strikes and disputes would tend to spread. If wages were uniform across the trade, workers would have good reason to lend their support to

Commerce file 3 lei/242, Tianjin City Archives.

a wage claim which had begun at another shop, while in the new factories they stood to gain nothing. If access to employment depended more on patronage than skill, not only would workers tend to be cautious about antagonising their superiors, the timing of wage and other demands would depend closely on shifts of personal and factional power within the factory, and a strike at one factory would not readily translate to another.

The evidence from Suzhou and Tianjin in fact lends strong support to this line of argument. In the Tianjin cotton mills, 7 out of 62 disputes and strikes were clear cases of joint or simultaneous and sympathetic action. In the flour mills, the Guomindang flour mill workers’ union prosecuted a joint wage claim at three of the six mills in Tianjin on one occasion out of 14 disputes. In the match factories in Tianjin and Suzhou, out of a total of 18 disputes, there was one occasion (affecting what have been counted in Chapter 3 as three separate disputes) in which the Tianjin match factory workers’ union conducted joint negotiations with representatives from the Beiyang, Rongchang and Danhua factories and the Bureau of Social Affairs when the three factories all ceased production between January and March, 1934, although the management of each factory acted on its own initiative and not in response to any joint action by the workers. Rawski (1989) has attested that the match industry as a whole was in a good deal of trouble due to overexpansion and a new Guomindang tax in the first half of 1934, and separate and distinct terms of settlement were eventually worked out at each factory.

The relative frequency of single enterprise and multiple enterprise disputes is reversed in the handcraft industries. The numbers of single enterprise and multiple enterprise disputes in the various handcraft industries are expressed in the table below:

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52. *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, March 1932, zhiling (order) no.1168; Ministry of Industry file 711(4)05511, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; Dong, 1985, p.139.

TABLE 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number of single enterprise disputes</th>
<th>Total number of disputes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brushes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckets &amp; bowls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese medicine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton carding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton weaving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupboards &amp; benches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyeing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold &amp; silver</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incense</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironworking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade &amp; crystal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint &amp; lacquer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper &amp; cardboard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk borders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk weaving</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocking knitting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemasonry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The totals are 41 single enterprise disputes and 95 multiple enterprise disputes out of a total of 136 disputes. This compares with 83 single enterprise disputes out of a total of 94 disputes in the cotton mills, flour mills and match factories.

Two important qualifications of these figures have to be made before they are analysed further. The question of what is a single enterprise dispute and what is a multiple enterprise dispute is not as inherently ambiguous as, for example, the question of what is a strike about wages. Three possible areas of doubt are how to treat strikes at more than one factory if the factories are owned by the same company, how to treat "sympathy" strikes against treatment of workers at one particular factory if workers in other factories did not make demands from their own employers but merely called for punishment of the employer or reinstatement or release of sacked or arrested workers, and how to treat "catch-up" claims for wage rises or union membership if there is no simultaneous action at other factories but the workers making the demands refer to terms recently awarded at other factories. In the first case, I have counted the Huaxin cotton mill dispute of April 1934, in which Tianjin Huaxin workers went out in sympathy with striking workers at the Tangshan Huaxin mill, as a multiple enterprise
dispute. In the second case, I have counted the Suzhou cotton carders’ strike of October 1926, in which over 300 carders employed at various small shops went out after one cotton carder was handed over to the police by his employer for asking for a wage rise, and the employers eventually conceded a trade-wide wage rise of 2.5c per jin, as a multiple enterprise dispute. In the third case, I have counted all catch-up claims as single enterprise disputes, unless related claims were being negotiated at different factories at the same time by the same organisations. I have taken this, the negotiation of related claims at different factories or workshops at the same time through the same organisations, as the definition of a multiple enterprise strike. In Appendices 1 to 4, I have indicated whether each dispute or strike included in the data has been counted as single or multiple enterprise.

Apart from the means of distinguishing between single and multiple enterprise disputes, the main uncertainty about the accuracy of the figures above is caused by the language in which the Suzhou and Tianjin Chambers of Commerce industrial correspondence is written. The Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Industry in Nanjing usually indicated exactly how many workers in how many factories or shops took part in each dispute. The Chambers of Commerce, however, tended to say things like "Incense makers in Suzhou, because their wages are low and they have trouble making ends meet, have called for a wage rise", without specifying either numbers of workers or numbers of shops, or naming any individual shops. Singular and plural need not be distinguished in Chinese. When a number of workers is given, it tends to be imprecise though large, such as "more than 300" or "more than 2,000". If the Chamber of Commerce files are read literally, some of the accounts of disputes and strikes on which this chapter is based are perfectly ambiguous about whether one or many shops were affected.

In practice, most of the accounts of disputes and strikes to which this applies ended in the drafting of trade-wide agreements on wages and conditions by the local government and the guild(s) concerned, and can not reasonably be regarded as single enterprise disputes. In the other cases where no information of this kind is provided, I have assumed that the failure of the Chamber of Commerce to name an individual employer means that several employers or employers in general were affected. Some doubt about the soundness of this assumption must remain. The sources for each account of each dispute are listed in Appendices 1 to 4, and I have indicated in each case whether or not there is any explicit reference to how many factories or workshops

were involved.

As well as indicating that single enterprise strikes were more frequent in the factory industries, and multiple enterprise strikes were more frequent in the handcraft industries, the figures above show other significant patterns if the exceptions to the majority trends – multiple enterprise strikes in the big factories, and single enterprise strikes in the workshops – are examined. Concerning the Tianjin cotton mills, I have stated above that 7 out of 62 disputes and strikes were multiple enterprise disputes. These numbers reflect the way the disputes are recorded in the contemporary sources, and the way the contemporary sources recorded the disputes concerned, as one event or separately, in turn varies according to whether a legal Guomindang union or an illegal Communist union was involved in the organisation of the strike or presentation of demands. In fact there were four occasions, in 1925, 1926, 1933 and 1934, in which workers in separate cotton mills acted jointly or in sympathy.

Communist unions were responsible for the presentation of the workers' demands in the first two cases. The newspapers and the files of the United States consulate in Tianjin report each incident at each factory separately, merely intimating that "Communist agitators" were behind the workers' actions. Only post-1949 sources and the oral testimony of ex-workers in Hershatter (1986) indicate that there was an overall plan of action, and that the same individuals, namely student Party workers recruiting cotton mill workers into CCP unions from a workers' night school in the case of Tianjin, were responsible for the organisation of Communist unions in each factory and attempted, without much success in the case of Yuda, to coordinate the actions of the Communist unions in each factory.56

In April 1933, the managements of all six cotton mills agreed collectively to lower wages and abolish paid holidays in order to deal with a slump in yarn prices. This was the one outstanding case of coordinated action by the Tianjin cotton mill managements, who otherwise seemed to prefer to set their own terms. Unions at all 6 mills were involved in joint negotiations which resulted in the pay cut being reduced, though the paid holidays were still lost. As the unions involved were legally existing Guomindang unions, the course of the negotiations was recorded in full detail in the 

\[Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao.\]57 In the remaining instance in April 1934, though the

Guomindang union was not involved and opposed the strike, Huaxin workers in Tianjin struck in sympathy with Huaxin workers in Tangshan. I have merely followed the contemporary sources in recording the 1925 and 1926 events as separate rather than single disputes, and could with equal consistency say there were 4 multiple enterprise disputes out of a total of 59. Either way the great preponderance of single-enterprise disputes remains.

In the modern flour mills, one dispute out of 14 is an unambiguous case of joint action at three separate enterprises. There is nothing obvious in the course of the dispute to distinguish it from the other 13; it began with a wage claim by the workers and finished with a partial wage rise (for some workers) and the return to work of 7 of 14 workers who had been sacked for their part in organising the wage claim. The only distinguishing characteristic is the action of the flour industry union (Mianfenye chanye gonghui) in presenting a list of claims relating to wages and conditions at three mills at once. What is most interesting about this dispute, which took place in the Fuxing, Minfeng and Jiarui mills in June to July 1932, is that in some respects it was intermediate between the typical single-enterprise wage claim in the modern factories and the typical collective wage claim in the handcraft industries. Three of the six Tianjin flour mills took part and three stayed quiet. Though the flour industry union acted on behalf of workers at all these three mills, it called for "workers at Fuxing to receive at least 1 yuan per month more". Workers at Minfeng initiated a slowdown, the others worked as usual while waiting for the outcome of negotiations. The eventual terms of settlement provided for differential pay rises. Minfeng workers received 1 yuan more, Fuxing workers received 50c to 70c more and Jiarui workers received no pay rise, though the factory took back 7 of the 14 bad elements who had been sacked. Though these differential pay rises very likely reflected different states of financial health in the three factories, the fact that they were granted reflects the quite different balance of power and autonomy between the Bureau of Social Affairs, the flour mills and the flour mill workers on the one hand, and the Wu county Guomindang branch, the Yunjin Guild and the Suzhou silk weavers on the other. Some zhangfang owners were certainly better off than others.

In the match factories, there was again only one dispute out of 18 in which workers in more than one factory took part in joint negotiations meant to take effect in each factory. Like the Tianjin cotton mill wage-cutting dispute of April 1933, it originated in response to the actions of the Beiyang, Danhua and Rongchang match

57.  

Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, May-June 1933, gonghan (public notice) no.313; Records of the United States Department of State relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939, despatch 893:00TT/59; Dong, 1985, p.161.
factories, which either closed or prepared to close in January and February 1934 under the impact of what is attested by Rawski (1989) as a crisis in the match industry. The negotiations, aimed at persuading the managements to keep the factories open or at least secure the most favourable terms of dismissal possible for the workers under the circumstances, were conducted by the match industry union [huochaiye chanye gonghui]. As in the Tianjin cotton mill wage-cutting dispute, and the wage campaign in the Tianjin flour mills in June 1932, different terms of settlement were accepted at different factories, according to the Guomindang authorities’ perception of the different economic conditions in each factory.

To sum up, two of the six multiple enterprise disputes in the modern factory industries took place under the active leadership and the apparent protection of Communist Party unions. Guomindang unions did not function in this way to spread the scope of a dispute or strike beyond the bounds of a single enterprise. Unlike the Communist unions, which sought to involve as many enterprises as were within their scope in campaigns for better wages and conditions, for the interlinked aims of raising the workers’ living standards, securing their loyalty to the Communist Party and attempting to create a revolutionary situation, the aim and practice of the Guomindang unions was to regulate and contain industrial conflict. Whether a settlement of a strike or dispute mediated by the Guomindang favoured the employers or the workers appeared to vary according to whether or not the employer(s) had resisted the Guomindang union apparatus’ efforts to unionise the workers, and whether or not the workers had kept within the bounds of action set for them by the Guomindang. Two of the multiple enterprise disputes involving Guomindang unions were responses to multiple factory closures or production cuts initiated by the employers at times of falling profits throughout the trade, and the other, the flour mills wage campaign of 1932, in view of the events which preceded and followed it in the various flour mills, can be seen as the effort of a relatively strong union to contest the employers’ opposition to unionisation, with the tacit approval of the Guomindang. The remaining dispute, the sympathy strike at Huaxin in April 1934, which aroused the opposition of the Guomindang and was defeated, is probably best understood in terms of the complex internal politics of the Huaxin mill.

Examination of the single enterprise disputes in the handcraft industries brings to light three more patterns. One is that there were relatively more of them in Tianjin than in Suzhou. Another is that the proportion of security of employment claims in single enterprise disputes in the workshop industries was greater than the proportion of security of employment claims to other claims in workshop industry disputes as a whole. Still another is that those single enterprise disputes that were concerned with
wages, rather than security of employment, tended to take place in response to the employer cutting wages, or taking some other action independently of other employers, which was opposed by the workers.

Out of the total of 41 single enterprise disputes in the workshop industries, 20 took place in Tianjin and 21 in Suzhou. The relative proportions of the total number of 136 workshop industry disputes are 98 to 38 in favour of Suzhou. There was clearly some factor, or a complex of factors, about the two cities as cities that caused single industry disputes in workshop industries to happen more often in Tianjin. The explanation that I propose here is the comparative weakness of guild structure in Tianjin. In Suzhou, almost every dispute mentioned in the Chamber of Commerce files was mediated through a trade guild, or in some cases, two guilds or even three. Below is a table of Suzhou trades mentioned in the industrial arbitration files of the Suzhou Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Industry with their respective guilds.

**TABLE 4.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Guilds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>Yunjin gongsuo (zhangfang owners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xiazhang gongsuo (journeymen weavers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wenjin gongsuo (self-employed weavers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton cloth</td>
<td>Shangshi buye gongsuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyeworks</td>
<td>Yinhua gongsuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade &amp; crystal</td>
<td>Zhujing yuye tongye gonghui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton carding</td>
<td>Danhua gongsuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk bordering</td>
<td>Sibian gongsuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Yunzhangchengyiye gongsuo (original guild)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xin yiye gongsuo (founded 1921 to represent journeymen tailors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xi yiye gongsuo (theatrical costumers' guild)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint &amp; lacquer</td>
<td>Danhuo gongsuo (employers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xingshan gongsuo (journeymen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese medicine</td>
<td>Taihe gongsuo</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Ziyi gongsuo</td>
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<tr>
<td>(shui mu zuo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incense</td>
<td>Xiangye gongsuo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charcoal</td>
<td>Kunzhen gongsuo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candles</td>
<td>Guyue gongsuo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>Yizheng gongsuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>Luye gonghui</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The dyers’ guild (yinhua gongsuo) is referred to in Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 299, Suzhou City Archives. For the jewellers’ guild (Zhujing yuye tongye gonghui); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1445. For the cotton carders’ guild (danhua gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 300. For the silk borderers’ guild (sibian gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1442. For the new journeymen tailors’ guild (xin yiye gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 669. For the theatrical costumers’ guild (xiyiye gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1448. For the paint and lacquer (employers’) guild (Danhuo gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 854. For the Chinese medicine guild (Taihe gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 669. For the charcoal burners’ guild (Kunzhen gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 949. For the candle makers’ guild (Guyue gongsuo); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1447. For the shoemakers’ guild (luye gonghui); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1447. A list of other guilds appears in Duan Benluo, *Suzhou shougongye shi* (The history of handcraft industry in Suzhou), Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986, pp.311-317.

Duan (1986) traces several of these guilds to the reigns of Tongzhi and Guangxu, and points out that guild organisation in Suzhou existed under the Song; the reason so many Suzhou guilds traced their origins to the reign of Tongzhi was that all guild organisations in Suzhou dispersed or collapsed during the Taiping Tian Guo, and
were reorganised after the re-establishment of Qing authority in 1864.58

The state of affairs in Tianjin was quite different. No names of guilds appear in the files of the Bureau of Social Affairs. The only employers’ associations that the Bureau corresponded with, apart from national modern industry associations such as the Chinese Cotton Mill Owners’ Association, were those established by the Guomindang itself. The Chamber of Commerce arbitration files mention only tailors’ and shoemakers’ "study societies", founded in the first years of the Republic.59 The Sanjin Mofang Guild appears to have been a striking exception to the generally under-organised state of Tianjin industry. Fang Xianting’s Nankai studies comment on the weakness or absence of guilds in the carpet weaving, brocade weaving and hosiery knitting industries, though these latter were new trades. A Weavers’ and Dyers’ Association was first formed in 1914, officially registered in 1918, dissolved in 1928 and again in 1929.60 A Carpet Manufacturers’ Association was founded in 1924, but declined in membership year by year and by 1929 existed in name only.61 The hosiery knitting establishments went without organisation.62 So did the ironworking and machine-building shops in Sintiaoshi studied by Hershatter.63

The most likely explanation for this is that unlike Suzhou, where various handcraft industries had been practised for centuries and had had ample time for the local entrepreneurs to organise themselves into guilds, the workshop industries of Tianjin were the products of the sudden growth of the city after it became a treaty port in 1860. Even those trades which were based on existing Chinese technology, like the ironworking and carpet weaving establishments, remained unorganised. This could have been because the small employers and artisans concerned had all come to Tianjin from somewhere else, their supply of raw materials was not fixed and customary and the market for their products was not fixed and was steadily expanding in scope; because Tianjin was a much larger city and was growing quickly compared to Suzhou, the nature of business transacted and the identity of the suppliers of raw materials and buyers of finished ones varied so much and so unpredictably from shop to shop that the shop owners saw little point in organising themselves into guilds. The need to regulate access to stable markets was not nearly as pressing as in Suzhou. If it is assumed that

59. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce files 2 lei/1414, 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.
60. H.D. Fong, Rayon and cotton weaving in Tientsin, pp.30-31.
61. H.D. Fong, Tientsin carpet industry, pp.61-63.
62. H.D. Fong, Hosiery knitting in Tientsin, p.66.
the smallest and newest industries in the most volatile social environments are under the least pressure to standardise prices and wages, handcraft industry can be seen as a continuum from the least standardised, represented by some of the smaller Tianjin industries featured in the wage tables in Section 2, to the most standardised, represented by the major handcraft industries in Suzhou.

The effect of the relative guildlessness of Tianjin workshop industries on the scope of industrial conflict was often to limit it. A single enterprise dispute in an industry composed of many small workshops located close together can be seen as a potential multiple enterprise dispute that has failed to spread. In fact some of the multiple enterprise disputes in Suzhou came about in response to events taking place at a single shop. There was the silk weavers' strike of 1907, which took place after a weaver was arrested for debt to a zhangfang owner, was put in the cangue and died in prison. The silk weavers' strikes of August 1918 and June 1920 took place in response to the failure of certain zhangfang to grant wage rises authorised by the Yunjin and Xiazhang Guilds. The cotton carders' strike of October 1926 followed the arrest of one cotton carder who had asked for a wage rise. In September 1934, when the owner of the Tongshengyu incense shop sacked the entire workforce, a delegation representing the entire incense trade went to the Suzhou party branch to protest. This sort of thing scarcely happened in Tianjin. The mass walkout of workers at the Baocheng, Beiyang and Yuyuan cotton mills after the massacre at Yuda in August 1925 is the only clear instance of this, and it took place in one of the factory industries. The existence of a guild, which not only set a uniform official standard for wages and conditions but provided handcraft workers with a channel for information and sometimes with a place to meet, appears to be a real factor in cases like those above.

Handcraft industry workers made claims related to security of employment, defined as in the first part of this chapter, in 18 out of the 41 single enterprise workshop industry disputes. This is considerably higher than the corresponding proportion of 40 out of 171 counting all workshop industry disputes, or 32 out of 136 not counting those in workshops using recently imported technology. This indicates a correspondence between single enterprise scope and defensive response by the workers to conditions.

65. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi)2-1 669, (Yi)2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.
Nineteen of the 41 single enterprise workshop industry disputes began when the workers made an organised protest against wage cuts, the actions of a supervisor or foreman, or new work rules issued by the management. Fourteen began as protests against sackings, closing of workshops or exclusion of union members from work. The initial cause of conflict is unknown in 3 cases. Only 5 disputes began with a wage claim initiated by the workers. The corresponding proportion of disputes initiated by the workers, or in which the origin is not stated, out of all workshop industry disputes is 73 out of 136. (There were four disputes, three of them single enterprise disputes, in which the origin of the dispute can not be inferred.) The categories of "disputes initiated by the workers" and "disputes caused by action of the management" again can not be considered mutually exclusive. I have assumed here that the distinction is a close enough indication of the workers' confidence of success to be worth making. What it shows is that in the workshop industries, single enterprise disputes are more likely to be defensive ones.

To sum up, the most common kind of workshop industry dispute was a multiple enterprise dispute in which workers took action either in order to secure an agreement on wages and conditions that would cover the whole industry, or in response to some action taken by an employer or employers which potentially affected the whole industry. The typical factory industry dispute was a single enterprise dispute.

4. Strikes and protests on behalf of sacked workers.

If the different characteristics of industrial conflict in factory industries and workshop industries are caused by workers' access to jobs being significantly more contingent on personal contacts in factory industries than in workshop industries, strikes and protests on behalf of workers who had been sacked should happen relatively more often in factory industries. This is because being sacked was potentially a more serious matter in the factory industries. While it was true that factory workers who objected to the sacking of colleagues risked their own jobs – it was not unusual for the management to deal with demands from the workers by identifying and sacking the ringleaders and giving everyone else a wage rise – it can be argued that they acted not only out of solidarity but according to basic self-interest, in order to establish a precedent. The number of times "No sacking without cause" appears in the course of arbitration gives weight to this view of solidarity disputes. Also, the (almost always) untraceable but, as indicated by Hershatter and Honig's work, very forceful operation of networks of patronage and loyalty could be expected sometimes to cause factory workers to take
certain risks. In the workshop industries, because the possession of a recognised skill made the workers more mobile and because the relatively great number of small masters in each trade and the alternative of self-employment made dismissal more of a nuisance than a threat, the logic of defensive solidarity would not have operated.

As with all other distinctions between one kind of industrial dispute and another that I have made in this chapter, the distinction between workers presenting demands to employers due to concern for other workers or due to concern for themselves can not be considered absolute. As implied above, there is an element of self-preservation in solidarity strikes. Also, claims for reinstatement of sacked workers were occasionally presented as part of a list of claims including others concerning wages and conditions. What I have assumed here is that the number of times that the workers, or the union, explicitly called for the reinstatement of workers who had been sacked is related to the difficulty workers in the industry concerned had in finding other means of support after being sacked. I have counted all demands for reinstatement of sacked workers by other workers or the union, as long as the factory or workshop remained open, as solidarity claims, no matter how many workers were concerned. I have not counted demands for the release of workers who had been arrested for their part in industrial action, unless the other workers or the union specifically called for their reinstatement at work.

In the Tianjin cotton mills, demands for the reinstatement of workers who had been sacked were made in eighteen out of the 62 industrial disputes. They were made in 4 out of 14 disputes in the modern flour mills, and 3 out of 18 in the match factories. Taking the three factory industries together, the proportion is 25 out of 94, or 26.6%. In the Suzhou silk filatures, demands for the reinstatement of sacked workers took place in 2 out of 44 disputes, or 4.5%. If all the handcraft industry disputes in Appendix $, including those in the silk industry, are counted together, the proportion is 11 out of 136, or 8.1%. If brocade weaving and hosiery knitting are counted as handcraft industries, the proportion is 17 out of 171, or 9.9%. Though there were more claims for reinstatement of sacked workers in the factory industries than in the handcraft industries, the difference in frequency is not extreme.

If all claims for reinstatement of sacked workers are examined according to how many workers were sacked each time, and why, further signs of a general difference between factory and workshop industries start to emerge. I have distinguished three kinds of reasons for sacking of workers; economic, political, and work-related. A work-related dismissal was one in which the worker(s) concerned were dismissed for ineffective performance or for failing to perform the tasks they were employed to perform. An economic dismissal was one in which the performance of the worker(s)
was adequate as far as the management was concerned, but the factory or workshop was losing money and coped with rising debts and falling profits by cutting its wage bill. A political dismissal was one in which the job performance was not faulted, but the worker(s) obstructed or challenged the authority of the management over the workers. This could be done by joining a union (both Communist and Guomindang unions brought on active resistance by employers), by asking for a wage rise or otherwise taking part in industrial action, by arguing with a foreman about the nature and distribution of work to be done, or by objecting to the sacking of other workers.

There are obvious questions raised by the use of such a scheme of categories. It can reasonably be argued that work-related sackings were in fact economic, because the factory could not afford to waste time and material by employing workers who made mistakes. It can be argued that economic sackings were in fact political, in that they took place only because the relations of power within the factory were what they were, and contemporary notions of the legitimate exercise of the power of management were what they were; the owners of the enterprise were authorised to pass the cost of overproduction or of the occupation of the Northeast by Japan on to the workers, and did so. It can also be argued that political sackings were both work-related and economic. From the management's point of view, a worker who argued the point or demanded more money was an inefficient one who cost the enterprise money. However, while the three categories tend to overlap when considered from the angle of what the employers' long term interests were, or what they understood their long-term interests to be, they are quite distinct when seen from the angle of what motivated the employers to sack workers in each case.

Economic sackings were responses to debts and falling profits. Political sackings were responses to deliberate attempts to limit or challenge the authority of the employer. Work related sackings were responses to somebody wasting material or causing a machine to break down. While economic sackings were invariably large scale reductions of the size of the work force, political and work related sackings most often affected one or a few workers. The workers responded, when they did respond, to different kinds of threats to their continued employment, or to their colleagues' unemployment, with different strategies of argument or protest. If it were a case of economic sacking, they would argue that the factory was not in fact bankrupt and could well afford to keep all the workers on. If it was work related, they would argue that the foreman or supervisor was prejudiced and had acted "without reason". If it was a case of political sacking, the response of the workers varied with the political context.

In the Guomindang period, the workers would protest to the local Party branch
or the Bureau of Social Affairs, through the medium of the union if there was one, that
the employer was discriminating against union members or opposed the Three People's
Principles. If there was a Communist union, it would publicise the event in leaflets or
by word of mouth and attempt to give force to the workers' demands by escalating the
dispute as far as possible. If there was neither a Guomindang nor a Communist union
but there was a trade guild, as in most trades in Suzhou before the Guomindang took
power, the workers appeared to follow both of these strategies. They would engage in
trade-wide industrial action while at the same time protesting the injustice of the one or
more employer' actions to the local government and the Chamber of Commerce. I have
assumed here that the distinction between economic, political and work-related sackings
is real enough to be worth making.

Four of the eighteen strikes and disputes brought on by sacking of workers in the
Tianjin cotton mills were responses to economic sackings. Six of them were responses
to political sackings, and eight of them to work-related sackings. In the modern flour
mills, there were two protests against economic sackings and two protests against
political sackings. In the match factories, there was one of each kind. Taking the three
factory industries together, there were seven protests against large-scale economic
sackings, nine against small-scale political sackings and nine against small-scale work-
related sackings. In the handcraft industries, taken together, there were two protests
against large-scale economic sackings, eleven protests against political sackings and
two against work-related sackings. If the hosiery knitting and brocade weaving factory
disputes are subtracted, there were two protests against economic sackings, seven
protests against political sackings and two protests against work-related sackings.

The implication is that workers in handcraft industries were less likely than
workers in factory industries to take issue with an employer who claimed to be driven
by economic necessity to reduce the size of the work force. They were also less likely
than workers in factory industries to take part in industrial action on behalf of a fellow
worker who had been sacked on a charge of inefficiency. They tended to protest the
sacking of other workers only when the employer's motive was explicitly political.

In fact, some doubt is expressed in the Guomindang's industrial arbitration
records of the two disputes in which handcraft workers were sacked for inefficiency
about whether or not the employers were politically motivated. One of these disputes
concerns the sacking of a single worker from the Longshunrong medicine shop in
Tianjin in April 1929. The pharmacy workers' union argued that the worker, Zhu
Zhigui, had been discriminated against because of union membership. The shop
manager said Zhu had been sacked previously, and had been taken back on his word
that he had reformed. However he persistently neglected his duties, and talked, played
chess and made political speeches during working hours. The manager declared he would personally rather go bankrupt than continue to employ Zhu. Longshunrong had been one of the shops named in the trade-wide dispute over terms of employment sparked off by the founding of the Guomindang union in December 1928, which brought about the sacking of several dozen pharmacy workers and an unsuccessful campaign for the deregistration of the union. It was charged with discriminatory sacking of union members in January 1929 by the Bureau of Social Affairs.69

The other, also in Tianjin and also in the period immediately following the establishment of Guomindang unions, took place when five workers were sacked from each of two gold and silverware workshops, Meifeng and Hengli, in March 1929. The gold and silversmiths’ union accused both shops of discrimination against union members. Hengli declared the five workers had been sacked by a foreman who had since been sacked himself, and would have first rights to re-employment. The Meifeng management said one had been sacked for fighting, and the others were under contract to a foreman who had stolen some of the shop’s gold or silver and vanished, so they could not be re-employed. The Bureau of Social Affairs accepted the employers’ accounts, though its report of the dispute noted that the location of the two shops in the foreign concessions had made it hard to secure their cooperation in the arbitration process.70

There are three possible conclusions that could be drawn from the fact that sacking workers for inefficiency, or alleged inefficiency, sometimes led their colleagues to demand their reinstatement in the factory industries but rarely or never did in the workshop industries. One, which tends to reinforce the conclusions drawn in sections 1, 2 and 3 above about the ability of handcraft workers to make employers keep to trade-wide terms of employment, is that of the three types of reason for sacking workers given above, only political sackings carried possible trade-wide implications. If a jade carver was unable to carve miniature figures without breaking the jade, it was nobody’s problem but his own. Another, which is corroborated by Hershatter and Honig’s interviews with old cotton mill workers in Tianjin and Shanghai, is that foremen in factories enjoyed powers of discretion and abuse going well beyond those of master craftsmen in the established trades. If the personal power of the foreman was greater, standards of quantity and quality were also less fixed, and more open to argument between the foreman and the union. The third, which again has been argued in the first


70. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1929, p.195; Wu, 1930, p.55; Tianjin shi shehui ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, pp.298-299; Dong, 1985, p.88.
three chapters of this thesis, is that losing one's job was a more serious matter for factory workers than for handcraft workers. Only a minute proportion of factory workers dismissed for poor work ever would have been fortunate enough to become the subjects of overt industrial conflict. Nothing more than informed speculation is possible about the causes, but it seems intuitively likely that workers sacked for mistakes could call on the loyalty of their colleagues only if they were relatively well connected, only if the foreman was particularly hated, and only if there was a fairly strong union willing to take up their cause. The fact that this sort of thing happened at all points to a shortage of alternative means of earning a living for factory workers.

5. Lockouts.

A lockout takes place when the management goes on strike, in effect, and stops production until certain terms are met. It can take place in response to demands raised by the workers, or the management may take the initiative and use it as a bargaining technique to convince the workers to accept lower wages or terms of employment more favourable to the management. If workers in factories depended less on skill and more on patronage than handcraft workers, as has been argued above, this state of affairs should influence the lockout statistics. There should be more of them in the factory industries. If it were not possible for factory workers to move easily from job to job, deprivation of wages would be a highly effective bargaining tool for factory owners. Conversely, it would be worse than useless for a zhangfang owner, who would be left with the bother of finding new workers and probably with the added task of retrieving his looms from the pawnshops. Only a trade-wide lockout, which would be excessively hard to police with every small master standing only to gain by breaking it, would make any impression on the workers. In the factory industries, lockouts would happen relatively often, and would tend to be confined to single factories. In the handcraft industries, there would be few or no lockouts, and if lockouts took place, they would be trade-wide lockouts.

The task of counting lockouts is made severely dubious by the tendency of factory managements to claim bankruptcy or unsustainable losses when in fact they were using the lockout as a bargaining technique. Sometimes factories did go bankrupt. All three factory industries studied in the first three chapters of this thesis experienced major difficulties in the early 1930s. The workers were in no position to assess the exact state of the factory's finances, and often enough, neither was the Bureau of Social Affairs. It is not always easy to distinguish pretended from genuine business failure on the basis of the Bureau of Social Affairs files alone. I have assumed here that when the management of a factory announced that they could not afford to stay in production,
closed the factory down, then opened again two or three weeks later after coming to an agreement with the workers, that this was a lockout, and when they announced the same thing, closed the factory down and it stayed closed, and the workers were paid off and given travel costs according to the Factory Law, that this was an economically motivated ceasing of production.

Even this manner of distinguishing lockouts from business failures makes artificially clear a distinction which might have been far from clear-cut in the minds of the board of directors at the time. It might have been the case that a factory was losing money, the board of directors were divided in opinion about how to proceed, a decision was made to close temporarily, partly to convince the workers to sacrifice their end of year bonus and New Year’s holiday pay for the common good and partly to wait and see if prices rose, the workers and the Bureau of Social Affairs proved intransigent and insisted on keeping their bonus and holiday pay, and this intransigence convinced the majority of directors to pay the workers off and wait until the slump in the market passed. There was certainly such a thing as a deliberate lockout, and there was such a thing as bankruptcy. However some doubt about the meaning of numbers of lockouts must continue to stand.

Lockouts took place in 19 of the 95 disputes and strikes in the factory industries, or 20%. There were thirteen of them in the cotton mills, one in a flour mill and five in the match factories. All of them were confined to one factory. In the handcraft industries, lockouts took place in 9 disputes out of 136, or 6.6%. Four of these were single enterprise disputes, and five were multiple enterprise or trade-wide lockouts.

Most of the lockouts referred to in the sources are unambiguous defensive lockouts, in which the management reacted to the workers demanding a wage rise or joining a union by closing the factory. Six of the cotton mill lockouts, the one flour mill lockout, one of the match factory lockouts and all but one of the handcraft industry lockouts, which took place in the silk weaving, cotton weaving, jade carving, incense and timber processing industries, were responses to industrial action by the workers. In one further instance, in June 1900, "the silk dealers" of Suzhou stopped buying yarn and putting out work. Seven to eight thousand silk weavers assembled in the city. The zhangfang owners closed their shops and went into hiding, and the Yuanhe, Changshu and Wu county governments sent police to the scene and also arranged for food to be distributed. The crowd dispersed. This could have been either a defensive lockout or a crisis in the silk trade. Concerning the lockouts in which the management appeared to
make the first move, the two in the match industry, both at Beiyang in the first months of 1933, took place at a time when match factories were closing their doors all over China, and the seven in the Tianjin cotton mills all happened between May 1933 and March 1934, similarly a difficult time for the industry in general. The remaining two lockouts, at the Beiyang and Danhua match factories in January and February 1934, took place when the managements, on their own account, were forced to cease production by the new Guomindang tax on matches. These were in fact strikes of capital against the government.

There were not enough lockouts in the data under investigation for any very meaningful conclusion to be drawn from their distribution. The lockout as a bargaining tool was not favoured by workshop owners. It was not much favoured by factory owners either, who regardless of the weaker bargaining position of the workers they employed faced costs of an altogether higher order of magnitude once production stopped. The one clear difference between handcraft industry lockouts and factory industry lockouts is that the latter were inevitably confined to one factory. In spite of the large numbers of small shops involved, and the difficulty of enforcement, five of the nine handcraft industry lockouts to which the data refer were multiple enterprise or trade-wide lockouts.

To return to the question formulated at the beginning of this chapter, there were important differences in the content of industrial conflict in factory industries and in handcraft industries. In handcraft industries, there was more conflict about wages than about security of employment, while in the factory industries the opposite was the case. The effect of the handcraft industry workers’ concern with securing the highest wage possible, and of their power of making their concern felt, was to bring about a much higher degree of wage uniformity than existed in the factory industries. Both the distribution of numbers of factories or shops in each dispute and the distribution of lockouts tend to confirm that, compared to handcraft industry workers, factory workers were not very mobile. Examination of the data on solidarity strikes suggests a further dimension to the uncertainty about "skill" proposed in the first part of this dissertation. In the factories, it was not unknown for workers to take issue with a foreman’s judgement of a fellow worker’s performance of the job to the extent of striking. This


73. *Records of the United States Department of State relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939*, despatches 893:00TT/68, 893:00TT/69, 893:00TT/72; Ministry of Industry file 422(6)639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing; Dong, 1985, pp.169, 171.
was not only because unemployment was more of a threat to factory workers' ability to support themselves, but because standards were not fixed by custom as they were in the handcraft industries, and the foreman enjoyed considerable power to protect or punish. In the handcraft industries, there is no certain evidence that this sort of thing ever happened.

Examination of wage uniformity, and its absence, in handcraft industries, and of the difference in "spread" of handcraft industry disputes in Suzhou and Tianjin, indicates the presence of a second possibly influential factor, the power of trade guilds to regulate prices and wages. While this is in one respect an important qualification of the argument to date, in another respect it aids in understanding of how the institutional vacuum into which the new factory industries were imposed gave rise to the particularistic recruiting practises and the seemingly random and quite uneconomic-looking wage differentials which are associated with them. Institutions for regulating prices and wages work most easily when business conditions hardly change. There is a relationship of probability between social stasis and regulation of trade. When business conditions are in a state of flux, for any set of reasons including technology transfer and rapid urban growth, old institutions are superseded, and some time will elapse before new institutions are created.
CHAPTER 5

Non-technological aspects of factory industry – the role of supervision in industrial relations

Introduction

The preceding chapters have sought to analyse and understand the material and social imperatives behind industrial conflict in republican China by distinguishing systematically between pre-existing and imported manufacturing technology. I have argued that the introduction of new technology made "skill" unimportant in the working environment which its introduction created, both because of its nature and because it was new, and in this way gave rise to a "false labour market" under which networks of patronage and dependence were a potential factory worker’s only reliable means of finding and keeping a job in a time and place where the "social safety net" did not exist, in which the workers were not mobile, could not easily change jobs of their own free will, and on the other hand could be quite difficult to sack if they were well connected, as Zhou Xuexi discovered. However, it is less than productive of understanding of such a complex phenomenon as industrial conflict, in republican China or anywhere else, to use a single technological determinant to account for the content and distribution of disputes across all industries without examining other factors that may also have been important. Scale is one of these.

One characteristic of factories is that they were much larger than workshops. The Guomindang Factory Law of 1931 classed all industrial enterprises employing more than 30 workers as "factories". The factories investigated in the first three chapters of this thesis were considerably larger than this. The modern flour mills, which employed smaller numbers of workers than the match factories or cotton mills, though the technology of flour milling obliged them to invest much more substantially in machinery than the match

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1. There is an account of the faction fighting at Huaxin in Zhou Xuehui and Ma Jinggan, "Tianjin Huaxin fangzhi gongsi shimo" (The Huaxin Textile Co. of Tianjin from beginning to end" in Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji (Selected materials on the culture and history of Tianjin) vol.38, pp.43-66.

factories did, had, in 1932, between 137 and 253 workers. The match factories employed between 78 and approximately 3,400, and the cotton mills from 1,675 to 5,922 as of 1930.\textsuperscript{3}

The Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs' industrial survey figures quoted in the previous chapter indicate that out of 244 handcraft workshops or factories surveyed, 153 employed less than 10 workers, 78 employed 10 to 49 workers, 10 employed 50 to 99 workers and 3 employed over 100 workers.\textsuperscript{4}

The recruiting and management of a large work force posed tasks for the managers of factories that did not occur in workshop industries. When a new factory opened, over a thousand workers might have to be found. When a factory cut production or closed, there might be over a thousand unemployed workers to negotiate with or pay off. The scale and complexity of the enterprise meant that there was more delegation of authority, that while the manufacturing process was more complex the management's knowledge of what was happening on the factory floor was less exact, and a powerful stratum of intermediaries - the foremen - were able to protect their favourites and punish those they disliked without the consent or even the knowledge of the managers.

Also, the directors and major shareholders of modern factories stood in an altogether different relationship to the local government than the owners of iron foundries or zhangfang. They were high officials, former high officials or entrepreneurs of the first rank, their wealth made their opinions of concern to the local authorities, and though their control over events on the factory floor was less direct, their informal access to those officials in a position to make decisions affecting the running of the factory could be useful. All of these factors might be expected to influence relations between workers and


\textsuperscript{4} Wu Ao (ed.), \textit{Tianjin zhi gongshangye}. Discontinuous pagination; for page references see Chapter 4, part 2.
employers. However, relations between owners and managers of large enterprises and the local government affected the manner in which strikes were broken or negotiated to a conclusion more than they affected what strikes were about in the first place, and since the aim of this dissertation is to analyse what strikes and disputes were about in order to gain understanding of the relationship between factory industry and social change in Republican China, I will focus here on the internal organisation of factories rather than on the management’s relations with external authority.

The relationship between technology and enterprise size in republican China was not one of simple direct variation. As explained in the preceding chapter, some workshop industries practised on a very small scale used newly imported technology. The factory industries studied in the first three chapters all used newly imported technology. However, there were two industries of major economic importance in Suzhou and Tianjin in which modern scale and organisation; a work force of several hundred employed at the same place to perform the same few tasks; was associated with established and gradually evolving pre-treaty port technology. These were the silk weaving industry of Suzhou and the carpet weaving industry of Tianjin.

Both these industries displayed a bimodal distribution of enterprise size, with a few large factories and many small ones. Because these industries offer the opportunity to examine the effects of scale on industrial relations in isolation from technological factors, I have undertaken here to look at the content of industrial conflict in the Tianjin carpet industry, on which there exists a useful amount of material, and to draw comparisons where possible with the silk factories in Suzhou and the new factory industries discussed in the first three chapters in order to identify the effects of scale.

Organisation of the Tianjin carpet industry

The carpet industry held an unusual position among Tianjin manufacturing industries. Unlike the other textile industries in Tianjin, it produced almost entirely for export. Any domestic sales of Tianjin carpets were incidental. Carpets were in fact the only important manufactured export from Tianjin; other exports were in the category of unprocessed or partially processed raw materials. Most Tianjin carpets, about 90%, were
exported, and about 80% were sold to American buyers.5

The Tianjin carpet industry rose and declined with the demand from overseas. Before the age of production for export, Tianjin was not a significant centre of carpet manufacturing. Carpet manufacturing in the late Qing was an established luxury industry involving manufacturing techniques which, apart from the use of machine-spun woollen yarn and synthetic dye, still dominated in the 1920s and 1930s. As foreign demand increased steadily over the first two decades of the twentieth century, Tianjin rose in importance as a manufacturing centre because of its access to the sea. The demand for Tianjin carpets reached its peak in 1926, and then, for a complex of economic and political reasons, began to decline.6 Exports from Tianjin declined slowly until 1931, rose abruptly in 1932, fluctuated above and below the 1932 level until 1936 and were beginning to increase again at the time of the Japanese occupation of Tianjin in 1937.7

In the early 1920s several American companies, hoping to take advantage of the growing demand for Tianjin carpets in America and the comparatively low cost of labour in Tianjin, established factories in Tianjin. American-owned carpet factories included Elbrook Inc., the largest enterprise with four factories, Tavshanjian, Karahousian, Nichols, Breslin-Griffitt and Tailong. They formed the elite section of the Tianjin carpet industry.8 Chinese-owned factories, of which there were over five hundred at the stage of greatest expansion of the carpet industry, tended to be much smaller and operate on minimal running capital contributed by a single owner-manager. The Chinese-owned Qingshengheng factory, however, rivalled the American factories in size, with a capital of

10,000 yuan and 280-odd workers in 1930.9

A survey conducted by the Nankai University Committee on Social and Economic Research in 1929, when the carpet industry had begun to decline, listed 303 factories, of which 85% of the 293 of which the amount of capital could be ascertained, employed capital of 500 yuan or less, and the three American factories surveyed – Tavshanjian, Nichols and Elbrook – accounted for 1,800,000 yuan of the total capital investment surveyed of 2,053,688 yuan. The bimodal nature of the Tianjin carpet industry can be seen in the tables below, in which Tianjin carpet factories or workshops are classed according to capitalisation and to the number of workers employed.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital per workshop or factory (yuan)</th>
<th>No. of workshops or factories</th>
<th>Total capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 100</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 200</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 - 300</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 - 400</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 - 500</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 - 600</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 - 700</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701 - 800</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801 - 900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>901 - 1,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001 - 2,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,001 - 15,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>164,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of workers per workshop or factory</th>
<th>No. of workshops or factories</th>
<th>Total no. of workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 70</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 - 100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4,263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The larger carpet factories were not very large by contemporary industrial standards. However, they were many times larger than the average Chinese-owned carpet factory or workshop. The average number of workers employed in the 303 carpet factories surveyed by Nankai in 1929 is 38.2. If the 22 factories employing more than 100 workers are subtracted from the table above, the average number of workers per factory is 26.

Below is a table illustrating numbers of workers employed in the larger carpet factories in Tianjin, with the sources of the numbers quoted.

Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
<th>Number of workers (year)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tavshanjian</td>
<td>600-700; weavers only (1926)</td>
<td>US Dept. of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>400+ (May 1929)</td>
<td>Nankai, 1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>450+ (May 1929)</td>
<td>Dong Zhenxiu, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>400 (Sep. 1929)</td>
<td>Dong, Nankai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elbrook</td>
<td>1360 (1926)</td>
<td>US Dept. of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>450 (Jun 1929)</td>
<td>Nankai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.4 branch</td>
<td>250 (Aug 1929)</td>
<td>US Dept. of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4 factories)</td>
<td>400+ (Aug 1929)</td>
<td>Dong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>302 (Aug 1929)</td>
<td>Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailong</td>
<td>345 (1926)</td>
<td>US Dept. of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200+ (May 1929)</td>
<td>Nankai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>277 (1930)</td>
<td>Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The only technological difference between the large American and the Chinese carpet factories was in the use of machine-spun rather than hand-spun woollen yarn. Elbrook and Nichols spun their own yarn on the premises. Both American and Chinese factories used similar old-fashioned Chinese carpet looms, which were wooden instruments of extremely simple construction.\[11\] Other differences between Chinese and American carpet factories were in the size and style of the factory buildings, the provision of toilets

\[11\] Fang, 1929, pp.19, 23, 29-30.
and sleeping quarters for the workers and, in some cases, in the wages paid.  

Industrial conflict in the Tianjin carpet factories

These are the immediate conclusions that can be drawn from examination of strikes and disputes recorded by various sources in carpet factories in Tianjin between 1914 and 1935. There is an unusually high proportion of claims related to security of employment, and these are concentrated in the large American factories. Disputes in the large American factories greatly outnumber those in the small Chinese ones, even though, as the American consul in Tianjin repeatedly pointed out, the pay was better, or at least no worse, in the American factories and living conditions for the carpet weavers were of a higher class altogether, consisting of a bunk in a dormitory room rather than a space on the floor next to the loom. Carpet weavers often complained about the conduct of foremen.

I have found reference to 38 disputes and strikes in Tianjin carpet factories. The sources make some indication of the subject matter of the disputes in 32 of the 38 cases. The carpet weavers made wage demands, or other economic demands, in 16 out of these 32 cases. There were 15 claims related to security of employment, and nine protests against foremen. The proportion of strikes or disputes featuring claims for security of employment, or protests against sackings, reaches 46.9%, a difference of an order of magnitude compared to 4.5% of disputes in silk factories or "account houses" and 9.9% in all handcraft industry establishments including silk factories, and comparable to the equivalent proportions of 46.8% in the cotton mills, 78.6% in the modern flour mills and 55.5% in the match factories.

In the preceding chapters, I have explained the greater proportion of demands for security of employment in factory industry disputes compared to handcraft industry disputes by the factory workers' lack of recognised skill and consequent dependence on patrons and lack of mobility. This argument would predict that in the Tianjin carpet factories, in which the scale of the large American establishments, and the presence of foremen responsible for co-ordination and discipline, created workplace conditions appearing to fall between the old-fashioned workshop and the factory, the proportion of strikes and disputes about security of employment would fall between the equivalent proportions in workshop industries and in factory industries. Instead it is much closer to

the overall proportion of 53.2% in the factory industries than to the corresponding proportions in the other handcraft industries.

Either the skill versus dependency argument does not in fact account for the different patterns of industrial conflict in workshop and factory industries, or "appearing to fall between" is too vague; in any case, something must have been behind the Tianjin carpet weavers’ unusual preoccupation with security of employment. Enterprise size, of itself, can not be the determining factor. The American carpet factories in Tianjin were intermediate in size; roughly equivalent to the modern flour mills, and smaller on average than the match factories and the cotton mills. The explanation may be found in the relationship between enterprise size, factory administration, and the nature of the productive technology concerned.

In Chapter 4, section 4, protests and strikes on behalf of workers who had been sacked were sorted out further into three categories: protests against economic sackings, protests against political sackings and protests against work-related sackings. The result of this was that work-related sacking protests were shown to be concentrated in the factory industries, while most workshop industry sacking disputes were about political sackings. That is, in the three factory industries studied earlier in this dissertation, seven out of the total of 25 claims for reinstatement of sacked workers by other workers or the union were concerned with economic sackings, nine with political sackings and nine with work-related sackings, while in the handcraft industries, there were two protests against economic sackings, two protests (possibly of a political nature) against work-related sackings and seven or eleven against political sackings, depending on whether or not brocade weaving and hosiery knitting are included as handcraft industries.

The explanation offered was that handcraft workers, for whom dismissal was less of a threat to their livelihood than it was for factory workers, protested the sacking of other handcraft workers only when there were possible trade-wide implications. The logic of defensive solidarity operated only on the trade wide scale. In the factory industries, where unemployment was a more frightening prospect and networks of patronage governed factory-floor politics, the logic of defensive solidarity could cause a strike in a single enterprise over the sacking of one worker. As for economic sackings, the prevalence of small employers and the possibility of self-employment in the handcraft industries meant that craft workers rarely exerted themselves to persuade the owner of an ailing shop to stay in business, while factory workers, faced with the prospect of competition with 600 of their
ex-fellow workers for jobs in five factories, never mind the politics of networking, would
 go to exhausting and dangerous lengths to exert pressure on the management. Not only
 were factory workers more often worried about security of employment than handcraft
 workers, as demonstrated in the first three chapters, they were worried about it for different
 reasons.

In the Tianjin carpet factories, out of 15 security of employment claims in 32
 disputes and strikes in which the cause of conflict, or part of it, can be traced, there were 12
 claims for reinstatement of sacked workers. Seven of these were demands for the
 reinstatement of workers who had been sacked for joining unions or organising industrial
 action. Two were responses to economic sackings: in one case after 200 workers were
 sacked from Tavshanjian because the factory was losing money; in the other case at
 Elbrook, where a foreman refused time off at the Mid-autumn Festival to the workers and
 sacked those who asked.13 The other three, at Qingshengheng and Tailong in 1930,
 concerned sackings of small numbers of workers; twelve, one and four respectively. Dong
 Zhenxiu does not mention why they were sacked, but only quotes the Qingshengheng
 workers as protesting in one case that their fellow workers had been sacked "without
 reason".14 These are likely to have been work-related sackings. In the preponderance of
 protests against political sackings, the profile of industrial conflict in Tianjin carpet
 factories resembles that of the handcraft industries more than that of the factory industries.
 What is not explained is why so many disputes and strikes in carpet factories were about re-
 employment of sacked workers, or about job security in general.

Reinstatement of sacked workers is only one out of several potential job security
 issues. The other types of job security issues that came up most often in industrial disputes
 in Suzhou and Tianjin between 1900 and 1930 were pre-emptive demands by unions or
 workers at one or more enterprises that no workers should be sacked at the New Year or
 other festivals, demands for union control over hiring and firing, and protests against the
 closing of factories. In the Tianjin carpet factories, twelve out of fifteen job security
 claims, or 80%, were claims for reinstatement of sacked workers. The others were one

13. United States Department of State: Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-
 1929, file nos. 893.5045/441, 893.5045/442, 893.5045/448; Tianjin shi Shehui Ju minguo
 shiba nian gongzuo baogao (Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs 1929 work report) pp.68-69;
 Dong Zhenxiu, Xin minzhuzhuyi geming shiqi Tianjin gongrenyundong jishi (Annals of the
 Tianjin workers’ movement in the period of the New Democratic Revolution), Tianjin
 Academy of Social Sciences and Tianjin General Union Labour History Research Unit,
 1985, pp.96-97; Fang, 1929, p.67.

demand that no workers should be sacked at the approaching Chinese New Year, at the Chinese owned Dafeng factory in August 1936, and two demands by the new Guomindang union at the American owned Breslin-Griffitt factory late in 1928 for the power of veto over hiring and firing. The Breslin-Griffitt disputes were part of a series of events in which the American management met the new Guomindang union apparatus with direct resistance, attempted to keep union members out of the factory by selective dismissal and eventually closed the factory in April of the following year. They are best seen as preemptive claims against political discrimination, in a setting in which political discrimination had already taken place and was expected.

In the handcraft industries looked at in Chapter 4, the proportion of demands for reinstatement of sacked workers to security of employment claims in general was 11 out of 32, or 34.4%. If brocade weaving and hosiery knitting are included as handcraft industries, the proportion is 15 out of 37, or 40.5%. In the cotton mills, the proportion is 18 out of 29, or 62%; in the flour mills, 4 out of 11, or 36.4%; and in the match factories, 3 out of 10, or 30%.

The meaning of this statistic – the proportion of demands for reinstatement of workers who had been sacked to security of employment claims in general – is in its function as an index of the importance of the employer or foreman’s power to sack workers as an object of contention. What is measured by the proportion of security of employment claims to total strikes and disputes is how concerned the workers were about losing their jobs. What is measured by the proportion of claims for re-employment of sacked workers to security of employment claims in general is how concerned they were about losing their jobs because of the decision of an employer or foreman going against them.

When this proportion is looked at across different trades, a pattern emerges which cuts across the "old versus new" technological distinction and clearly calls for the introduction of a new strand to the theory of what caused and what limited industrial conflict in Republican China. In most industries, whether old or new, the proportion tends to fall between 30% and 40%. The figure for cotton mills in Tianjin is substantially higher at 62%, and the figure for the Tianjin carpet factories, which judged by the technology of

15. Dong, 1985, pp.82, 184; Rui Yunzhi, "Tianjin ditan gongye de xingqi he fazhan" (The origin and development of the Tianjin carpet industry), Tianjin Wenshi Ziliao vol.1, pp.77-78; Wu Bannong, Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi, Beijing Shehui Diaoacha Suo (Beijing Institute of Social Research), 1930, p.45; United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929, file no.893.5045/12.
carpet weaving should fall in with the handcraft industries, is highest of all at 80%. The reason for the proportion of security of employment claims in carpet factories being so high is that the number of complaints against the decisions of foremen or employers to sack workers was high. It could be reasonably argued that the numbers of disputes in the flour mills and match factories are too low to be used meaningfully in a cross-trade comparison. Even if these are left out, though, some explanation is still needed for the very high proportion of arguments about sackings in the carpet factories.

Labour mobility does not seem less in the Tianjin carpet industry than in other handcraft industries. Compared to factory workers, carpet weavers moved from one employer to another quite freely. The Nankai survey states that 51 out of 305 carpet weavers about whom the manner in which they found their jobs was known had applied directly to the employer using nothing but their trade papers, without any form of personal acquaintance or patronage coming into it, and another 51 were personally acquainted with their prospective employers, who in this case were not office holders of an immense corporate enterprise, socially remote from those they employed, but near equals and former co-workers.16

The explanation that I propose here is related to the size of the enterprise, but is not a restatement of the idea that mass production leads to psychological alienation and therefore to industrial conflict. The assumed cause is not psychological but material and micro-political. It derives from the power of foremen to fine and dismiss workers. Mass production makes necessary the employment of foremen, whose job it is to co-ordinate the activities of large numbers of workers according to a schedule of production determined by the capacity of the factory machinery. In Chinese factories in the Republican era in general, and in all the large factories studied in this dissertation, the power to employ, promote, discipline or sack workers rested with the foremen. In the workshop industries, of course, the owner-manager had the power to employ, promote, discipline and sack workers. Later I will advance the paradoxical argument that the authority of owner-managers was limited, in practice, in a way that the authority of foremen was not, and that this difference in scope of authority did not rest in custom or the different nature of personal relationships in small enterprises and large ones but in the difference between owner-managers’ and foremen’s institutional foundations of authority over the workers.

16. Fang, 1929, p.46.
Though I have preferred, throughout this dissertation, to account for the actions of Chinese factory workers by material rather than cultural or psychological causes, I do not intend to exclude all factors other than material ones. I consider that experience is important, that all events, in Chinese factories and elsewhere, are experienced in terms of concepts derived from previous experience (which may include cultural and intellectual experience), and that custom, as historians of labour usually call the unwritten but authoritative accumulation of collective opinion about what could and should happen in the workplace, could be a crucial factor in determining whether or not a particular incident caused an industrial dispute. I suggest below that custom was a factor behind the pattern of industrial conflict in Tianjin carpet factories, while the weakness of custom led to conflict of a different kind in the cotton mills. However, custom is assumed to be a medium through which changes in relationships of power of material origin, expressed in changes in industrial organisation and industrial technology, are perceived and understood, and not a cause acting independently of material circumstances.

This primacy of material circumstance is not because I have assumed that workers in factories in Republican China, or people in general, inevitably act with their own material interest in mind. I have not assumed that such factors as nationalism and religion on the large scale, or native-place loyalty and the desire to appear heroic on the small scale, are necessarily conscious disguises for economic self-interest, or unconscious reflections of it. I have not even assumed that material factors are important more often than non-material factors are important. What I have assumed is that while things like political sophistication, altruism, ambition, deference to authority and emotional volatility vary greatly between one individual and another, and there may be as many sets of ideas about rights, duties and morally appropriate behaviour as there are workers in a factory, the facts of proficiency in a trade, or the lack of it, ease or difficulty of access to work, low income, absence of social security and fear of unemployment were common to all of them.

Labour history, with most topics in social history, is less concerned with the results of relationships and power struggles between one individual and another than with relationships between collectivities: workers, employers, political organisations and unions. I have assumed that the ideas and values of factory workers were not the determinant of the position they took towards their employers, not because these ideas and values were themselves materially determined, but because they were individual, and because individual factory workers were rarely if ever in any position to decide what line all their fellow workers should take towards any issue of wages or conditions, or to exert
influence on their employers. When workers did exert influence, it was in the mass, and because of this, only what they had in common determined the action they took. While concepts and values vary with experience, character and all the vagaries of personal intellectual evolution, material interests are basic and vary relatively little. This is what makes efforts to reduce developments in intellectual, cultural or religious history to the expression of material interest appear counter-intuitive, weak and politically suspect, while conversely, cultural and psychological explanations of industrial conflict appear facile, also politically suspect and unpleasantly patronising. Both are the result of misunderstanding of how the relative power or powerlessness of individual actors to influence the course of events, according to the sphere of enquiry, affects the relative importance of material and non-material causes.

In the cotton mills, the difficulty of access to employment, and the likelihood that standards for work performed on the various machines shifted with decisions made by the management about production volume, were not fixed by custom in the minds of the workers and depended most often on the opinions of foremen, and the cotton mill workers’ dangerously low incomes and lack of resources combined to cause a high number of disputes about sackings, of which more than one-third were explicitly about whether or not the workers sacked were responsible for defects in production. Carpet weaving in Tianjin was an apprenticed trade in which a uniform set of standards of competency for the weaving of different grades of carpet was recognised in every workshop. The number of disputes about sackings in carpet factories can not be understood as the result of foremen taking advantage of the absence of fixed production standards to protect their favourites and punish their enemies. In fact seven out of the twelve disputed sackings were explicitly political. Small numbers of activist carpet weavers were dismissed for their part in industrial action, or for attempting to recruit other carpet weavers into either Communist or Guomindang unions.

This kind of conflict was not confined to carpet factories. Similar conflict took place in both handcraft and factory industries in Suzhou and Tianjin. However, the proportion was highest in the carpet factories. These are the numbers of unambiguous disputes about union membership in different industries. In order to counter the effect of the number of carpet factory disputes (6 out of 38) for which the sources do not state any cause, I have left these out, and have also removed disputes and strikes in other industries for which no cause is given in the sources.
**TABLE 5.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>No. of GMD union-related disputes, 1st year</th>
<th>No. of union-related disputes, other times</th>
<th>Total no. of disputes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carpets</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32 (cause known)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton spinning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native cloth</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brushes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton carding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk bordering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacquer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese medicine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemasonry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipe making</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupboard &amp; benches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckets &amp; bowls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was no carpet weavers’ guild in Tianjin, and unions were unheard of in Tianjin carpet factories before 1926. The carpet weavers’ readiness to confront their employers about union membership did not arise from an established tradition of separate organisation, as in the case of the silk weavers in Suzhou. The explanation that I propose is that frequent industrial conflict with a high proportion of disputes about job security and union membership comes from the response of handcraft workers to the new exactions and impositions of authority brought about by the introduction of the factory system. Because of the unusual character of the carpet industry, as an industry in which potentially self-employed craftsmen were collected in factories to work under the supervision and direction of a non-weaving foreman who was a wage-earning employee of the management, and because factory workers tended to owe their jobs to foremen, this kind of conflict happened more often in carpet factories, and went on for longer, than in other industries, whether old or new. The union was conceived of as a brake on the foreman’s power.

The reason carpet weavers protested against foremen more often than cotton mill workers, who also worked under the authority of foremen and were equally vulnerable to being sacked, was in the carpet weavers’ greater freedom of movement as craftsmen, and because what was for cotton mill workers, and workers in the other new factory industries, just one aspect of the order of things in factories, was for the carpet weavers a new and very visible phenomenon, which existed in the new factories but not in the old, and which often

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17. Fang, 1929, pp.61-63; United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929; despatches, J.V.A. Macmurray (US Minister, Beijing) to Secretary of State, February 20, 1926 and Consul-General C.E.Gauss to Macmurray, February 21, 1926, file no. 893.5045/322.
stepped in to threaten them with unemployment. What was at stake so often in the carpet factories was not production standards, or even union membership, it was the power of foremen.

The "aristocratic" status of Tianjin carpet weavers.

Another factor which can be important for understanding of differences in the subject matter of industrial conflict in skilled trades and mass manufacturing industries employing semi-skilled workers is comparative wages. The literature on labour history in Europe has, for most of this century, used the concept of a "labour aristocracy", a minority among wage workers, consisting of skilled workers in apprenticed trades to which the entry was restricted, who were socially indistinct from the small employers they worked for and sometimes became employers themselves, and who earned wages consistent with what they and many of their contemporaries understood as the substantial difference in worth to society between them and the unskilled. The term is used to explain aspects of skilled workers' participation in industrial conflict such as the importance of job control, the political moderation of British craft unions in the mid-19th century contrasted with their radicalisation after 1900, and overall differences in the declared purposes, duration and success rate of strikes in handcraft and factory industries. While opinions have differed about who belonged to the "labour aristocracy" and what, at different times and places, its effect was in the spheres of politics and industrial relations, it is broadly accepted, because all available wage statistics point to comparatively high wages for workers in the favoured trades, that the skilled status of the "aristocrats" was reflected in their wages. The possession of an economic advantage over other workers, along with (in less materialist analyses) the possession of an unquantifiable but valuable and cherished superiority in social status, is then held to account for differences in attitude and action between skilled and unskilled workers.

Shorter and Tilly, in *Strikes in France*, proposed a threefold division of industries according to how the productive technology and organisation of the industry concerned influenced the workers' priorities. The three categories are (1) handcraft industries in which the workers hung onto their status as relatively highly-paid craftsmen enjoying a substantial degree of job control, in spite of changes in productive technology and organisation; (2) handcraft industries in which the workers lost the battle to preserve their status during the process of industrial transformation and were reduced to the status of semi-skilled factory operatives, and (3) factory industries in which the great majority of the
workers had never been craft workers. On the basis of quantitative analysis of strikes in France in all industries between 1900 and 1914, Shorter and Tilly distinguish the issues at stake, by industry, as follows:

"1. The craft survivors of industrialisation. High levels of union involvement mark the disputes of such trades as printers and metalsmiths, a sign of organisational tradition. And because such workers are well organised their strikes tend to be long .... Craft workers who have met industrialisation successfully need also pay little attention to shop organisation issues, for the obvious reason that they already are running things pretty much to suit themselves, and instead concentrate on wages-and-hours issues .... Finally an absence of rancour should characterise the craft survivors' disputes with their employers, for both parties are agreed on the rules of the game; employer authority is not being challenged, nor worker control threatened ....

2. The threatened crafts. By "threatened" we mean a prospective loss of job control and professional solidarity from mechanisation and more generally from employer inroads upon traditional worker prerogatives. Like the craft survivors, such threatened crafts ... have behind them venerable guild and corporate traditions; unlike the successful crafts, however, they are losing the struggle with the capitalist employer, who tries to arrange shop floor authority, technology and work patterns to serve the profitability of his firm .... Unlike the successful artisans, these men will strike often over job control questions, and great bitterness will run through their conflicts, as evidenced by high rates of striker dismissals.

3. The new occupations. Recently arisen in consequence of industrial advance, the new industries and occupations lack entirely the historic traditions and habits of collective action that hold artisans together .... The new workers will be relatively unconcerned about job control issues, because they experience no loss of established powers and perquisites, and, what is more, see the hopelessness of advancing such demands. Finally, strikes within new occupations are distinguished by no special acerbity on the shop floor, for the expectations of both workers and employers are that only bread-and-butter demands are legitimate (or advisable) ...."

That is, craft workers who were "labour aristocrats", according to the concept of labour aristocracy as developed by E.P.Thompson and E.J. Hobsbawm,\(^\text{18}\) tended to be highly unionised and strike relatively often, to be politically moderate when the terms of their employment were not being rendered less favourable by changes in productive technology and industrial organisation, and to become radicalised when the terms of their


employment were so affected.

If this scheme of analysis were applied to strikes in Chinese factories, the cotton mills, modern flour mills and match factories would fall into the category of "new occupations", silk weaving and most of the other handcraft industries examined in Chapter 4 would be "craft survivors", and the Tianjin carpet factories, in which a new form of industrial organisation cut back the job control and job security of the carpet weavers, would plainly represent a "threatened craft". Some aspects of Shorter and Tilly's analysis, for reasons that are best derived from the considerable differences in the political and social context in which strikes took place in France and in China, plainly do not apply to Chinese strikes. In particular, strikes in the factory industries were not "distinguished by no special acerbity"; murder, suicide and police killings were not unknown in cotton mill strikes. More will be said about the "acerbity" of cotton mill strikes in the next chapter. The "threatened craft" model, though, does appear to coincide with the carpet weavers' hostility to foremen.

On the issue of wages, however, Tianjin carpet weavers do not appear at all aristocratic during the period under investigation, and neither do they appear to have been previously highly-paid craft workers who had come down in the world as a result of industrialisation. Carpet weavers were typically paid by the piece at a fixed rate per square foot of different grades of carpet, and were always provided with food and a place to sleep by their employers, which complicates the task of estimating their earnings in order to compare them with the earnings of workers in other industries. Below is a selection of carpet weavers' wage figures from different sources.

The only exact and systematic account of carpet weavers' earnings appears in the survey conducted by Fang Xianting and the Nankai University Committee on Social and

Economic Research in 1929. Monthly cash incomes, and monthly earnings including the cost of room and board, are tabled separately in the Nankai survey. The Nankai wage figures are derived from a survey of 354 workers in 152 factories. All were male, and all but one over 16 years of age. All were wage earners, not apprentices, though 20 unskilled labourers have been counted with the 334 qualified carpet weavers. The distribution of monthly cash incomes according to the Nankai survey is as follows:\(^\text{21}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (in yuan per month)</th>
<th>No. of workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 to 4.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 5.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 6.5</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 7.5</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 8.5</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 9.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principle by which the cost of food consumed by the carpet weavers has been estimated is not specified in the Nankai survey. Whatever it was, the cost of food has plainly been measured in each of the factories surveyed, rather than assumed according to grain prices, since Fang declares "The cost for board is not always the same for the workers investigated, although the commonest, applicable to 279 workers, is six dollars per month". The cost of "room" or accommodation, however, is assumed to be 50c per month in every factory. When "board" and "room" are added to the carpet weavers' cash earnings, the results are as follows:

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supervisors in St. Petersburg and Shanghai" in *Past and Present*, no.139 (May 1993).

TABLE 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Converted earnings (in yuan per month)</th>
<th>No. of workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.5 to 10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5 to 11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5 to 12</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.5 to 13</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5 to 14</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5 to 15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5 to 16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.5 to 17</td>
<td>1 (16 unknown)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information on carpet weavers' wages provided in other sources is much less detailed, or consists of rough guesses based more or less on experience of the industry rather than results of investigation. The United States consul-general, Clarence Gauss, stated in a report on the industry for the information of the United States minister in Beijing in March, 1926, that carpet weavers in American-owned factories, in which 23 of the 38 strikes and disputes took place (five of the 15 in Chinese factories were at Qingshengheng) were paid better, but not much better, than their counterparts in Chinese-owned factories. Gauss quotes "a disinterested rug exporter at Tientsin" as saying "In the general run of Chinese factories, a worker can earn from $5 to $10 local currency a month; the average is about $6.50 local currency. In addition the worker receives board and lodging", and adds "The wages in the American-owned factories appear to run to a higher average", but qualifies this elsewhere: "The general statement has been made that except as to the sanitary conditions surrounding workers and plant, no distinction can be made between American or foreign-owned rug factories at Tientsin, and Chinese factories, the wage scale, hours of labour, and general working conditions being in general the same".\textsuperscript{22} The manager of Tavshanjian, C.M. Papaz, who Gauss describes as "not a particularly able or intelligent person" from whom he had difficulty eliciting information, said workers at

\textsuperscript{22} C.E. Gauss, "Labor conditions in American rug factories in Tianjin" in United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929, file no.893.5045/335.
Tavshanjian were guaranteed an income of 8 to 11 yuan per month.23

A survey of 7 Chinese factories, not including Qingshengheng, cited in 1926 by the Ministry for Agriculture and Commerce gave wage figures from 5 to 20 yuan per month, without indicating an average wage for Tianjin. The Zhong wai jingji zhoukan (Chinese weekly economic bulletin) quoted the average wage in March, 1927 as 8 yuan.24

The Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1930, Tianjin zhi gongshangye, listed the average monthly wage as 8 to 9 yuan, the highest monthly wage at 18 yuan and the lowest at 1 to 2 yuan. These figures applied only to adult male workers, not apprentices.25 The magazine Guohuo yanjiu yuekan in July 1932 gave the average monthly wage as 6 to 9 yuan, and the magazine Gongshang xuezhi in April 1935 gave it as 6 to 10 yuan.26 As above, the cost of room and board is explicitly excluded from these wage surveys.

All the wage figures quoted above are wages for piece work, and as such, vary not only with the kind of work done (carpets of 80, 90, 100 and 120 threads per foot and bearing patterns of different degrees of difficulty were paid for at different rates) and possibly between one carpet factory and another, but with the amount of work done as well. This could depend, as said in Chapter 4, not only on the skill and speed of the carpet weaver but on the amount of business done in the shop. The Tianjin carpet workshops produced carpets only as they received orders for carpets of a specified size, design and quality from export firms based in Tianjin. Because the workshop owners provided food and sleeping quarters, however cramped, the weavers were able to tide over short breaks between orders from export firms.27 In fact the customary practice by small employers in handcraft industries of providing food and sleeping quarters for workers, which was not confined to China, existed in order to maintain a constant workforce on small capital in just such a situation of shifting and unreliable demand. The employer was spared the difficulty and expense of dismissing workers and rehiring them, and the workers were not left without means in between contracts. Carpet weavers were not rewarded with cash bonuses

23. United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929; despatch, Gauss to Macmurray, 22.1.1926, file no.893.5045/322.
26. Guohuo yanjiu yuekan (Chinese produce research monthly), Tianjin, July 1932, "Tianjin zhi ditan gongye" (Tianjin’s carpet industry) pp.87-88; Gongshang xuezhi (Business information), Tianjin, April 1935, "Tianjin ditanye gaikuang" (The state of the Tianjin carpet industry) pp.76-77.
at the foreman’s or employer’s discretion. At most, they received an overtime rate, higher 
than the normal piece rate, for work done in excess of the standard monthly quota of square 
feet of carpet. Income from overtime work has been included in the Nankai survey.

The figures above can do no more than give a vague impression of Tianjin carpet 
weavers’ earnings in the 1920s and 1930s. However, if they are compared with the wages 
of workers in Tianjin cotton mills, flour mills and match factories in the same period, they 
tend towards the low end of the wage scale. Below is a table of average daily wages in 
different factories in the cotton, flour and match industries, commuted to monthly wages, in 
yuan per month, at the assumed rate of 27.8 working days per month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory</th>
<th>Average Men’s Wage</th>
<th>Average Women’s Wage</th>
<th>Average Child’s Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuyuana</td>
<td>14.73</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>10.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengyuana</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaxina</td>
<td>11.95</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>6.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>8.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baocheng</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>10.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuda</td>
<td>13.07</td>
<td>11.12</td>
<td>11.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoufeng</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingfeng</td>
<td>16.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minfeng</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiarui</td>
<td>11.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhonghua</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The wage figures for the cotton mills; Yuyuan, Hengyuan, Huaxin, Beiyang, 
Baocheng and Yuda; are those from the Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1930. The 
figures from the flour mills; Shoufeng, Qingfeng, Minfeng and Jiarui; are from the Bureau 
of Social Affairs survey of 1932. The figures from the Zhonghua match factory are from 
the Baogong huikan survey of 1926. These figures do not include food, which all factory 
workers bought themselves or brought from home, nor accommodation, though this was 
sometimes provided by the factories in the form of dormitory rooms at rents below the 
market rate for basic single-room accommodation.

All are nominal wage figures only, and do not include bonus payments. If bonuses 
and fines were included, factory wages would tend to be higher rather than lower. The 
Nankai survey compares nominal and real wages at the Yuyuan and Huaxin mills, but does

27. Fang, 1929, pp.14-17.
so in a format that complicates the extrapolation of real wages, as a proportion over nominal wages, to the other mills, and makes comparison with carpet weavers’ earnings difficult. First, total earnings for workers in different departments at Huaxin are provided, but the numbers of male, female and child workers surveyed are not stated, and neither is there any indication of how much of the workers’ earnings was made up of nominal wages, and how much of bonuses.28 Then both nominal wages and total earnings for male and female workers in all departments at Yuyuan are quoted.29 The difficulty with these figures is that juvenile workers have evidently been counted with adults. This means the average real wages for men and women at Yuyuan are diluted by the inclusion of children’s wages, which detracts from the value of any comparison with the wages of adult male carpet weavers.

The problems with the figures are not insurmountable, but it is necessary first to extrapolate the percentages of juvenile workers at Yuyuan, as counted by the Bureau of Social Affairs survey conducted from July 12 to November 23, 1929, into the total of "4,828 workers out of a total of 6,395; that is, ... those workers who have worked with the mill more or less continuously for a period of six months" surveyed by Nankai over the period January 1 to June 30, 1929. The numbers of male, female and child workers at Yuyuan, according to the Bureau of Social Affairs survey, are as below:30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>4,671</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately the Yuyuan workforce shifted and changed constantly as workers joined and left the factory. When surveyed by Fang Xianting, Yuyuan employed 6,395 workers, 4,828 of whom were counted in the survey. When surveyed by the Bureau of Social Affairs, it employed 5,922. The Nankai survey indicates the numbers of male and

30. Wu Ao (ed.), *Tianjin shi fangshaye diaocha baogao*, p.52.
female workers, but not the numbers of adults and children. In fact if the proportions of men and boys at Yuyuan in the Bureau of Social Affairs survey – 79% and 5% – are added, the result – 84% – is the exact percentage of male workers to all workers counted in the Nankai survey, also 84% (4,055 out of 4,828). If it is assumed that the proportion of boys to men, and the proportion of girls to women, stayed constant between the two survey periods – not an entirely satisfactory assumption, but the only means at hand of arriving at complete wage figures for male, female and juvenile workers in 1929 and facilitating cross-industry comparisons – the proportions of children working in Yuyuan at the time of the Nankai survey can be hypothesised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3814</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average wages paid to men, women, boys and girls are listed separately in the Bureau of Social Affairs survey, so it is possible, by multiplying the wage averages for men, women, boys and girls by their numbers, to calculate the percentage by which men’s, women’s, boys’ and girls’ wages exceeded or fell short of the overall average. The figures expressed below are in yuan per day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total Wage Bill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2475.63</td>
<td>236.57</td>
<td>118.77</td>
<td>127.08</td>
<td>All-factory total 2,958.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4671</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>353</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-factory average 0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of All-Factory Average Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>106%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If the bonus payments were distributed according to the same proportions as the nominal wage payments, and (as indicated by the sources) equivalent proportions of adults and children were employed in both surveys, the Nankai figures for cash earnings of workers of all ages and sexes would be as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominal Wages</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>15.57</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>10.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Nankai survey quotes daily nominal wages, but not monthly nominal wages. The monthly nominal wages above are derived by multiplying the daily wages in the Nankai survey by 27.8. This is based on comprehensive workers’ attendance figures for 1929 in the Nankai survey.31

This assumes that the distribution of bonus payments was not significantly skewed according to age or gender. Again, it is not an unquestionable assumption, though not unreasonable given the nature of recruitment at Yuyuan and other cotton mills; it can be assumed that women and children worked at Yuyuan because they were related to a worker with a certain amount of influence, or could claim the personal allegiance of one, and therefore were not necessarily left out of the distribution of cash favours by the foremen.

If the proportion by which real wages (with bonuses) exceeded nominal wages at the Yuyuan cotton mill in 1929 (as measured by Nankai) is deemed to apply to other cotton mills (this of course is a hypothetical exercise, and in view of the diversity of nominal wages between one factory and another, there is no reason to assume a priori that bonuses were paid at an equivalent rate) the average earnings for each cotton mill would look like this:

31. Fang, 1932, pp.122-123.
As Fang Xianting indicates, 273 of the 338 workers in carpet factories whose incomes could be estimated, or 83%, earned between 11.5 and 14 yuan a month, counting food and "housing". Looking at the monthly earnings of adult male cotton mill workers, the Hengyuan workers’ earnings fell below this range, the Huaxin workers’ earnings were within this range, and the earnings of adult male workers at the other four mills exceeded it. If Fang Xianting and Nankai’s method of estimating the cost of room and board in carpet factories is taken on trust, and if the practice of converting food provided by an employer and sleeping space into a cash equivalent is of value in comparing remuneration of labour, carpet weavers appear to have earned the same or slightly less than adult male cotton mill workers.

Studies of "labour aristocracy" in other countries have pointed to a close correspondence between possession of a skill recognised and required by employers (usually formalised by apprenticeship), earning an income considerably higher than the wages paid locally to unskilled workers, and an unquantifiable but valuable and desired "respectable" social status. In fact the available information on workers’ incomes generally supports this correspondence. But not in the case of the Tianjin carpet weavers. Even the social status does not seem to have applied to them. Fang Xianting describes their social status as rather low, pointing out that their age at marriage was higher than was then usual in China and that only 139 out of 354 could read and write. That is, they tended to possess neither basic education nor any other quality distinct from income to make them particularly attractive as marriage partners from the point of view of parents of daughters.

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32. Fang, 1929, p.45.
The Tianjin carpet industry of the 1920s and 1930s gives the impression of having been a low-status trade, recently established, weakly organised and subject to cutthroat competition among a mass of hundreds of small employers. If Tianjin carpet weavers behaved rather like "threatened craftsmen" in France, it was not because they were threatened with loss of status as members of local society, or loss of a relatively high income-earning capacity that defined their status. It was because they were threatened with increased vulnerability to authority.

The Suzhou silk factories.

The relative importance of the issue of foremen can be conveyed more exactly by making a comparison across different industries not just of the numbers of strikes and disputes which included claims for the re-employment of sacked workers, as above, but of the numbers of disputes in which the workers complained explicitly about the actions of foremen, whether or not anyone was sacked. Small-scale handcraft industries can not be included, because no foremen were employed. However, the scope of comparison can be increased if the silk industry of Suzhou is treated in the same way as the carpet industry of Tianjin.

The silk industry of Suzhou, as discussed in Chapter 1, was a very old and locally important handcraft industry undergoing a transition, in the period under study, from a merchant-employer system to a factory system, with a degree of change in the technology of silk weaving that did not render the skill of "wooden loom" weavers irrelevant. In the 1920s and 1930s, silk weaving in Suzhou, like carpet weaving in Tianjin, was an industry in which large numbers of small enterprises run by owner-managers existed alongside a small number of much larger factories. Silk weaving, in terms of numbers of workshops and factories and numbers of workers employed, was the largest handcraft industry in Suzhou. The size and organisation of the industry has been discussed in Chapter 1, and I will not discuss it further here. Like Tianjin carpets, the silk fabric produced in Suzhou, and in other cities in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, attracted the interest of foreign traders in the treaty ports in the 19th century, and soon became the most economically important manufactured export of the Yangtze valley, and as was the case in the Tianjin carpet industry, the stimulus of overseas demand caused Chinese, and in this case Japanese, investors to attempt to profit from it by founding silk factories.33 There were two major

33. Duan Benluo, Suzhou shougongye shi (History of handcraft industry in Suzhou), Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986, ch.2, pt.1, pp.198-235, and ch.3, pt.1, pp.354-396; also Tao Shunan, "Tantan jiefang qian de Suzhou sizhiye" (Talking about the pre-Liberation silk industry of
differences between the silk factories and the zhangfang. The silk factories used flying shuttle looms (shou la ji) on which figured silk cloth could be woven – these were initially imported from Japan, though by 1918 Chinese machine shops were making them – and instead of putting out work to weavers who worked at home or in their own workshops, they assembled the weavers in factories to work under supervision.

If the silk weaving factories in Suzhou display a similar pattern of industrial conflict to the carpet factories in Tianjin, the argument so far is not exactly proved, but it is somewhat strengthened. If zhangfang and factories are counted together, the number and type of silk weavers’ disputes are 34 wage claims and 5 employment claims in 44 disputes. If the new-style silk factories using the flying shuttle looms are looked at in isolation, there are 9 wage claims and 4 employment claims in 16 disputes.

The numbers of complaints about foremen by industry are tabled below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Total no. of disputes</th>
<th>Cause known</th>
<th>No. of complaints about foremen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
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<td>Carpets</td>
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<td>Silk</td>
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The weavers in the silk factories were more likely than the weavers in the zhangfang to take action on security of employment issues, and were more likely than workers in cotton mills, modern flour mills and match factories to complain about foremen. In these respects the Suzhou silk factories resemble the Tianjin carpet factories, and

Suzhou) in Suzhou wenshi ziliao (Selected materials on the culture and history of Suzhou) vol.1-5; Zhu Hongyong, "Jindai Suzhou sichou shengchan de yange yu fazhan xingshuai" (The rise and fall of the modern silk industry in Suzhou) in Suzhou wenshi ziliao vol.18; and for an account of a May 4th strike in a Japanese factory, Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.
contrast with the new factory industries, and with the handcraft industries which were not shifting towards the factory system.

Three of the four security of employment claims in the silk factories were responses by the weavers to the closing of factories in 1927 and 1929, at which time the industry was in a state of relative decline. The Chamber of Commerce files are not especially informative on what demands the workers raised and what terms they were offered, but they do state clearly that the factory closings were due to losses, and were not lockouts. On one occasion a list of unemployed weavers was sent to the silk factory employers' guild. On another occasion the weavers were paid off with 12 yuan. There are no references to the issue of first rights to future employment. The other security of employment claim, at the Minsheng factory in February 1935, was a demand for "no sacking without cause of workers or union representatives" raised by the weavers during negotiations to end a dispute over a wage cut. It appeared that the weavers were trying to pre-empt selective action against activists. There were no demands for the reinstatement of sacked silk weavers.

The powers of foremen.

The relatively great concern of the Tianjin carpet weavers and Suzhou silk weavers with security of employment issues can be traced to their resistance to the new power relationships entailed by the introduction of the factory system. They complained about being physically assaulted by foremen (8 times), threatened and insulted (3 times) and discriminatory sacking or arrests (14 times), and demanded time off, or a more convenient distribution of working hours (5 times), repeal, or supervision by the union, of the standards used to measure the workers' output and assess its quality (4 times), and issue of bank books and shortening of the minimum term for the payout of superannuation funds (twice). But the question remains only partly answered. If it is accepted that handcraft workers objected to factory conditions more often than workers in the new industries because they were less dependent on personal patronage and better able to find work elsewhere, why did they rarely or never go on strike because of being beaten, insulted or unfairly fined by a workshop owner? The fixed production schedule and the superannuation system were in

34. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi)2-1 659, (Yi)2-1 670 and (Yi)2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives; Jiangsu sheng zhengfu gongbao (Jiangsu provincial government gazette), vol.1, no.11 (October 1927) pp.36-37, vol.1, no.12 (November 1927) p.32, vol.1, no.16 (December 1927) pp.30-32.
35. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives; Ministry of
effect only in factories. However, small employers in the handcraft industries possessed the same powers to discipline and dismiss workers and evaluate their output as did foremen in factories. Out of the eight recorded disputes in small Chinese-owned carpet workshops, six were wage claims or other economic claims, one was no dispute at all (the Bureau of Social Affairs, required by the law of the time to negotiate terms for paying off the workers at a workshop which had filed for bankruptcy, sent its representative there to discover that all the weavers had left) and the other, in early 1929 when the Guomindang unions were being set up, featured a brawl between the new union representative’s gang and the boss’s gang. (Both sides then filed suit).\(^36\) Out of 29 disputes in the silk weaving workshops, there was just one instance of mass protest over the treatment of a weaver who was put in prison for debt to a zhangfang owner, and died there.\(^37\) There were two claims for material relief from the Chamber of Commerce or Wu county at times of mass unemployment in 1900 and 1911,\(^38\) and the rest were wage claims. Some explanation appears to be necessary for why the powers of master craftsmen mattered less than the powers of foremen.

What follows is pure hypothesis, not yet supported by the kind of systematic shop by shop investigation which would be necessary either to bear it out or refute it. That is, the authority of small employers in the handcraft industries was more circumscribed than the authority of foremen in the factory industries, and therefore, they used it less. The small size of these enterprises made qualified and experienced workers less expendable. In the context of the small owner-managed workshop, the fact that owners and workers tended to come from the same locality or even the same family meant in practice that capricious abuse of power by the owner damaged his standing in the village, soured his relations with others in the trade and made it difficult for him to recruit workers in future. The owners of such small enterprises depended for their own economic survival on a reliable supply of skilled labour, and could not afford to give themselves a bad name. This was the key difference between an owner-manager and a foreman. The foreman’s wages were paid by the company. As long as a foreman worked as directed, his income and his status were

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36. Tianjin General Chamber of Commerce files 2 lei/241 and 2 lei/252, Tianjin City Archives; Rui Yunzhi, "Tianjin ditan gongye de xingqi he fazhan", pp.77-78; Dong, 1985, pp.113, 184; Du Lunshan, "Tianjin ditan jianshi", p.49.


guaranteed. Foremen could afford to be altogether less restrained in their dealings with workers. In fact, foremen were likely to be "restrained" in the opposite direction - required by the management to deal strictly with the workers.

At the Tavshanjian carpet factory, where there were six disputes and strikes, the manager, Papaz, was an American citizen of Armenian origin, and all the foremen were Indians. According to a leaflet circulated in January 1926 by the (then Communist) Tianjin carpet weavers' union, "... the factory supervisors (Indian) often brutally whipped us and fined us by deductions from our starvation wages. The last strike was brought about by this very cruel treatment and what we demanded was that thereafter no workmen be whipped; this was no more than the plea of a prisoner to his jailer for mercy; but contrary to our expectation the plea enraged the manager and the result was the discharge of the workman Liu .... Imagine the humiliation that we labourers are supervised, as slaves, by Indians. Prisoners do not undergo such hardships. We are deprived of our natural rights and privileges". The Tavshanjian carpet weavers also called for an end to quality control of finished carpets by "foreigners". There are no other references to the employment of Indians as foremen in Tianjin factories. However, Sikhs were routinely employed as watchmen or security guards in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and there were normally several hundred of them in the police force of the International Settlement in Shanghai, on the assumption that Chinese thieves were more afraid of them than of their own countrymen. It is probable that Papaz, who was once cautioned by U.S. Consul-General Gauss "not to use or display firearms" in the factory, hired the Indians assuming they would enforce factory discipline and obedience more easily and willingly, and be more accountable to the management, than Chinese foremen. The Elbrook factories, in which there were four strikes, employed White Russians as foremen.

What is suggested by the consequences of introduction of the factory system for relations between workers and employers in the Tianjin carpet factories and Suzhou silk factories is that scale does have distinct effects on power relations in the workplace, though

39. United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929; enclosure in despatch, Gauss to Macmurray, February 4, 1926; file no. 893.5045/311.
40. American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations; Shanghai and Tientsin (Studies of the Pacific No.5). New York, 1939, p.106; A.M. Kotenev, Shanghai, its mixed court and council, North-China Daily News and Herald, Ltd, Shanghai, 1925, pp.122-123. See also North China Herald, Shanghai, July 18, 1925, for an example of Guomindang political propaganda critical of the use of Sikhs to protect British interests in China.
41. The United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929; despatch, Dorsey to Macmurray, August 31, 1929; file
these effects are different in new factory industries and factory industries with handcraft antecedents. The amount of work required in the administration of a large, complex enterprise employing hundreds or thousands of people gave rise to an intermediate stratum of foremen, who were responsible for co-ordination of production and recruitment, sacking and discipline of the workers, but did not, themselves, stand to lose by antagonising the workers in the way that small employers did. Because of the size of factories and the way they were organised, factory workers faced a different kind of authority from that faced by handcraft workers. Because craft workers were not dependent on foremen for access to employment in the way that factory workers in the new industries were, they objected to the way they were supervised more often and with greater determination than workers in the new industries. The important difference between workers who were recognised as skilled, and workers who were recognised as unskilled, was not so much that the skilled workers possessed a greater sense of self-worth and lower tolerance of being bullied, but that the unskilled workers were less able to do anything about it.
CHAPTER 6

The Guomindang, the Communist Party and factory floor politics

Introduction

This chapter investigates the participation of workers in different industries in Suzhou and Tianjin in Communist and Guomindang unions. The first four chapters have argued that the type of manufacturing technology used – locally evolved versus imported – affected the means of recruitment available to employers and the workers’ mobility, and therefore had a determining effect on the content of industrial conflict. The fifth argued that the size of the enterprise was also a determining factor, because the delegation of authority to foremen in factories, and the relative importance to the enterprise of the individual worker, ensured that supervisory staff in large enterprises in fact held more unrestrained authority over the workers than owners of small ones. In the course of argument, both illegal Communist unions and legal Guomindang unions have frequently appeared both as agents of strikes and disputes and as causes of them, with employers trying to exclude or abolish the union and workers trying to preserve it. This study looks at workers’ membership of unions not as a first cause of industrial conflict or an expression of the workers’ class consciousness or feelings of exploitation but as a consequence of the intersection of the political agendas of the Guomindang and the Communist Party with existing relations of power in workshops and factories. That is, how the dynamics of authority, dependence and independence in workshops and factories, as outlined in the previous chapters, are expressed in workers’ membership of trade unions.

All other things being equal, the argument of Chapters 1 to 5 would predict that craft workers would be more organised than factory workers, and that craft workers in trades which were going through a transition towards the factory system would be the most organised of all. This assumes that the relative independence of craft workers made them risk less when they antagonised their employers by joining a union, and that workers in handcraft industries which were tending towards the factory system had more to protest about than other craft workers. It also assumes that workers were reasonably sure they had something to gain by joining a union, though what they hoped to gain is open to debate; Hershatter and Honig’s studies, and more recently, Elizabeth
Perry in *Shanghai on Strike* (1991), have commented on the range of personal motivations that workers in Shanghai and Tianjin had for joining unions. I consider that the extent of union involvement in industrial conflict in Republican China, and the extent of conflict over the status of unions, negates the idea that unions were no more than a concept imported to China with other elements of Western liberal and socialist ideologies and then imposed from above by the Guomindang or outside by the Communist Party, and that they are irrelevant to any understanding of power relations in Chinese factories.

However, all other things were not equal. The Communist Party, to the extent that it was able to operate at all in factories in Tianjin and Suzhou in the Republican period, consistently directed its labour activists to organise workers in large factories. To some extent, this was due to the Sino-Marxist inheritance of the Leninist thesis of the nature of the proletariat. That is, workers in large modern capitalist enterprises were the most profoundly excluded from control over the means of production and were therefore the most revolutionary, while craft workers, who might at least own their tools and, more important, regularly crossed the class boundary separating them from their employers, belonged materially and therefore intellectually to pre-capitalist "feudal" society and were less reliable as a force for proletarian revolution.

Even if the Party centre had been open to revision of this thesis on the basis of concrete Chinese circumstance – and even the most partisan of Party histories indicate that it scarcely ever was – the students who made up the great majority of the Party’s corps of labour activists were probably too lacking in experience of factories, and too socially remote from the workers, to make much sense of the relations of authority, dependence and independence between workers, foremen and employers, and of the material circumstances of their origin, except in the terms that had been handed down to them. Policy aside, there were practical difficulties in contacting and organising workers employed in large numbers of small workshops. This did not prevent the silk weavers, shoemakers, incense makers and other tradespeople in Suzhou and Tianjin from taking part in collective action on their own or through guilds, but it might have been a major obstacle for the inexperienced and highly visible student activists of the Communist Party.

The Guomindang, as the governing party in Tianjin after June 1928 and in Suzhou from March 1927, was in a much stronger position to establish unions in both large and small scale enterprises. However, the Guomindang’s partnership and split with the Communist Party, and the remaining presence of or fear of Communist activists in the Guomindang areas, caused the Guomindang labour bureaucracy also to
focus on large factories, in the expectation that the more serious threats to social order would come from these. In fact it is possible that statistics of workers’ membership of Communist and Guomindang unions reflect little more than the political philosophies and strategies of the two parties, and that no useful conclusion about the relationship between industrial technology and organisation on the one hand, and power relations between workers, foremen and employers on the other, can be drawn from them.

These are the kinds of inference that could be drawn from union statistics. If it happened that workers in large enterprises were consistently less organised than workers in small ones, in spite of Communist and Guomindang priorities, the link between imported technology and relations of personal patronage in factories would appear stronger. If the opposite were true, if workers in small-scale handcraft enterprises were clearly reluctant to join unions while factory workers joined at the first opportunity, the thesis connecting imported technology and personal patronage would appear to need qualification. If factory workers in one industry were highly unionised and equally unskilled factory workers in another industry hardly joined unions at all, then the explaining power of the thesis as it stands is inadequate, and another variable or set of variables has to be identified.

The unions’ participation in disputes, or lack of this, is also important. In some cases, Guomindang unions were taken over and reorganised by the local Guomindang Party branch for taking up the workers’ cause too insistently, and in others, the Guomindang union attempted to restrain the workers from striking or making demands, and the workers struck without it. What follows is an attempt to test the argument of this dissertation against the information available on the membership and degree of activism of trade unions in Tianjin and Suzhou.

The workers’ histories

One serious difficulty that must be managed one way or another in any study of unions in Republican China, particularly Communist Party unions, is the use of histories of the workers’ movement written under the People’s Republic. The amount of material collected in these histories, and the degree of detail they sometimes provide about events in individual factories, makes it a hard and costly decision to ignore them altogether. Historians can not afford to restrict their use of sources to those written or compiled according to the standards of impartiality and accuracy they are required to keep themselves, or to restrict their reading of books to those written for political aims
similar to their own. Even so, these workers’ histories are particularly difficult to use. The theoretical importance of the proletariat to the Communist Party translated after 1949 into assimilation of the history of labour in pre-Communist China into the history of the rise to power of the Communist Party. In the paradigmatic and authorised history of the Chinese Communist Party, the great mass of discrete and often contradictory events and trends that comprise the history of labour in China up to 1949 is rendered into a spurious totality, a "labour movement", which progresses step by step, in spite of the occasional backward slip or dead end, towards the single and necessary goal of the triumph of the Communist Party (the vanguard of the proletariat) and the establishment of socialist society.

Under the People’s Republic, the absence of material foundations and political guarantees to ensure the independence of universities, publishers and the press has meant that there has been no separate tradition of academic history which might have generated alternative histories of labour, or contributed theoretical and empirical rigour to the authorised Party histories. In effect, Chinese academic historians working on labour have written Party history or nothing, and the effect and purpose of their work has been to legitimise the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party.

The resulting works are loosely constructed and weakly argued. The overarching conceptual framework, according to which strikes are an expression of the workers’ rising proletarian class consciousness, workers’ membership of Communist Party unions is another expression of the same thing, and the victory of the Communist Party over the Guomindang in the Chinese civil war is the political expression of the victory of the proletariat and China’s transition to socialism, is treated as undebatable historical fact. Rather than attempting to confirm the Sino-Marxist conceptual framework by systematic analysis of the manner in which the rise of the Chinese working class and its class consciousness caused the Communist Party to defeat the Guomindang in the civil war, what these studies do is string together sequences of events which are used to illustrate the truth of the received conceptual framework.

Typically, they include a series of illustrations of the exploitation of the workers under the old order; a series of illustrations of the subservience of the warlords and Guomindang to the forces of late capitalist imperialism represented by British and Japanese interests in China; a series of illustrations of the people’s outrage against imperialism and feudalism; and a series of illustrations of the workers’ achievement of class consciousness. The death of a rickshaw puller, who collapsed between the shafts in Victoria Road, Tianjin, and was left lying there by his foreign passenger, takes on a kind of power of explanation by poetic symbolism. One workers’ history differs from
another not at all in the theory they set out to argue or illustrate, but only in the people, organisations and events used as illustrations. One effect of this approach is that events of little or no significance for the workers and their relationship with their employers (such as speeches at May 30th rallies) are given prominence because they are part of the political history of the Communist Party, while events of much greater significance, such as the refusal of the workers at the Baocheng cotton mill in January 1932 and September 1933, at Huaxin in March 1932 and April 1934, at Yuyuan in November 1932 and May 1934, at Beiyang in February 1934, and at the Beiyang match factory in June 1934 to recognise the right of the Guomindang unions to represent them, are not mentioned at all, not even because these events present the Communist Party in an unfavourable light but because they did not involve the Communist Party.

What is frustrating for historians is the general lack of reference to sources; accounts of disputes and strikes are sparsely or misleadingly footnoted, or not footnoted at all. Even more frustrating is the fact that in spite of the overriding political purpose of these texts, their weakness of logical structure and neglectful attribution, the accounts of disputes and strikes that they present cannot even be confidently dismissed as political fabrications. Often enough, the most detailed account, or the only detailed account, of a dispute or strike is the account worked up after 1949 from the records or the memories of Communist Party activists, and what information there is in contemporary sources tends to confirm more than refute the Communist Party account. Or else, an account of a strike, composed in a style of flat-footed hyperbole that almost implores the reader to dismiss it out of hand as propaganda, appears unattributed in a workers’ history of the 1970s and proves, on examination, to be taken in its essentials word for word from a Guomindang Bureau of Social Affairs work report. Below I have set out parallel accounts of a 1929 industrial dispute in post-1949 and contemporary sources, by way of illustration.

The Tianjin gongren yundong shi (History of the Tianjin workers’ movement) edited by Zhao Yi and published in 1989 by the Labour History Research Unit of the Tianjin General Union, is a late but characteristic example of its type. There is the following account of a dispute over sackings of shop assistants in Tianjin silk shops:

"From February to May, 1929, shop assistants in Tianjin silk shops took part in a fierce struggle against sacking and termination of employment [sic]. On February 24, the Huazhu and six other silk shops took advantage of the Beiping government’s prohibition of the General Union of Shop Assistants to flout the standard rules of practice for hiring and firing shop assistants and sack sixty-four shop assistants who had shown themselves willing to work for the union. This brought about a shop assistants’ slowdown. The shop assistants called for unconditional return to work of all of those who had been sacked and for
punishment of the manager of the Huazhu shop, who was responsible for the dispute. The Guomindang Bureau of Social Affairs came forward to negotiate, and proposed that those who had not made mistakes should return to work, and that the others should be paid off with two months' wages."

The workers were totally unsatisfied with this. On March 13th, a further round of negotiations took place, and the government representatives got together with the capitalists and refused to approve the workers’ demands. The masses of the shop assistants (dianyuan qunzhong) were infuriated and they organised a slowdown committee to continue the struggle. They announced that unless the employers gave a satisfactory answer within three days, they would close the shops and institute a trade wide slowdown. The situation grew more serious daily. The Tutelage Committee of the Tianjin Guomindang Party branch called a meeting of representatives of all parties, and all agreed that the shop assistants should return to work, but they could not come to an agreement on terms of settlement.

On April 22nd, shop assistants at Huazhu took the lead and commenced a slowdown in protest against the capitalists’ sacking of their fellow workers without reason. During the slowdown, the shop assistants’ branch union sent out "union support squads" of eleven members, each armed with a wooden club, to the scene of the slowdown to "preserve the peace". They announced that this was to prevent "reactionary elements seizing the opportunity to create disorder". At the same time, they pasted up posters in the doorways of the shops announcing the slowdown. A good many people stopped to read them. The Guomindang authorities and the military police headquarters at once sent a detachment of military police to monitor the situation. It was as if an enemy army had arrived. However, the shop assistants in the silk shops maintained the slowdown for over a month. On May 28th, the Guomindang city government of Tianjin convened a further meeting of the "labour-capital arbitration committee" and made the unilateral decision that half of the sacked shop assistants would get their jobs back, and the rest would be paid off with 60 yuan. Conditions for return to work followed the three conditions originally fixed by the Tianjin Guomindang Party branch and the city government."^1

None of this is attributed. In fact the Tianjin City Government Gazette (Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao) mentions the silk shops dispute in its issues of February, March and April 1929. It is also reported in the Bureau of Social Affairs’ First Annual Work Report (Tianjin shi Shehui Ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao) and in Wu Bannong’s 1930 study Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozhi zhengyi di fenxi (Beiping Social Research Institute, Beiping, 1932), itself based extensively on Guomindang government sources. The Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao of February 1929 reports:

"The silk shops branch of the General Union of Shop Assistants petitioned [the Bureau of Social Affairs] as follows: ‘The established custom in silk shops here [in Tianjin] is to dismiss assistants on the second day of the [lunar] New Year. This year, the Huazhu, Huafeng, Ruifu, Xiangrui, Fuxiang and Hongji shops sacked more than 40 assistants altogether on the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the first month. We do not know how many more will be

1. Zhao Yi (ed.), Tianjin gongren yundong shi (History of the Tianjin workers’ movement), Tianjin General Union Labour History Research Unit, Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, Tianjin, 1989, pp.132-133.
sacked. Please ensure that they are returned to work, to defend the rights of the people’. The Bureau was not appraised of all the facts, so called in the owners of the shops, questioned them and offered the following terms: (1) no more shop assistants to be sacked while talks are in process, and (2) those who had made no serious mistakes to be returned to work. The shop owners agreed to the first proposal and said they would consider the second. 'The Bureau is at present making urgent efforts to negotiate a settlement of the dispute'.

In the following April, the Gazette reported: "On the thirteenth and fourteenth of the first month, the Huazhu and six other silk shops sacked more than sixty shop assistants. The shop assistants’ branch union protested these actions and called for all the sacked shop assistants to be returned to work. The Bureau [of Social Affairs] held several conciliation meetings but failed to reach a settlement until the fourth formal meeting of the Conciliation Committee. The terms agreed on were as follows: (1) 18 shop assistants to be re-employed, and (2) the rest to be paid off with two months’ wages. Apprentices to receive 4 yuan. The representatives of both sides accepted and signed the agreement, but when the text was sent to the organisations concerned, the shop assistants said they would not accept it and a slowdown followed. The matter has been referred to an Arbitration Committee for settlement.'

The First Annual Work Report of the Bureau of Social Affairs reports: "The Huazhu and six other silk shops sacked 64 shop assistants on the 13th of the first [lunar] month. The silk shops’ shop assistants’ branch union declared that the employers had taken advantage of the Beiping Branch Political Committee’s order forbidding shop assistants to take part in [political] activity to oppress their employees and break up the union. They had also broken the customary agreement on the hiring and firing of shop assistants [which had always been done on the second and third of the first month]. They demanded that all sacked shop assistants should be returned to work, and that the owner of the Huazhu shop, who had started the dispute, should be punished.

The Bureau met with representatives of the employers and asked them why the shop assistants had been sacked. They said that the sacked shop assistants had neglected their duties, or were bad characters. Perhaps this was so, but as the employers had not dismissed the shop assistants on the second and third of the first month, but on the thirteenth and fourteenth, which coincided with the Beiping Branch Political Committee’s order against shop assistants organising, the suspicion that the sackings were politically motivated could not be ignored. The Bureau convened a Conciliation Committee and the following terms were proposed: (1) 18 shop assistants who had made no mistakes to return to work, and (2) the others, who had made mistakes of some kind or who had a poor relationship with their employers, to be paid off with two

2. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, February 1929, p.128.
months’ wages. The representatives of labour and capital expressed their agreement, but
the labour organisation then repudiated the agreement, and the dispute was referred to
an Arbitration Committee”.4

The Bureau of Social Affairs’ 1929 work report, which summarises the work of
the Bureau up to the end of December 1929, gives no indication of what the Arbitration
Committee decided – the narrative of the dispute breaks off at the same point as it does
in the first annual work report quoted above. Wu Bannong adds that the slowdown
lasted 3 days, and that the Arbitration Committee offered the following terms: (1) half
the shop assistants to return to work; (2) the other half to be paid off with 60 yuan; and
(3) the Tianjin city government and Guomindang Party branch to determine the
standards by which shop assistants may be re-employed. 39 of them were re-employed
and 40 paid off with 60 yuan - although Wu initially gives the number of workers
involved in the dispute as 64 (the Bureau of Social Affairs’ figure) not 79.5

The greatest factual discrepancy between the contemporary Guomindang and
post-1949 Communist accounts above is in the length of the slowdown. In the Tianjin
gongren yundong shi account it lasts for a month, and in Wu Bannong’s summary only
three days. In all other respects – the number of shop assistants sacked, the details of
the arbitration process and the eventual result – the Tianjin gongren yundong shi agrees
with the contemporary accounts. There is even a suggestion, considering Wu
Bannong’s summary, that the Tianjin General Union underestimated the number of shop
assistants who were sacked.

The narrative of the 1929 silk shops dispute is characteristic of the presentation
of industrial disputes in the Tianjin gongren yundong shi, in style, attribution (or lack of
it) and relationship to the sources it appears to derive from. Chapter 1, part 3 – "The
spontaneous struggles of the Tianjin workers" – goes into some detail about the anti-
French boycott and strike of 1916 which followed the extension of the French
concession into Lao Xi Kai, and mentions other strikes in the telegraph office in 1903,
in carpet factories in 1919 and in the old-fashioned flour mills or mofang in 1916, "all

3. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1929, p.196.
4. Tianjin shi Shehui Ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao (1st annual work report of the
Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs), Bureau of Social Affairs, Government of the Tianjin
Special Municipality, 1929, pp.296-297.
5. Wu Bannong, Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozhi zhengyi di fenxi (Analysis of
labour-capital disputes in Beiping, Tianjin and Hebei province), Beiping Shehui
of which were successful to some degree. All references to strikes are unattributed.

The Lao Xi Kai strikes were reported extensively in the contemporary Tianjin newspapers, *Yishi Bao* and *Dagong Bao*. The *Tianjin gongren yundong shi* mentions strikes in the Yipin company (a French construction materials enterprise, with a brick kiln and ironworks), the Yishan Industrial Co. (another French ironworks), the French electric light company, the Huali ironworks, the Boli rickshaw yard, the French sporting club, the Municipal Council, the Dalai Hotel, and the Zhongfa Industrial Steel Company. The strike spread to various organs of the French Municipal Council, to foreign import-export firms, banks and newspapers, and to domestic servants employed by French residents. On November 26, 1916, the *Dagong Bao* published a list of the Chinese employees of French organisations and enterprises who had joined the strike and registered with the Strike Committee, which coordinated the anti-French strike campaign with financial assistance from the Chihli Federation of Chambers of Commerce. These were: the casual labourers employed by the Municipal Council, the ironworkers of the Yipin Company and the Huali Company, the rickshaw pullers from the Boli yard, the staff of the French sporting club, the ironworkers from the Yishan Company, the staff of the electric light company, the workers of the Zhongfa Industrial Steel Company, the indoor staff of the Municipal Council, the Chinese staff of the Dalai Hotel, the employees of the post and telegraph office, and the domestic servants of French and other foreign residents. The *Dagong Bao* also reported a strike of workers at a French firm exporting straw braid and straw hats. The *Tianjin gongren yundong shi* narrative of the 1916 anti-French strike and boycott appears to follow the account presented in the contemporary Chinese press.

As for the other three strikes mentioned in this section, I have not located contemporary references to the telegraph office strike of 1903 or the carpet weavers’ strike of 1919, but the *mofang* strike of 1916 is mentioned in the correspondence files of the Tianjin General Chamber of Commerce, now held in the Tianjin City Archives. A wage rise was eventually awarded, so that the *Tianjin gongren yundong shi*’s claim to success has some foundation, although the Chamber of Commerce file makes it clear that the wage rise was awarded to a substantially new workforce, as most of the flour millers taking part in the 1916 strike were sacked.

9. *Tianjin shanghui dang’an* (Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file) 3 lei/242, Tianjin City Archives.
Chapter 5, part 3, "The unprecedented high tide of the Tianjin workers’ movement", which describes post-May 30th strikes in Tianjin, relates strikes of printers in British and Japanese newspapers, of sailors and dock workers on the Butterfield and Swire and Jardine Matheson ships and docks, and of cotton mill workers at Baocheng and Yuda. In this case there is one attribution of a strikers’ manifesto issued by the printers (to the *Yishi Bao* and the *Dagong Bao*), though the remainder of the two-page narrative is unattributed. For the sailors’ and dock workers’ strike, there is one reference, in an account of similar length, to the publishing of a strikers’ manifesto in the *Gongren zhi lu* (*The Workers’ Road*, published in Hong Kong by the strike committee) and one to a declaration of support from the Shanghai sailors published in the *Yishi Bao*. There is also one reference (the only one in which a source is brought in to corroborate physical events) to an attack on striking dock workers as they assembled to receive relief funds from the CCP-lead Strikers’ Relief Committee by the Fengtian military police, which killed two people and injured several others – and this comes from a contemporary Communist Party publication, *Zhengzhi shenghuo*. In the account of the Baocheng strike, there is a long quote from the *Yishi Bao* describing the workers’ occupation of the factory and assault on the personnel office. The detailed narrative of the riot and massacre at the Yuda cotton mill lacks attribution to any contemporary source.\(^\text{10}\)

All of the May 30th strikes in Tianjin were reported in the contemporary Chinese press, as well as attracting the attention of the English language press and the British and United States consulates. The *Tianjin gongren yundong shi* narrative of the Baocheng cotton mill strike, in spite of the opposed political constructions made from the event, closely follows the account given in the Japanese-owned Beijing newspaper, the *Shuntian Shibao*, and that recorded in the files of the United States Department of State (Baocheng was indebted to the American company Andersen, Meyer & Co., and was managed by an American nominee of the company).\(^\text{11}\) The narrative of the sailors’ and dock workers’ strikes contains important detail, or alleged detail, not mentioned in the contemporary Chinese or English language press or in the United States consular records. The narrative of the Yuda strike and its suppression by the Fengtian military police, in spite of the violent and controversial nature of its subject matter, does not differ essentially from that given by the sociologist Tang Hai in 1927, or that pieced together by Gail Hershatter in 1980, or even from the version in the *Shuntian Shibao*.

\(^{10}\) Zhao, 1989, pp.59-73.

\(^{11}\) *Shuntian Shibao*, 11 August 1925, p.1; United States Department of State, *Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1910-1929*, files no.893.5045/210, 893.5045/222.
All sources agree that several dozen workers lost their lives at Yuda.\(^{12}\)

The above examination of the *Tianjin gongren yundong shi* and its sources, or probable sources, illustrates the kind of difficulty that material of this kind poses for historians. Sometimes sources are provided. Sometimes no source is provided, the narrative is expressed in a style of rhetoric that invites disbelief, but contemporary sources, when found, only confirm the Chinese Communist Party account. Sometimes no contemporary sources can be found, and the only available accounts of events are those derived after 1949 from the records or memoirs of CCP participants. These accounts are written in order to legitimise the Chinese Communist Party’s rise to power, under circumstances in which no independent critical input is possible. To accept them creates the risk of being misled, while to reject them creates the risk of depriving oneself of closely detailed and useful information for reasons themselves political.

What I have chosen to do throughout this dissertation is to assume that when a post-1949 CCP source relates that a dispute or strike took place, it did in fact take place, even if no contemporary source can be found to corroborate this. I have assumed that post-1949 CCP sources can be taken at their word on relatively concrete matters such as demands raised or terms of settlement of any one particular strike. I consider that the political burden of these accounts is not in the industrial circumstances and events they narrate but in the drawing together of these events into a story of the triumph of the working class and its vanguard, and that the paucity or absence of reference to contemporary sources is most usually due to reluctance to quote Guomindang or pro-Guomindang sources, hard to excuse by the standards of Western academic history but intelligible in China, and not due to invention of events that did not happen.

On the subject of union membership, both contemporary Guomindang sources and post-1949 CCP sources tend to exaggerate the strength of the Communist Party presence. In the workers’ histories, this is for the reasons set out above. In the files of the local Guomindang authorities and, occasionally, the Chamber of Commerce, the discovery and punishment of Communists in places where subsequent workers’ histories do not claim any CCP involvement is best understood as ad hoc political legitimation, or rationalisation, of police actions taken at the request or insistence of local employers.

The Guomindang and Communist subversion.

The civil war between the Guomindang and the Communist Party added ideological and practical political weight to employers’ demands on the Guomindang. The political organisation of the Republic of China under the Guomindang made it difficult for factory workers accused of "counter-revolution" to defend themselves. There was no electoral mechanism, and the judicial system was a branch of government ultimately accountable to the Guomindang Party centre. This meant that the Guomindang was not under the same pressure to ensure that justice was done in factories, and seen to be done, as the government of a twentieth-century Western democracy.

At the local level, in spite of the pseudo-Leninist character of the Guomindang’s mission to educate the citizens of the Republic in the Three People’s Principles, the extent of state function was relatively limited. The local Party and government apparatus was acutely vulnerable to shifts in the balance of power between one faction and another of the more or less autonomous military elite to which, in effect, it was accountable, and was chronically short of money. In these circumstances, especially in Tianjin where a substantial share of the city’s modern manufacturing industry was financed by well-connected former government officials, the request of a cotton mill manager to have a few agitators removed after a wage claim could not be taken lightly, while the agitators themselves were of no immediate consequence.

For instance, there is the iron loom silk weavers’ strike in Suzhou from October to November, 1927. The Sanxing factory announced that it would close owing to poor business. The (Guomindang) iron loom weavers’ union opposed the closing of the factory and put forward a set of demands on behalf of the Sanxing weavers. The iron loom weaving employers’ guild first notified the Chamber of Commerce that it had leaflets in its possession issued by a "secret organisation" of silk weavers which declared that the employers would be "overthrown" and "made to suffer". Then on October 18th, a large crowd of silk weavers – the Chamber of Commerce estimated their number at around 2,000 – broke into the office of the Chamber of Commerce. They kidnapped the chairman of the Chamber, a director and seven staff members, along with the commander, deputy commander and four members of the Suzhou Merchants’ Militia, and dragged them through the streets to the office of the Guomindang branch, where they were locked inside and made to sign an agreement granting a sum of money for the support of the Sanxing weavers. "These actions" wrote the Chamber of Commerce" are the
result of agitation by reactionary elements intent on disturbing the rear". On October 30th, the Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Guomindang branch: "It is clear that there are Communist elements agitating from within." An unknown number of silk weavers were arrested, though neither Guomindang nor Communist accounts specify what they were charged with. It might reasonably be assumed, from the determination, ferocity and lack of fear of the law demonstrated by the silk weavers, that the strike was led by Communist activists, particularly as only six months had passed since the initial Guomindang purge of Communists in Suzhou. However, the *Chronology of events in the history of the Chinese Communist Party in Jiangsu* (Zhong Gong Jiangsu dangshi dashiji) published in 1990 by the CCP Jiangsu Party History Committee and the Jiangsu Provincial Archives, though it provides information on the numbers, organization and activities of CCP cells and branches in all towns and districts of Jiangsu, and though it describes the iron loom weavers’ strike of October 1927, does not mention any involvement by the Communist Party.

More surprisingly, in January 1928, the provisional executive committee of the Wu county (Wu xian) Guomindang branch wrote to the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, in connection with the reluctance of some pawnshop owners to implement conditions agreed by the Guomindang for settlement of a pawnshop employees’ dispute: "We are consistently receiving word of the presence of Communist agitators. They will cause trouble if the employers do not implement the conditions. They are deliberately inciting employers not to raise wages, in order to create conflict. The provincial government has directed that the agreement of August 1927 must be implemented. The Party branch asks the Chamber of Commerce to instruct the minority of pawnshop owners that if they persist in not abiding by the agreement they will come under suspicion of willing collaboration with the designs of Communist agitators". The *Chronology of events in the history of the Chinese Communist Party in Jiangsu* does not state that Communist Party activists ever made contact with pawnshop employees, or employers. At most, some pawnshop employees may have joined a short-lived CCP union some time between March 20 and April 19, 1927. There is no reference to the above dispute.

What I have done in these circumstances is to consider as established the

13. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.
14. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 659, Suzhou City Archives.
Guomindang’s claims that Communist Party activists or Communist unions were operating in factories only in cases where Communist sources corroborate this. In view of the political pressure on historians of labour in the People’s Republic to exaggerate the role of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletariat, I have considered uncorroborated post-1949 accounts of the existence of Communist cells in factories as established only if the degree of detail offered – names of Party members, for instance, or details of the size of the cell and its exact relationship to the local district committee – is such that they appear to have been copied from contemporary written documents. Statements such as “reliable support existed (for the Communist Party) in the Belgian Tramways and Electric Company and the Guomindang city government printing press” have been treated as potential but not established indications of the presence of Communist Party cells. In view of the political pressure on the local Guomindang apparatus to appease the local elites, aggravated by the ideological and military hostility between Guomindang and Communists in the terms of which the Guomindang legitimised its appeasement, I have counted uncorroborated Guomindang references to Communist agitators planning or leading strikes as potential but not established indications.

The meaning of union membership statistics

Aside from the question of the reliability of the sources, the meaning that can be read from statistics of union membership derives from the aims of the organisation that established the unions – the Guomindang or the Communist Party – and the extent to which these aims were achieved. There was some common ground in ideology and political purpose between the two networks of union organisations. Both were intended as organisational bases of power for the political parties, which were, ideally, intended to work for the realisation of each party’s comprehensive political program rather than for the achievement of ends confined to the factory or trade and defined by the workers who joined, and to mobilise support among the workers towards this end. Both were conceived as unions of workers, meaning wage-earning manufacturers of material products, not as unions of members of a trade as in the Qing guilds. However, that was as far as the resemblance went.

The Guomindang unions in Tianjin and Suzhou were created after the Guomindang took power in 1927 (in Suzhou) and 1928 (in Tianjin). They were legally constituted organisations established by the government to encourage the workers to

16. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1442, Suzhou City Archives.
"raise their intellectual level, increase production to the fullest extent of their ability, and maintain and improve their living standards and conditions of labour". They functioned in the open, were frequently subsidised by factory management at the behest of the local government, and took part in negotiations with employers and with the local government according to legally constituted conciliation and arbitration procedures. Communist Party unions enjoyed no legal status and functioned in secret. Their members faced expulsion from the factory or arrest if discovered.

The short-term and long-term aims of the two union networks overlapped to a limited extent. Communist Party unions were elements of major theoretical and strategic importance in a revolutionary movement which aimed to create an altogether new system of government and society based on abolition of existing economic and political power relations and concentration of economic and political power under the control of the Communist Party acting as the vanguard of the proletariat. Because the establishment of Communist government in China seemed a long way off to an underground Communist union activist in 1930, the immediate task was to conduct publicity for the Communist Party among the workers, and to create support for the Party by successful industrial action to gain immediate material benefits for the workers such as higher wages, time off and greater job security. As it was set out in a resolution of the Second All-China Labour Congress of 1925:

"Our aim is to overthrow imperialism and defeat the warlords, to achieve national liberation and strive to bring about world revolution. But all this can be gained only by going through a long period of struggle... The demands that are now most urgent, the movement for higher wages and shorter hours, for the freedom of speech, assembly, organisation and publication, for the right to strike and for universal suffrage, are not our ultimate aims. But they are all concerned with the basic necessities of our daily life. The achievement of these demands will not only improve our immediate standard of living, but will enable our organisation to expand, add to our experience of struggle and establish the foundation of our political strength. The achievement of these demands is the first step that we must take on the road toward our ultimate aims".20

17. Tianjin gongren yundong shi, p.126.
19. "Tianjin ge ji gonghui diaocha gaikuang" (Result of investigation into all levels of unions in Tianjin) in Shehui yuekan, Tianjin, December 1929, pp.1-26 provides details of factory subsidies to Tianjin Guomindang unions.
20. Resolutions and manifesto of the Second All-China Labour Congress (Di’erci quanguo laodong dahui jue’yi’an ji xuanyan), reproduced in Zhongguo gonghui lici daibiao dahui wenxian (Documents from the successive All-China Labour Congresses), Gongren Chubanshe, Beijing, 1984, p.19.
This expression of the necessary relationship between the immediate economic interests of the workers and the eventual proletarian revolution did not change in substance throughout the period under investigation. Conflicts within the Party about appropriate strategy for underground labour activists were not concerned with how long it would be before labour activists could legitimately introduce elements of political theory into their work, or with when it would be time to abandon economic demands altogether, but with maintaining the optimum balance indicated by the political and economic conditions of the time. The interests of the employers and the workers were assumed to be irreconcilable.

From the point of view of the individual worker, what this meant was that joining a Communist Party union, or taking part in industrial action organised by representatives of the Communist Party, meant embarking on a course of action to which the organisation that employed him or her was directly and irreconcilably opposed. Whether or not the workers who joined did so out of any firm commitment to the ideology and aims of the Communist Party, they can only have joined for reasons of the most compelling kind.

The logic of participating, or not participating, in a Guomindang union was more complex, and the terms and consequences appear to have changed more over the period under investigation. The Communist unions were always outside the law, and the degree to which they were suppressed and their members endangered varied only with the attention and efficiency of the local government. Although no corresponding shift in the expressed political theory and purpose of union organization can be read from the trend of labour legislation in Nanjing, the Guomindang unions passed through distinct epochs in their relations to employers and the government both in Tianjin and in Suzhou.

In Tianjin, there was an initial surge of organising activity and industrial conflict in the second half of 1928 and the first half of 1929, as the Guomindang tried to bring as many workers as possible into its union network, and employers reacted to the new demands and conditions imposed on them by the presence of the Guomindang unions by discriminating against union members. In this period, while the attitude of the Bureau of Social Affairs appeared favourable or at least neutral, the newly founded Guomindang unions often took advantage of their lawful status to campaign for higher wages and better conditions. By 1930 the situation was quieter. The Tianjin General Union was dissolved in 1930, not as a direct ideological reflection of change in Guomindang labour policy but as a consequence of the struggle for sovereignty in north China between Nanjing and Yan Xishan, and as a contemporary survey of the
carpet industry put it: "The Guomindang has ceased to be active in founding mass organisations". Union membership remained constant or declined slightly from 1930 to 1932. Then when Tianjin factories started to feel the effects of world depression and of the loss of economic access to the Northeast and started cutting wages, cutting production or closing from 1932 onwards, the Guomindang unions appeared to act on behalf of the Guomindang government and the employers in urging the workers to refrain from industrial action and accept reduced incomes. It was in this period that Tianjin workers represented by Guomindang unions began petitioning the Bureau of Social Affairs for reform of their unions, declaring that they did not recognise the union in their workplace, and striking in defiance of the union’s instructions.

In Suzhou, there was a similar surge of union establishment and growth of membership in 1927 after the Guomindang took power. There was no sudden upsurge in industrial conflict with the arrival of the Guomindang in Suzhou as there was in Tianjin, because the handcraft workers in Suzhou were initially much more widely organised and went on strike more often than the workers in new industries in Tianjin, especially in the last years of the Fengtian military government. There was therefore less visible slackening off of Guomindang union activity after 1930. What is clearly apparent is that the number of trades in which the workers were represented by unions declined. This took place in Tianjin as well.

Guomindang unions were constituted on the principle that the interests of workers and employers were the same, even if one side or another might occasionally fail to understand this. As the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs declared in 1929:

"The issue of labour has become a fundamental social problem throughout the world. However, in a capitalist country like ours, no matter whether the workers themselves make demands of their employers in order to improve their living standards, or whether the capitalists want to expand production and increase their profits, the needs of labour can not be ignored. This sort of mediation between labour and capital has already achieved great success in advanced capitalist countries such as Britain and America. In China, where production is still backward, there is no other way to ensure national construction and increase production except development of the national economy and consolidation of capital. But development of the national economy and consolidation of capital must be founded on cooperation between capital and labour. There is no other way. The cooperation between capital and

21. "Tianjin zhi ditan gongye" (The carpet industry of Tianjin) in Guohuo yanjiu yuekan (Chinese produce monthly), Tianjin, July 1932, p.89.
labour espoused by our party is the only way to save China".24

In the relationship between workers, employers and the Guomindang, the Guomindang sometimes took one side and sometimes the other, and sometimes appeared to pursue political ends of its own or even fight with itself.25 Whether or not an individual worker put his or her employment at risk by joining a Guomindang union, or possibly by neglecting to join one, varied according to local political conditions at the time.

For the workers who joined, the legal status of the Guomindang union network was the most crucial difference from the Communist Party unions briefly organised in 1925 and 1926. The legality of the Guomindang unions not only made it possible for the workers to make the occasional successful claim for higher wages or better terms of employment, but also opened up the prospect of individual upward mobility through the Guomindang itself. If they satisfied the basic political conditions and proved themselves able to read Three People’s Principles literature, active members of Guomindang unions were admitted to membership of the Guomindang, and were in fact encouraged to join.26 The concluding report of a survey of unions conducted by the Bureau of Social Affairs in the autumn of 1929 reports the number of union officers and members who had joined the Guomindang: 35 Guomindang members out of 5,014 union members at Yuyuan; 71 Guomindang members out of 2,952 union members at Hengyuan; 680 Guomindang members out of 10,106 union members in the Tianjin branch of the Bei-Ning (Beijing-Liaoning) railway union; with a precision which suggests this was an issue of some concern to the Guomindang government.27 A

26. For policy on expansion of the Guomindang and its relationship with the mass organisations, see *Shunzheng shiqi dangwu gongzuo fangan an* (Resolution on Party work in the period of political tutelage), Resolutions of the Third Session of the Third Plenum of the Central Executive Committee, reproduced in Rong Mengyuan (ed.), *Zhongguo Guomindang lid daibiao dahuiji zhongyang quanhui ziliao* (Records of the successive Guomindang Congresses and plenums of the Central Executive Committees), Guangming Ribao Chubanshe., Beijing, 1984, vol.2, pp.792-794. See also Patrick Cavendish, "The ‘New China’ of the Kuomintang" in Jack Gray, ed. *Modern China’s search for a political form*, Oxford University Press and R.I.A.A., 1968; and *Dagong Bao*, 10 February 1931 for the report of a survey of Guomindang membership in Tianjin – 212 workers out of a total of 580 Guomindang members surveyed. For the distribution of Guomindang political publicity through the union network, the Nankai carpet industry survey contains a section dealing with the workers’ literacy, which records how many of the workers surveyed could read "pamphleteer literature on the Three People’s Doctrine". See Fang Xianting, *Carpet industry in Tientsin*, p.45. The implication is that when asked by the Nankai sociologists if they could read and what they read, the workers often replied "The Three People’s Principles".
The most outstanding example of a Guomindang union activist turned politician, Ma Chaojun, director of the Labour Bureau of the Nanjing government in 1927, was not a former rank and file union member; Ma was a veteran of the Tong Meng Hui in Japan and an associate of Sun Yatsen since 1904, who had (briefly) studied political science at Japan’s Meiji University and represented the Guomindang in the Republican Parliament of 1912 before taking charge of the Guangzhou Mechanics’ Union in 1917. However, people like Zhang Guangxing, of the Tianjin-Pukou railway union and the Belgian Tramways and Electric Company Union, and Tao Zhuoran, an ex-Communist, of the Printers’ Union and the National Salvation Society, enjoyed a certain degree of local renown and influence.

When the large manufacturing enterprises started cutting production or closing down in response to the world depression in the early 1930s, and on other occasions as well, the Guomindang unions acted to prevent their members from striking and persuade them to accept the terms offered to them by their employers and the Bureau of Social Affairs. At these times the Guomindang took the position that the workers’ demands were morally illegitimate or against the national interest. At other times,

27. “Tianjin ge ji gonghui diaocha gaikuang” (The state of trade union organisation in Tianjin), Shehui yuekan, Tianjin, December 1929, pp.12, 24.
31. For the refusal of the Yuyuan union to take part in a strike for issue of work clothes by the factory in November 1932, see Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, p.187; Dong, 1985, p.152. For pledges by the Beiyang match factory union in March 1933 that it would not interfere with the running of the factory or with future dismissals of workers, see Ershi’er nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian (1933 Yearbook of Chinese labour), Ministry of Industry, Nanjing, 1934, vol.2, pp.127-129; Ministry of Industry files 711 (2) 450 and 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives, Nanjing. For the Hengyuan union imposing "disciplinary rules" on the workers after the factory shut down in May 1933, see Ershi’er nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.117-123; Dong, 1985, p.162. For the Yuyuan union reporting to the Guomindang branch in May 1933 that workers who had struck to protest production cuts without the union’s permission were under the influence of Communists, see Ershi’er nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, pp.124-127; United States Department of State, Records
Guomindang took the workers' demands as legitimate and castigated employers for their failure to comprehend that progress towards national salvation depended on the cooperation of labour and capital.32 There were also occasions when Guomindang unions and the local government appear to have co-operated in efforts to gain economic or political concessions from foreign employers.33 What remained constant, in diverse industries and through diverse combinations of economic and political imperatives, is that the voice of the Guomindang was the voice of power and moral authority. By taking on board the Guomindang ideology, such as it was, and entering labour politics, a factory worker whose only other prospect was to continue to keep 74.7% of his family alive34 in deeply uncertain and humiliating conditions could see his way to "becoming an official".

The frequency with which Guomindang unions acted as direct instruments of Guomindang policy even when this was against the wishes of the membership can be seen as an effect of political control by the Guomindang through the agency of Guomindang labour bureaucrats, and is understood this way by Communist Party labour historians. While they are well justified in pointing out that the Guomindang unions had little or no political freedom of action, especially after 1930 in Tianjin, to interpret Guomindang unions as nothing more than transparent media through which the Guomindang exercised power appears to miss something to which attribution of the commonest kinds of personal motivation to the union officers would award real

relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939; Despatch, Tientsin to Peiping, USDS 893:00 TT/62.

32. For an instruction of July 1928 from the Jiangsu Bureau of Agriculture and Industry to the xian (county) government, after reports from the Jiangsu General Union, that the silk border weavers' guild (sibian ye gongsuo) should be prevented from discriminating against union members, see Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1442, Suzhou City Archives. For an instruction of November 1931 from the xian government of Suzhou to the Chamber of Commerce setting out the terms on which shops would be permitted to dismiss shop assistants, see Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi)2-1 1448, Suzhou City Archives. For the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs' refusal to disband the pharmacy assistants' union in spite of pressure from the employers' guild, see Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1929, p.193.

33. For the Hai He Conservancy strike of April 1931, which was understood by the foreign administrators of the Conservancy as an attempt to force transfer to Chinese administration, see Tianjin Hai He Gongchengju Dangan (Tianjin Hai He Conservancy Commission) files 122 and 126, Tianjin City Archives; United States Department of State, Records relating to the internal affairs of China, 1930-1939, despatches, Tientsin to Peiping, USDS 893:00 TT/35, 36, 37. For a strike in the British-owned Jian Waterworks in Tianjin intended as a protest against a rise in water rates, see Dong, 1985, p.133; Beiguo chunqiu (Northern Annals), Beijing, 1960, no.3, p.28.

34. Among families of cotton mill workers in Tianjin, the husband, on average, contributed 74.7% of total family income. In Shanghai the share contributed by the wife and children was higher. See Fang Xianting, Cotton industry and trade in China, Nankai Institute of Economic Research, Tianjin, 1934, p.136.
importance. For a factory worker looking forward to nothing more financially rewarding or socially respectable than a lifetime of wage-earning, Guomindang membership, through the medium of the trade union, offered a way upwards. By acting in accord with Guomindang ideology and policy, Guomindang union officers proved themselves worthy of a better place in society.

To sum up, when a handcraft or factory worker joined a Communist Party union, whether it was due to more or less informed sympathy with the revolutionary aims of the Communist Party or to personal obligation or loyalty to other workers who joined, he or she took a step to which the factory management was irreconcilably opposed, and consciously ran the risk of unemployment, or even imprisonment or violence. When a handcraft or factory worker joined a Guomindang union, because he or she considered that the Guomindang labour apparatus acted in the workers’ interests or, again, out of personal obligation or loyalty, the meaning of this action has to be interpreted according to the political conditions of the time. It varies according to whether the employer was opposed to or reconciled to the union, or even regarded the union as a safeguard against "unrest". The factor of personal ambition must also be considered. As well as reflecting the priorities of Communist and Guomindang labour activists, it is possible that the distribution of Communist and Guomindang union organisation in Suzhou and Tianjin reflects the manner in which industrial organisation and the micro-politics of the factory floor encouraged the workers to join one or both types of union, or worked to prevent them from joining. What follows is an attempt to use sources on union membership in Suzhou and Tianjin, while keeping in mind the qualifications set out above, to draw conclusions about personal relations and power relations in workshops and factories.

The Communist Party unions.

Communist Party activity in Tianjin can be roughly divided into a period of overt activity in 1925 and early 1926, and a much longer and less eventful period of secret activity from the last eighteen months of the Fengtian military government to the Japanese occupation. Below is a table of the factories and industries in which Communist unions or cells were founded, with a list of the periods in which the sources refer to these unions as being active. If one source refers to a Communist Party cell in one particular factory in August 1927, and the same source, or another one, refers to a Communist Party cell in the same factory in August 1929, I have not taken this to mean that the Communist Party was necessarily represented in the factory during these two years without a break, though this could have been the case. A full list of data on
Tianjin Communist unions, including sources, appears in Appendix 5. Most of the information is taken from post-1949 Communist sources, the *Tianjin gongren yundong shi* (here entered as *TGYS*) and Dong Zhenxiu’s *Xin minzhu zhuyi shiqi Tianjin gongren yundong jishi* (Annals of the Tianjin workers’ movement in the period of the New Democratic Revolution, here entered as *TGYJ*), with some corroboration from contemporary non-Communist and consular sources. The Communist Party unions of the May 30th period, and those founded or refounded between January and March 1926 while Tianjin was briefly occupied by Feng Yuxiang’s National People’s Army (*Guominjun*) operated openly, while the unions and Party cells at all subsequent times up to 1937 were secret.

Unfortunately the Tianjin statistics cannot be compared with similar Communist union statistics from Suzhou, because there was next to no Communist union network in Suzhou. The *Zhong gong Jiangsu dangshi dashiji* (Chronicle of the history of the Chinese Communist Party in Jiangsu) published by the CCP Jiangsu Party History Committee and the Jiangsu Provincial Archives in 1990, though it provides exact information on the size and location of secret Communist Party branches in Suzhou before and after the Guomindang came to power there, says only "Suzhou printers, telegraph workers, telephone bureau workers, cupboard and bench makers, silk weavers, staff of import firms and over 100 other trades established (Communist) unions in Suzhou".\(^{35}\) There were scarcely 100 trades in Suzhou. These unions were established with the arrival of the National Revolutionary Army in Suzhou in March 1927 and broke up less than a month later after the April coup. CCP organisation in Suzhou never revived until the last months of the Guomindang.

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<tr>
<th>Factory or industry</th>
<th>Periods in which Communist unions existed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beijing-Fengtian (Bei-Ning)</td>
<td>Summer 1922-August 1925 (open)</td>
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<td>railway</td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
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<td>February 1927, January 1928, April 1929 (secret)</td>
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<td>Baocheng cotton mill</td>
<td>April-August 1925 (open)</td>
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<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
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<th>Location/Industry</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yuyuan cotton mill</td>
<td>February 1927, January 1928, September 1932 (secret)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing presses</td>
<td>April-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiyang cotton mill</td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 1927, April 1929, May 1930, October 1930, September 1932, June 1933 (secret).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengyuan cotton mill</td>
<td>May-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaxin cotton mill</td>
<td>May-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 1930, July 1936 (secret).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianjin-Pukou railway</td>
<td>May-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August-December 1925 (secret)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hai He docks</td>
<td>June-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 1927, October 1930, July 1936 (secret).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet factories</td>
<td>June-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 1926, December 1926, February 1927, August 1927 (secret).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>June-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone carvers</td>
<td>June-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe shops (shang zuo)</td>
<td>June-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping companies</td>
<td>July-August 1925 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-March 1926 (open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 1929 (secret).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brocade weaving shops
Yuda cotton mill
Rickshaws
Iron foundries and machine-mending shops
Muqi (wooden bowl and vessel) shops
Heji canning factory
Lixing canvas factory
BAT cigarette factory
Belgian tramways and electric company.
Post office
Jiarui flour mill
Dasheng (Yongnian) flour mill
Dongya woollen mill
Tianjin mint
Beiyang match factory
Jiuda salt refinery
Telephone bureau
Straw braiding factories
Naigai chemical fertiliser factory

July-August 1925 (open)
July-August 1925 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
February 1927, April 1929 (secret).
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
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January-March 1926 (open)
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January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
January-March 1926 (open)
February 1927 (secret)
February 1927 (secret)
February 1927 (secret)
April 1929, September 1932, July 1933, December 1933 (secret).
February 1927 (secret)
February 1927 (secret)
February 1927 (secret)
April 1929 (secret)
September 1933 (secret)
February 1936 (secret)
July 1932, July 1936 (secret)
July 1936 (secret)
September 1932 (secret)
Transport guilds (jiaohang) September 1932 (secret)
Bristle sorters September 1932 (secret)
Jian waterworks September 1932 (secret)
Municipal cleaners September 1932 (secret)

In the Guomindang period, the determination of the Guomindang to prevent the Communist Party from creating bases of power in Tianjin universities and factories made it increasingly difficult for the CCP to maintain any sort of effective secret presence. In 1929, the Bureau of Public Security individually traced and arrested over 30 CCP members out of a total membership of something over 200. In May 1930, the majority of CCP members in Tianjin were arrested following a failed May 1st demonstration and rally, and the Tianjin Workers’ Federation and nearly all of the network of secret factory cells which comprised the Federation was broken up. After this there are very few reports of Communist Party activity in Tianjin, even in the Party histories, which can be expected to play up the Party’s organisational links with the working class as much as possible. There are signs, however, that the Communists were beginning to gain ground again in Tianjin in the last year or so before the Japanese occupation.

The "underground unions" or "Party cells" (mimi gonghui, dang zhibu or dang xiao zu) referred to in the table above were small groups, typically of ten people or less. The only large CCP unions, with dozens or hundreds of members, were those in the cotton mills in the May 30th and Guominjun periods. The carpet weavers’ union which conducted the strikes in the American Tavshanjian and Elbrook factories in the first months of 1926 appears to have represented at least a large minority of the workers at these factories, but neither contemporary nor post-1949 Communist sources give a clear idea of the size of this union. While it was not unknown for a secret union or Party cell to take the initiative in conducting a strike, they maintained a fairly passive existence in the larger factories and enterprises to the extent that they were able to exist. The policy of the Party centre that Party activists in the factories were to strive to create separate, Communist unions and were not permitted to join the "yellow" Guomindang unions or take part in any activity conducted by these unions, certainly made the task of recruiting workers into CCP unions still more difficult. The overall picture is of an initial stage of overt and quite successful CCP union-building in 1925 and early 1926, a network of underground factory cells persisting until 1930, then almost total absence.

until 1936, when a rather belated shift in Party policy to allow a more gradualist
approach to organising in factories - combined with the weakening of the local
Guomindang as the government and Party apparatus edged towards bankruptcy under
ever increasing Japanese economic and political pressure, - caused some growth in the
CCP factory cell network. What governed the waxing and waning of Communist
unions in Tianjin was not the degree to which workers agreed with the Party’s aims and
methods, but the external political climate in which the Party operated.

What is evident from the Tianjin Communist union statistics is that while
Communist organisation was stronger in the cotton mills than anywhere else, the
modern flour mills and match factories, which comprised the next most locally
important manufacturing industries after the cotton textile industry, hardly featured at
all in the Communist factory cell network. There were eight flour mills in Tianjin by
1925 (the longest established of them founded in 1915) and six of them were still in
business in 1932. The first match factory in Tianjin was established in 1909, and there
were four of them in 1925 and six in the early 1930s. In spite of this, the only
references to these two industries in the Party histories are mentions of underground
Party cells existing at the Jiarui and Yongnian flour mills in February 1927, and at the
Beiyang match factory in September 1933. Because Zhao’s and Dong’s accounts do not
differ except in occasional small omissions on the extent of Communist factory
organisation in Tianjin, and because both these accounts maximise the extent of the
Party’s links with the working class about as far as they can be maximised, it is not
likely that any substantial number of Party cells or secret unions has been left out. It is
safe to assume not only that the size of the underground CCP network was quite
miniscule, but also that workers in the flour and match industries played next to no part
in it. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the modern flour mills were not large employers –
they employed, typically, between 100 and 200 workers – but since the largest match
factory, Danhua, employed approximately 3,400 workers at its peak productive
capacity, the omission of the match factories from the CCP’s network of unions or
factory cells, in both the active and the nonexistent phases of its operations in Tianjin, is
even more surprising.

Among the smaller scale industries, a similar pattern (or non-pattern) emerges.
Carpet weavers evidently joined the Communist union in large numbers in January
1926 after Feng Yuxiang’s Guomindjun drove the Fengtian forces out of Tianjin, and
then there was no sign of carpet weavers in Communist unions after August 1927,
although the larger carpet factories continued to produce well into the Guomindang
period – the carpet weavers at Karahousian, which like Tavshanjian was owned and
managed by Americans of Armenian origin, went on strike for better food in September 1935, and those at the Nichols factory struck for a wage rise, better food and medical treatment for a weaver who had been injured by a foreman in 1936. The cotton and rayon brocade weaving industry, which was the next most significant handcraft industry in Tianjin after carpet weaving, is represented only by a short lived and probably insignificant brocade weavers’ union founded in July 1925 and broken up with the rest of the Communist union network after the riot and massacre at Yuda on August 11th. Most of the more significant craft industries (significant in terms of numbers of shops and of workers employed), such as hosiery knitting, clothing, dyeing, porcelain, gold and silverware, and all the building trades except painting, are not even mentioned. One of the six or seven shoemaking operations had a Communist union in the May 30th and Guomindun periods, but the others did not. The ironworkers in Santiaoshi, who performed services of great strategic importance for the local factory industries, had a Communist union in the Guomindun period, though it is not recorded as having organised any campaigns for higher wages or better conditions or even having represented itself at the major political meetings and demonstrations of the Guomindun period, and was presumably small and ineffective. The list of workers in non-factory industries of whom some small number joined Communist unions or cells is a strange one; there were the carpet weavers (the carpet weavers and the printers were the only craft workers to organise for serious industrial action behind a Communist union in Tianjin), the brocade weavers and ironworkers (very briefly and ineffectively, and both unions were founded at the time when the CCP was at the height of its influence), printers, painters, ornamental stone-carvers and shang zuo shoemakers (all active 1925-26; only the printers maintained some form of shadowy sub-union cell liaison with the Communist Party at the end of the 1920s), and makers of wooden bowls and vessels (1926 only). Once the Communist Party was proscribed and its alliance with the Guomindang was over, its contacts among craft workers in small scale industries were lost.

In fact most of the Communist Party’s industrial contacts, apart from the cotton mill workers, were workers employed in public works and transport enterprises, especially those under foreign ownership or administration. In the public works field, there were Communist unions or cells in the post office, the telephone and telegraph bureau (which was part of the postal administration), the Tianjin mint and the waterworks, and among municipal street cleaners. Dong does not specify which

40. Rui Yunzhi, "Tianjin ditan gongye de xingqi he fazhan" (The origin and development of the Tianjin carpet industry) in Tianjin Wenshi Ziliao, vol.1, p.77; Du Lunshan, "Tianjin ditan jianshi" (Short history of Tianjin carpets) in Tianjin gong shang shiliao zong kan, vol.6, p.49.
waterworks, but it was almost certainly the British owned Jian waterworks. No other water filtration plant appears in the literature on industrial conflict.

In the field of transport, there were Communist unions or cells in the Tianjin branches of the Beijing-Fengtian and Tianjin-Pukou railways. There was a Tianjin branch of the national seamen’s union, which sailors on Butterfield and Swire and Jardine Matheson ships joined in the May 30th period, and also a Communist union among the dock workers on the Butterfield and Swire and Jardine Matheson docks. There was a rickshaw pullers’ union in the Guominjun period, traces of which still existed in 1930. Also represented were the workers in the Belgian tramways and electric company and the transport workers of the "foot guilds" (jiaohang; these were porters or "freight coolies" who carried commercial goods on foot). None of these last three unions took part in any recorded industrial action.

The other manifest feature of the distribution of Communist unions and factory cells in Tianjin is over-representation of factories or organisations owned or managed by foreigners. There were: the Tianjin seamen’s and dock workers’ unions, which were confined to the ships and docks belonging to Butterfield and Swire and Jardine Matheson; the Heji canning factory; the BAT cigarette factory; the Belgian tramways and electric company; the Dongya woollen mill, under American ownership;41 the Japanese Naigai chemical fertiliser company; and the Jian waterworks. Though the printers’ union consisted of workers in several dozen presses, most of which were Chinese, they conducted strikes specifically against British and Japanese newspapers in June and August, 1925. The bristle sorters worked seasonally under a form of contract to Chinese labour contractors, but on behalf of foreign import-export firms which bought the bristles and paid the contractors.42 Straw hat braiding was another export-processing operation performed for foreign trading firms. The Yuda and Baocheng cotton mills and the large American cotton mills had Communist unions in 1925 and 1926, and even though these unions represented the industries as a whole, not just the foreign enterprises, and the Chinese carpet factories and cotton mills also experienced strikes in these periods, industrial conflict was plainly concentrated in factories owned or managed by foreigners. Out of the total of 38 separate enterprises or industries in which any workers ever joined Communist unions or union cells, there were 14 which were owned or managed by foreigners, or in which enterprises owned or managed by foreigners dominated in the Communist union network. This proportion is an emphatic

41. "Song Feiqing ji Tianjin Dongya qiye gongsi" (Song Feiqing and the Tianjin Dongya Enterprise Co."") in Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji, vol.29.

42. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 128/2866, Tianjin City Archives. Contains correspondence on bristle sorters’ unsuccessful attempt to establish a "study society" in
overstatement of the overall importance of direct foreign investment in Tianjin.

This distribution of Communist unions and factory cells suggests that Communist Party organisation and recruitment policy, Communist Party resources and the degree of attention paid by the local government to searching out and arresting Communists were in fact the most important reasons why some workers joined and others did not. These extrinsic political factors overrode any importance that the size and technological character of the enterprise might have had. There were more Communist unions and factory cells in cotton mills because these were the largest factories employing the most workers, and the Tianjin Party representatives, whose resources were limited, concentrated on them. There were a disproportionate number of Communist unions and cells in enterprises owned and managed by foreigners because the Party deliberately sought out workers in these enterprises, to enlist them as front line fighters against imperialism. The prominence of public works and transport also appears to make most sense when interpreted by Communist Party priorities and strategy – organising workers in state enterprise would help to destabilise the Guomindang. Furthermore, where there were comparatively large numbers of workers, as there were in the transport industries, it was not altogether impossible for Communist activists to work unobserved. There is no firm indication that factory workers were generically more likely or less likely than craft workers to join Communist unions or cells. While the successes and failures of the CCP in recruiting workers may illuminate certain aspects of Communist Party and Guomindang history, they are irrelevant to the relationship between industrial technology and organisation and power relations on the factory floor.

Although the CCP union statistics do not demonstrate any clear distinctions between types of enterprises, they are not altogether without value for the study of industrial power relations. There are two things they do demonstrate clearly. One is that both skilled and unskilled workers in industries of all types were capable of deciding, if the opportunity presented itself, to take the step of joining an organisation to which their employers were absolutely opposed. It could reasonably be argued that the secret Communist factory cells of the Guomindang period were too small for any general conclusion to be drawn from them, but the cotton mill workers’, sailors’, dock workers’, printers’, carpet weavers’ and railway unions of the May 30th and Guominjun periods were considerable enough to lead industrial action involving hundreds or thousands of workers. The workers’ histories tend to quote exact numbers of workers who went on strike without specifying how many of them had formally joined the Communist union, but Hershatter’s interviews indicate a membership of about 1,800, or 1913: permission was refused.
two thirds of the workforce, at Baocheng. If nothing else, this implies a distinctly grim and detached view of the stability and desirability of industrial employment as a way of life, a view which I consider not to spring from irrational psychology but from a rough awareness of existing conditions and opportunities. Factory workers in Baocheng and elsewhere had no very definite long-term career plans, and no real confidence that their interests and their employers’ were the same.

The other is the almost total ineffectiveness of Communist unions in the Guomindang period. There seems to have been some form of secret Communist Party organisation in each of the cotton mills throughout the Guomindang period, until they started closing down. However, Zhao and Dong claim only two occasions when underground Communist organisations led claims for higher wages or maintenance of existing conditions, at Hengyuan in 1930 and at Yuyuan in 1933. Both were unsuccessful and resulted in the arrest of all Communist union members and suspected members. There were altogether 49 disputes and strikes in Tianjin cotton mills in the Guomindang period. The cotton mill workers’ lack of interest in the CCP and its industrial program in these years cannot have been because they were cowed into submission, because they were satisfied with their conditions of employment or even because they did not consider themselves as permanent wage-earners and therefore were indifferent to their conditions of employment.

Effective suppression by the Guomindang, and the profoundly unrealistic labour policy taken by successive Party leaderships under the direction of the Comintern between 1928 and 1935, under which Party activists were supposed to establish openly Communist unions and organise mass demonstrations and general strikes, are the reasons usually given for the marginalisation of the Communist Party in Tianjin and other cities in the 1930s. While the Party’s labour policy was certainly impractical, and the Guomindang did give a high political priority to the search for Communists, these factors do not appear quite enough to account for the difference between the pre-Guomindang and Guomindang periods in Tianjin. It was dangerous for workers in Tianjin in the 1930s to associate with Communists, but it had been no less dangerous for the workers at Yuda in 1925. In fact nothing on the scale of the massacre of the Yuda workers took place in Tianjin in the Guomindang period. The Beijing-Fengtian and Tianjin-Pukou railway workers who joined the Communist unions would have been well aware of the events along the Beijing-Hankou railway on February 7th, 1923, and even if the peasants’ sons who worked in the cotton mills had not heard of the massacre of the Beijing-Hankou railway workers before coming to Tianjin, the CCP activists who

ran the workers’ night schools and founded the unions would have lost little time in explaining to them all the crimes of the warlords. It makes more sense to explain the difference between the pre-Guomindang and Guomindang periods not by Guomindang coercion but by the presence of the Guomindang unions.

If it was not obvious to the workers that their interests and their employers’ interests were the same, it was no more obvious that the Guomindang unions were political tools devised by the Guomindang to serve the interests of employers. The Guomindang unions often did achieve real material gains for their members. For the more active members, they appeared to offer a way out of wage labour. The basis of this was the Guomindang unions’ legal status. From the workers’ point of view, a legal union was a far better risk than an illegal one. The legal status of the Guomindang unions made the Communist unions irrelevant. The best illustration of this is the response of workers in the cotton mills and the Beiyang match factory to the pro-management attitudes of their unions between 1932 and 1934, when the effects of the world depression, the occupation of the Northeast by Japan and the evident rightward shift in social policy of the local Guomindang combined to threaten their jobs and terms of employment. Rather than joining secret Communist unions, they went on strike for the reorganisation of their existing unions and re-election of the union officers. What mattered was not the overall political philosophy of the party to which the union was affiliated, but its evident strength, its success in achieving higher wages and greater security for its members, and its demonstrated intention of going on doing this.

The Guomindang unions.

While the distribution of Communist unions and factory cells in Tianjin does not demonstrate any clear correlation between type of industry and willingness of the workers to join Communist unions except that imposed by the Party itself, it does indicate something about the attitude of the workers to their employment and to where they considered their interests lay. The distribution of Guomindang unions, because there were many more Guomindang unions and they did not operate under the political constraints affecting the Communist unions, may offer more insights into factory floor politics in different industries. Below is a list of Guomindang unions in Suzhou and Tianjin. The principal sources are Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files and Nanjing Ministry of Industry files in the Suzhou City Archives and the Second Historical Archives for Guomindang unions in Suzhou, and the Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao and various Bureau of Social Affairs publications for Guomindang unions in Tianjin.

Because the Guomindang unions were within the law, I have assumed that when
a union is mentioned, for instance, in Chamber of Commerce correspondence in June 1930 and then again in June 1932, it continued to function in the intervening period, unless the sources indicate that it was closed down. This cannot claim to be anything like a comprehensive record – when the last date at which a Guomindang union is referred to in the sources is given as "October 1935", for instance, it means only that I have not found any subsequent reference to this union in the materials I have looked at, not that it ceased to exist after October 1935. There is a full list of data on Guomindang unions with sources in Appendix 6.

Table 6.2

Guomindang unions – Suzhou

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory or industry</th>
<th>Periods in which Guomindang unions existed, numbers of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candle makers</td>
<td>February 1927 – July 1935. 100 members January 1928.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice shops</td>
<td>March 1927 – October 1935. 400 members January 1928.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>March 1927 – January 1928. 8,000 members January 1928.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match factories</td>
<td>March 1927 – October 1935. 1,000 members January 1928. 943 members 1932.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerosene factories</td>
<td>March 1927 – January 1928. 60+ members January 1928.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These are the corresponding data on Guomindang unions in Tianjin.

Painters
April 1927 – January 1928.
600 members January 1928, 900 members 1932.

Rickshaws
April 1927 – January 1928.
70 members January 1928.

Soy sauce shops
April 1927 – January 1928.
4,000 members January 1928.

Wooden loom silk weaving shops

Cloth import dealers
May 1927 – January 1928.
1,003 members January 1928.

Chinese pharmacies

Silk border weaving

Bamboo carving
August 1927 – January 1928.
1,200 members January 1928.

Transport (jiaohang)
July 1931.

Timber yards
October 1929 – 1932. 368 members in 1932.

Cap knitting

Post office
144 members in 1932.

Gold and silverware
May 1927 – 1932. 128 members in 1932.

Theatrical costumers
November 1930 – October 1935. 102 members in 1932.

Paper sellers

Fan xie shoemakers
July 1936.
Table 6.3

Guomindang Unions in Tianjin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory or industry</th>
<th>Periods in which Guomindang unions existed, numbers of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone bureau</td>
<td>June 1928 – August 1934. 914 members December 1929, 817 members December 1932.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brocade weaving</td>
<td>July 1928 – March 1930. 3,000 members December 1929.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors’ shops</td>
<td>July 1928 – December 1932. 1,747 members December 1929, 1,326 members November 1930, 1,440 members December 1932.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold and silversmiths’ shops</td>
<td>August 1928 – November 1930. 210 members December 1929, 132 members November 1930.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet factories</td>
<td>August 1928 – 1930. 1,692 members April 1929, 1,255 members May 1929, 42 members December 1929.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yongli soda refinery
Silk shops
Shoe shops
Leather workers
School maintenance staff
Printing presses
Chinese pharmacies
BAT cigarette factory
Beijing-Fengtian (Bei-Ning) railway
Beiyang cotton mill
Water carriers
Dyeworks
Drivers
Hai He docks
Tianjin-Pukou railway
Post office
"Western style" clothing
Municipal cleaners

1,128+ members December 1929,
1,386 members November 1930,
1,587 members December 1932.

August 1928 – May 1929.
Reorganised May 1929.

September 1928 – April 1929.

October 1928 – November 1930.

November 1928 – December 1929.

54 members December 1929.

November 1928 – December 1929. 266 members December 1929.

November 1928 – December 1932.

November 1928 - March 1929.

December 1928 – November 1933.

12,154 members December 1929.

January 1929 – February 1934.
Reorganised September 1929.
1,743 members December 1929,
1,880 members December 1932.

January 1929 – December 1932.

841 members November 1930,
1,042 members December 1932.

January 1929 – April 1929.

January 1929.

January 1929.

January 1929 – 1933. 2,197
members December 1929.

January 1929 – September 1934.
881 members December 1932.

February 1929.

February 1929 – December 1932.

331 members November 1930,
499 members December 1932.
River boat crews

Bristle sorters
March 1929 – April 1933. Reorganised October 1929. 1,182 members December 1929, 1,159 members November 1930, 2,900 members December 1932.

Jiuda salt refinery
April 1929 – August 1929.

Match factories
June 1929 – March 1935. 1,156 members December 1929. 1,377 members November 1930. 2,000 members December 1932.

Flour mills

Yuda cotton mill

Hai He conservancy

Jian waterworks
November 1930 – December 1932. 181 members November 1930. 112 members December 1932.

Paper sellers
November 1930 – December 1932. 80 members November 1930, 50 members December 1932.

Tilers
300 members December 1932.

Timber yards
November 1930 – December 1932. 70 members December 1932.

Naigai chemical fertiliser factory
November 1931 – August 1932.

Hangu Bohai chemical co
September 1932.

Boming weaving mill
November 1932.

Laundries
June 1933.

Sack makers
March 1934.

Xiehe towel factory
April 1934.
In shoemaking, *shang zuo* was the operation of sewing the uppers onto the insoles. *Fan xie* was the operation of stretching into shape and turning inside out the uppers and insoles which had been stitched together from the inside. The Hai He Conservancy Commission was responsible for dredging and associated maintenance of the Hai He, or Sea River, Tianjin’s main waterway.

The dates at which the Baocheng, Yuyuan and Hengyuan cotton mills last appear in the sources are the dates at which these factories closed. Last dates for other factory unions represent the last dates at which the unions are mentioned in the sources. The reason for the marked upward progression of membership numbers in the Tianjin flour mill workers’ union is that workers at one mill after another joined at different times between 1929 and 1932 until all six flour mills had union branches. The reason for the sharp decline of membership numbers in the Tianjin carpet weavers’ union in 1929 is the closing of the Breslin-Griffitt, Elbrook and Tavshanjian factories. Reorganisation of a union under the authority of the Guomindang Party branch typically though not always followed on the union’s involvement in major industrial conflict. Most often it was imposed on the union by the Guomindang branch on the advice of the Bureau of Social Affairs which was responsible for the arbitration process, with the intent of excluding troublemakers from leadership of the union, but sometimes — particularly in the larger enterprises in Tianjin after 1932 — workers would petition the Bureau of Social Affairs for the reorganisation of their union, on the grounds that the leaders were corrupt or were in league with the management. Reorganisation of a union could also be a less explicitly political consequence of union amalgamation or ambiguous trade demarcation boundaries, or of criminal conduct by one or more union leaders, but there were much fewer of these than there were explicitly post-strike reorganisations, or reorganisations due to faction conflict within the union (14 union reorganisations were concerned with industrial conflict or faction fighting, two with trade boundaries and one with criminal conduct). There was some difference between Suzhou and Tianjin in the range of occupations in which workers were entitled to organise trade unions, as distinct from commercial associations. In Suzhou there were a number of retail and service trades — imported cloth merchants’ shops, rice shops, soy sauce shops, pawnshops and hotels — in which white collar wage earners joined trade unions (*gonghui*), while in Tianjin people in this type of employment — silk shops and Chinese pharmacies are the two retail or service trades in which employees were involved in prolonged industrial conflict early in the Guomindang period — joined shop assistants’ branches of the Merchants’ Federation. This may have reflected either the greater conservatism of the Guomindang in Tianjin or the much stronger trade guild tradition in Suzhou.
The data on Guomindang unions indicates a broadly discernible pattern of unionisation which, by drawing a clear distinction between Suzhou and Tianjin on the one hand, and on the other hand pointing out a rough similarity in the distributions of Communist and Guomindang unions in Tianjin, seems at first sight to confirm that what decided whether or not workers joined Guomindang unions (Communist unions) were the political aims of the Party, qualified by the institutional and financial ease or difficulty of achieving these aims. That is, the particular complex of relations of power and allegiance that functioned within workshops and factories in any industry, as the result of the coincidence of manufacturing technology and social institutions (or the lack of them) was not of any importance in deciding whether workers in that industry joined unions or not. Union membership figures may reveal shifts and changes in the policies of the Guomindang and the Communist Party, but they reveal nothing else of the forces behind the history of labour in China. If the Guomindang and Communist Party union statistics are read as indications of the workers’ militancy, they say quite important things about the limits of this sort of material in revealing how satisfied or dissatisfied Chinese factory workers really were with their wages and conditions, or even what they really thought about the Guomindang or the Communist Party. If the Guomindang and Communist Party union figures are interpreted as "illegal union membership figures" or "official union membership figures", they go further towards creating understanding of how the different situations of workers in different kinds of industry affected their institutional relationship with authority, in the form of the Guomindang. Seen in this way, the Guomindang union figures appear to reinforce a view of Republican Chinese industrial relations in which the important determinants of the relationship between employers and employed were the technology of manufacturing, the possession of skill, and what may be called "institutional inertia" – that is, the lapse of time between change in the organisation of production, which itself might come about for any reason from economic growth to war, and corresponding change in the social institutions through which production is regulated and the power which derives from control of production is mediated. The key to interpretation of the Guomindang union figures is the Guomindang’s status as the sole legal political organisation.

The Tianjin Guomindang union statistics show an initial rush of activity from approximately mid-1928 to mid-1929, when the Guomindang appeared more active in encouraging workers to unionise than it did subsequently, and when workers in all trades and industries were taking advantage of the opportunity to organise legally. As indicated in Chapter 4, there were more industrial disputes in Tianjin in this period than at any other time, many of them responses to lists of demands raised by newly constituted Guomindang unions, or concerned directly with the issue of union
membership. Out of the 35 unions recorded in the sources as being founded between May 1928 and July 1929, 10 or 11 were craft unions (depending on how Chinese pharmacy employees were considered), 15 were modern industrial or communications unions, eight were unions of workers in previously casual or unskilled outdoor occupations (such as dock work or pulling rickshaws), and one or two were commercial unions (see craft unions above). There was a separate union in each cotton mill, more because of the numbers of workers employed in them than for any clearly political reason, and the Beijing-Liaoning and Tianjin-Pukou railways had separate union networks. In December 1932, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Industry, there were four craft unions, 12 modern industrial or communications unions, and six unions of workers in formerly casual or unskilled outdoor occupations.\(^44\) The last occasions on which a non-industrial or communications union is mentioned as being involved in an industrial dispute are wage claims presented by the bristle sorters’ union and the laundry workers’ union in April and June, 1933.\(^45\) After this, the Bureau of Social Affairs’ industrial relations correspondence is entirely taken up with wage claims, union reorganisations and factory closing settlements in the modern manufacturing industries and communications institutions.

As an illustration of the narrowing of the scope of Guomindang union involvement in negotiating for better wages and conditions, between June and December, 1928, Guomindang unions in 10 different trades or industries took part in negotiations with employers and the government over wages, conditions or union membership. The corresponding figure for the 12 months of 1929 is 14; for 1930, four; for 1931, eight; for 1932, 13; for 1933, eight; for 1934, six; and for 1935, three, while the representation of handcraft and traditional unskilled occupations declined. This is not the number of trades and industries in which there were Guomindang unions, or the number of trades and industries in which there were industrial disputes and strikes, but the number of trades and industries in which Guomindang unions tried to secure higher wages, better non-wage terms of employment, union representation without discrimination or better terms of dismissal for their members. It cannot be considered a comprehensive account, but represents only what is indicated by the sources used. The

44. *Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2, p.19. The survey results were first published in the *Minzhong yundong yuekan* (Labour movement monthly), then reproduced in the *1932 Yearbook of Chinese labour*, which indicates that three of the cotton mill unions then still extant and active in Tianjin – those at Baoccheng, Huaxin and Hengyuan – were not included in the original *Minzhong yundong yuekan* survey report. This survey report also includes as "crafts" trades in which specific implements or machinery were used and rules of apprenticeship applied, and formerly casual or unskilled occupations. These are treated as separate in the text above.

45. Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives.
trades and industries in which Guomindang unions are recorded as negotiating with employers to secure better wages or conditions for their members between 1928 and 1935 are tabulated below.

Table 6.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Guomindang union activism in Tianjin by industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928 (June-December)</td>
<td>BAT cigarette company, Belgian tramways and electric company, carpet factories (4 times), Chinese pharmacies, cotton mills (twice), gold and silversmiths' shops, printing presses, post office, railways, shoe shops, silk shops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Belgian tramways and electric company (twice), brocade weaving (6 times), carpet factories (5 times), Chinese pharmacies (twice), cotton mills (twice), dyeworks, gold and silversmiths' shops (3 times), Jiuda salt refinery, post office (twice), printers (4 times), railways (3 times), silk shops, Western style tailors, Yongli soda refinery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Belgian tramways and electric co., brocade weaving (twice), cotton mills, post office (three times).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Belgian tramways and electric co., cotton mills, flour mills, Hai He conservancy, Jian waterworks (twice), Naigai chemical fertiliser company, railways, tailors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932 (Boming)</td>
<td>Belgian tramways and electric company (3 times), weaving mill, bristle sorters, cotton mills, flour mills (4 times), Hangu Bohai chemical co., Jian waterworks, match factories, post office (3 times), printers, railways (twice), telephone bureau (3 times), Xinji timber yard (twice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Belgian tramways and electric company (twice), bristle sorters, cotton mills (3 times), flour mills (3 times), laundries, matchfactories (twice), post office, railways (twice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934 (flour)</td>
<td>Belgian tramways and electric company, cotton mills, mills, match factories (3 times), post office, telephone bureau.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Cotton mills, flour mills, match factories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1928 and 1929, it was not unusual for Guomindang unions representing workers in small scale handcraft industries to take action to secure higher wages or
better conditions for their members, but from 1930 onwards, in a development which parallels the history of secret Communist Party activity in Tianjin after 1926, this hardly ever happened. There are other similarities to the distribution of secret Communist unions and Party cells. Factories and other institutions owned or managed by non-Chinese were well represented. There were conflicts about unionisation, union subsidies or discrimination against union members, as well as more basic economic conflicts, at the British-run Jian waterworks, the Japanese Naigai chemical fertiliser factory, the Belgian tramways and electric company, the Baocheng and Yuda cotton mills, the Hai He conservancy, the BAT cigarette factory, and two American carpet factories, Breslin-Griffitt and Tavshanjian. State enterprise and municipal workers were also well represented. There were large and effective local branches of the railway unions and the post office and telephone bureau unions, as well as unions of school and university maintenance staff, water carriers, cleaners and newspaper sellers. There was, not surprisingly, much less conflict about Guomindang union membership for workers in state or municipal enterprise.

In Suzhou, there was little modern manufacturing industry. There was one cotton mill, the Sulun, and three match factories, two of which were very small. There were fewer public utilities than in Tianjin, and none of them were under non-Chinese ownership or management. Direct foreign investment in Suzhou appears to have been confined to one or more Japanese owned silk weaving factories, and the British Asia Petroleum Company. The great majority of Guomindang unions in Suzhou were accordingly handcraft workers' unions. Compared to the state of affairs in Tianjin, the decline in the activism of Guomindang handcraft workers' unions in Suzhou in the 1930s was less pronounced. These are the trades and industries in which Guomindang unions in Suzhou are recorded as negotiating with employers to secure better wages or conditions for their members between 1927 and 1936.

46. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives; Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives.
While the loss of the Northeast to Japan compounded the effect of the world depression in Tianjin, the invention and popularisation of artificial silk had a similar depressing effect on the market for Suzhou’s most significant manufacture and major export, though the long term implications for national sovereignty and basic human rights were probably less tragic. The frequency of industrial disputes tended to decline in both cities in the 1930s. The number of disputes involving Guomindang unions in Suzhou is too small for any very definite conclusions to be drawn from it, but it can be seen that a small number of handcraft and commercial unions – the incense workers’, hotel employees’, iron loom silk weavers’, candle makers’, theatrical costumers’, fan xie shoemakers and Chinese pharmacy assistants’ unions – remained active after 1930, while the match factory workers’ union is heard from once, and the Sulun cotton mill workers do not appear to have belonged to a union. The number of disputes and strikes in Suzhou after 1930 in which the workers were actively represented by a Guomindang union is about half of the disputes recorded in the sources. There were 28 labour-capital disputes and three inter-trade demarcation disputes between 1931 and 1937. Guomindang unions figured in sixteen of them.

It will be argued below that this distribution of Guomindang union activism in 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Guomindang union activism in Suzhou by industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Iron loom silk weavers, wooden loom silk weavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(March-December), silk border weavers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Chinese pharmacies, pawnshops, rice shops, wooden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loom</td>
<td>silk weavers (twice), silk border weavers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Hotels, incense shops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Incense shops (3 times), transport workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Incense shops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Hotels, incense shops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Theatrical costumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Candle shops, hotels, match factories, iron loom silk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>weavers, theatrical costumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Fan xie shoemakers, hotels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Chinese pharmacies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tianjin does not reflect the greater passivity of handcraft workers, or the greater difficulty experienced by workers in small shops in overcoming Guomindang repression, or even the generalised bankruptcy of handcraft industry in Tianjin in the 1930s, and neither does it give a complete impression of the role of Guomindang unions in large modern industrial enterprises. Also, the difference between Tianjin and Suzhou was not because the local Guomindang branch in Suzhou was less anti-union than the one in Tianjin. In fact Guomindang politics were decisive in determining which workers joined Guomindang unions and which unions took the most action on behalf of their members (as was the case with the Communist Party in Tianjin). However, the important differences were not in the way the Guomindang Party branch and union apparatus acted towards workers in different industries, but in the different situations of workers in different industries in terms of security of employment, mobility and alternative means of earning an income, which made it either advisable, useful or unnecessary for them to join Guomindang unions.

The near disappearance of handcraft industry from the Guomindang arbitration record coincides with a crisis in the local government of Tianjin. Early in 1930, Yan Xishan and the "Reorganisation" faction of the Guomindang led by Wang Qingwei attempted to secede from the Nanjing government and establish a rival government in Beijing (Beiping). Several months of fighting and negotiations followed, during which the Tianjin General Union and several trade and enterprise unions were dissolved, not because of strikes or Communists but because of Guomindang faction conflict within the labour bureaucracy. Then with the aid of Zhang Xueliang, son of the Northeastern warlord Zhang Zuolin and eventual kidnapper of Jiang Jieshi at Xi’an, Jiang and the Nanjing government reasserted control over Beijing and Tianjin in November of that year. After this, Guomindang social policy in Tianjin took a distinctly authoritarian turn. The General Union was not re-established, and the remaining trade and enterprise unions were more inclined to co-operate passively with the Guomindang branch than to act on demands presented to them by their own members.

The Tianjin Guomindang branch did not pursue a policy of only recruiting workers in large, modern enterprises into Guomindang unions, nor did it reluctantly permit these workers to organise out of fear of their numbers, while succeeding in keeping workers in small shops unrepresented. What I will argue here is that the preponderance of large enterprises in both Communist and Guomindang union statistics springs from different kinds of reasons.

For the Communist Party, the reasons were partly ideological and partly strategic. Marxist-Leninist theory indicated that proletarian factory operatives were the most potentially revolutionary workers, and those most likely to realise that their true interests lay with the Communist Party. Also, while the more shadowy class membership of handcraft workers probably would not have dissuaded the Communist Party in Tianjin from trying to recruit them if it had been easier to do – the supposedly petty bourgeois status of the Chinese peasantry did not prove an insurmountable obstacle – the practical difficulty of recruiting workers in small shops in a climate of active political repression, particularly as most Communist activists in Tianjin were university students, was great enough to ensure that the Party devoted its meagre resources to organising Party cells in large factories. The situation of the workers was in fact irrelevant.

For the Guomindang, while the vaguely corporatist ideology of mutual interest and the desire to integrate workers into the Guomindang union network to prevent strikes and Communist subversion was the moving force behind Guomindang labour policy, the eventual concentration of Guomindang unions in large, modern industrial enterprises and utilities was accidental. These workers, for reasons that had nothing to do with the Three People’s Principles, were more likely to consider that it was in their interest to join the union.

One factor was certainly the working of networks of patronage and dependence in factories. If a foreman or relatively senior and experienced worker became an officer of the Guomindang union, as often happened, the workers who owed their employment to him would be obliged to join. But what was behind the networks of patronage and dependence and gave them their force was the factory worker’s lack of any more stable guarantee of economic and physical survival, in the form of land or use of it, property or marketable skill.

What I have termed "institutional inertia", the lapse of time between qualitative change in relations of production and corresponding adjustment of the social institutions which regulate production and appropriation and mediate the power that derives from control of production, meant that in Tianjin in the Republican period there were still no formal labour exchange mechanisms that might have made labour recruitment simpler for both buyers and sellers of labour and which could have made it easier for the sellers of labour to stay alive while looking for work. The best way of avoiding destitution was to pledge personal devotion, financial assistance at weddings and funerals, and physical assistance in street fights and gang wars to an influential fellow villager in exchange for a place on a bench in the reeling department. For these workers, destitution was a
considerable risk. In this respect the handcraft workers, whose possession of marketable skill meant they were not so closely tied to a single workplace where they knew people, and for whom self-employment was not impossible, were just slightly better off.

The Guomindang unions of 1930s Tianjin were highly unsatisfactory as an instrument for achieving higher wages or greater job security, especially in the cotton mills. However, they represented an extra potential barrier against the risk of destitution. It was the comparatively weak employment status of the factory workers that made them persist in efforts to use the ever more conservative unions and the Guomindang labour bureaucracy as defences against this risk, while the handcraft workers, after the frequently pro-labour line taken by the Guomindang in 1928 and 1929 gave way to the authoritarianism of the 1930s, ceased to bother about joining them.

The best illustrations of this are the economic survival into the mid-1930s of some of the craft industries which dropped out of the Guomindang arbitration record after 1929, the persistence of the carpet weavers, the most contentious of Tianjin handcraft workers, in engaging in industrial conflict without a union (complemented by the arbitration statistics from Suzhou), the repeated efforts of the cotton mill workers and the workers at the Beiyang match factory to reform their unions, and the evidence that the Bureau of Social Affairs, as late as 1934, was still approving applications for the registration of new unions, on the rare occasions that workers in any industry applied to organise one.

* * * *

The 1930s in Tianjin were an age of depression and uncertainty. It was not the case, though, that manufacturing industry came to an absolute halt. Some smaller scale industries survived the last pre-war years fairly well compared to the large scale modern industries, in which nearly all factories shut down or changed hands. Though the brocade weaving industry never recovered its former importance after the slump of 1929, there were still 103 factories or workshops counted by a Bureau of Social Affairs survey in 1934. There were 102 carpet factories or workshops, 15 knitting mills, 29 tanneries and probably 16 printing presses.48 Bureau of Social Affairs statistics of 1935 indicate that there were at least 506 tannery workers still employed in Tianjin, 387 printers and paper-makers and 501 dyers.49 The same report contains a summary of

48. "Tianjin gongye shengshuai zhi yanjiu" (The rise and fall of industry in Tianjin), Changtan yuekan, vol.1, no.5 (October 1936) pp.37-44.
49. Tianjin di er ci gongye tongji (Tianjin Industrial Statistics, volume 2), Bureau of
capital, labour, productivity and profits at the larger factories in Tianjin ("Tianjin shi ge da gongchang gaikuang yilanbiao") as of 1933. This included seven brocade weaving factories with a total workforce of 551. These were all industries in which the workers either joined Guomindang unions, or attempted to join them and were denied permission, in the first years of Guomindang government in Tianjin. There were also 977 ironworkers and 1,514 machine-menders in the 1935 survey, none of whom ever joined a Guomindang union.⁵⁰ If these workers did not belong to Guomindang unions in the 1930s, it was not because their factories had gone bankrupt and they had left Tianjin.

Neither was it necessarily because they accepted the terms and conditions under which they worked, or saw no hope of bettering them by industrial action. The carpet weavers’ union was one of the unions which was dissolved during the conflict between Nanjing and the Reorganisationists in 1930, and was never reconstituted. In fact only one of the seven original branches of the carpet weavers’ union, the 7th branch, which represented the workers at the Qingji factory, survived to be included in the Bureau of Social Affairs’ survey of Tianjin unions in December 1929.⁵¹ It was dissolved in the following year.⁵² In 1930 there were six disputes and strikes at carpet factories. None of them were in response to the management’s decision to close the factory, and none of them were at Qingji. There were three protests at Qingshengheng and one at Tailong against sackings or contracting out of work to other factories, and two strikes at Dalai about the quality of the food. There were a further six disputes and strikes in carpet factories between 1932 and 1936. These were for wage rises, against wage cuts, and for prevention of sackings at the New Year, better food and stopping of abuse by foremen. However, the relative militancy of the Tianjin carpet weavers did not lead them to apply to the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Tianjin Guomindang branch to have their union reinstated. In fact a genuinely independent carpet weavers’ organisation, the "Cunyi zhiyou she" (Society of comrades for the preservation of virtue) was organised in 1935 and was credited by a post-revolutionary source with a membership of "seven thousand"
before it was broken up by the police. 53

The response of the cotton mill workers to the Guomindang’s growing intransigence was different. Rather than simply turning their backs on the factory unions, they appealed to the Guomindang authorities for reform of the unions. Or else, they attempted to take over the unions and make them act on the workers’ demands. At Baocchong in January 1932, following a conflict over pay for the New Year holiday in which the union had taken no part, the workers threatened to strike if the union was not reorganised. The management consented to reorganisation of the union, but the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch refused. Eventually after a ten-day slowdown the Guomindang branch promised to take on the reorganisation of the union.54 In September 1933, shortly after 600 workers had been dismissed from Baocchong for economic reasons, several hundred Baocchong workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch for the reform of their union. The petition was considered illegal and the workers’ demonstration outside the Guomindang offices in Zhongshan Park was broken up by the police. Ten Baocchong workers were subsequently arrested as agitators, and another nine given "education".55 At Huaxin, in March 1932, the endemic faction conflict between the workers recruited locally and those recruited from Wuxi took on a broader political significance, as the union split along local faction lines on the issue of whether or not to strike for a wage rise. The pro-strike faction seized control of the union, the Bureau of Social Affairs permitted the factory to close and stop wages and the Guomindang branch took over the union.56 At Yuyuan, in May 1934, a hundred or more workers in the weaving department assembled and voted to call for a wage rise, the reinstatement of workers dismissed after the strike of the previous year and release of those arrested, the abolition of fines, and to protest the beating up of workers by union staff. They appointed delegates to take their complaints to the factory union and conduct negotiations. The union staff beat up the delegates and forcibly escorted them to the Bureau of Public Security. The management convinced the union not to proceed with legal action against the workers.57 At Beiyang in February 1934, the union opposed industrial action to convince the management to award the workers a New Year bonus, and as at Huaxin in 1932, the pro-management incumbents were forced out of office. As at Huaxin, the

53. Rui Yunzhi, "Tianjin ditan gongye de xingqi he fazhan" (The origin and development of the Tianjin carpet industry), Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji, vol.1, pp.77-78.
54. TGYJ, p.131.
55. TGYJ, pp.165-166.
56. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1932; TGYJ, p.135; Zhou Xuehui and Ma Jinggan, "Tianjin Huaxin fangzhi gongsi shimo" (The Tianjin Huaxin Textile Co. from beginning to end) in Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji, vol.38, pp.43-66.
factory closed, and was permitted by the Bureau of Social Affairs to sack the "bad elements" before opening again. At the Beiyang match factory, in June 1934, leaflets were circulated around the factory reading "Down with Deng Jinbo" (a union officer) and "Down with the union". The workers responsible, when questioned, said Deng refused to publicise the union accounts and they suspected him of embezzling union funds. The Bureau of Social Affairs called a meeting of union and anti-union factions. Three leaders of the anti-union faction were sent on to the Bureau of Public Security for questioning. One was arrested, and the rest of the workers identified with the protest against Deng were sacked. The factory workers' persistence suggests that for them, the existence of the union and the ability to make it act in their interests were not insignificant.

One further insight into the absence of unions in non-factory industries in 1930s Tianjin can be derived from occasional registrations of new unions appearing in the Tianjin City Government Gazette. The Union Law, which first came into effect in November 1929 and was revised in September 1932, specified that all craft workers of whom there were more than 50 in any locality, or all industrial workers if there were more than 100 of them, could form a union. There were exceptions for workers in state enterprises, educational institutions and public utilities (Clause 3), but not for carpet factories and dyeworks. Local Guomindang governments could and did interpret Nanjing legislation in a variety of ways. However, the Tianjin Guomindang did not interpret the legislation to prevent the establishment of new unions after 1930. In March 1934, a sack makers' union (madaiye gonghui) was founded in Tianjin. In April 1934, a union was established at the Xiehe towel factory. It is surprising at first sight that workers in such small scale or casually organised enterprises would apply to the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch for permission to establish a union. One potential explanation that suggests itself, though it can not be proved, is that these workers were former cotton mill workers who had lost their jobs in the production cuts of the 1930s. There is no visible administrative or legal obstacle that would have prevented workers in the more significant handcraft industries from establishing unions.

While the data on Communist unions and factory cells in Tianjin do not appear to prove anything except that it was easier for Communists to organise in large factories

57. TGYJ, p.174.
58. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April, June 1934; TGYJ, p.170; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives.
59. TGYJ, p.175.
60. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March, April 1934.
(a likely reason for the Party's almost complete lack of success in Suzhou, where there were two large factories, Hongsheng and Sulun, the latter employing a majority of women and girls, the former an entirely female workforce) the data on Guomindang unions in Tianjin do appear to draw a line between handcraft and factory industries. The more vulnerable factory workers, because the risks they faced were greater and their other options fewer, remained attached to the Guomindang unions even after their value as collective bargaining mechanisms had become dubious. The greater preference of Suzhou handcraft workers for Guomindang unions is best seen as an instance of institutional inertia, or in this case, momentum. All the trades featured in the Suzhou Guomindang arbitration record after 1927 possessed guild organisation before 1927. In some cases the Guomindang union simply replaced an existing guild – as was the case with the Xiazhang silk weavers' guild, which became the wooden loom silk weavers' union – and in others, the wage-earning guild members split off into a Guomindang union, while the independent proprietors and master craftsmen stayed in the guild. In any case, the organisational base and much or all of the personnel remained. In Tianjin, where the handcraft industries were either new industries, like brocade weaving, or industries recently established in Tianjin by craftsmen migrating from elsewhere, like carpet weaving or ironworking, this institutional base did not exist. Faced with the conservatism of the Guomindang labour apparatus after 1930, Tianjin handcraft workers did not see a reason to be part of it.

The theme of systematic difference between handcraft and factory industries manifests itself again when the relationship between the workplace and the Guomindang state is examined through the medium of Guomindang union statistics. It was not the militancy or passivity of the workers in the different types of industry that determined whether or not they joined Guomindang unions, or their belief in the Guomindang, so much as the different opportunities and threats to their livelihood that the basis of their employment offered them, under the social and economic conditions obtaining in China at the time. Compared to the handcraft workers, or even to the peasant farmers, the workers in the new industries were disempowered. This disempowerment, a consequence of the technological and organisational disjunction between modern manufacturing industry and the social context into which it was introduced, manifested itself at the same time in the "traditional", "irrational" strategies of personal patronage and dependence, and the "rational" and "bureaucratic" strategies of membership in Guomindang unions and appeals to formal channels of arbitration. The roots of particularist tradition in Chinese factories are seen to be no older than the factories.
Conclusion

Throughout the six chapters preceding I have developed the argument that the particularistic recruiting practices and native place networks so often described in factories in Republican China arose in response to the transfer of 20th century manufacturing technology and organisation to China. I have made no statements about immiseration of the workers or the rise of proletarian class consciousness. What I have tried to describe and explain is the origin of a new kind of power relationship between factory workers and employers. While power relations cannot ultimately be considered apart from the concentration and distribution of wealth, I do not consider that the evolution of Chinese capitalism or Eurocentric world imperialism alone can account for the kind of things I have described above. In the Chinese case the mechanics of production in the factories were very important, as was the weakness of the state and the absence of labour exchange institutions. Neither do I consider that industrialisation in China destroyed old authoritarian social bonds and introduced the ex-peasants who worked in the factories to the freedom of the modern world, with all its uncertainties. I have argued that the creation of manufacturing industries in China in which skill was not deemed necessary for the workers, taking place as it did when institutions for the large scale selling of labour were little developed and the "social safety net" did not exist, left the new workers with a much enhanced "native place consciousness", and brought them into relations of personal subjection to their patrons in the factories that exceeded what they had left behind in the villages in authoritarianism and in "feudal" particularism.

The two most important aspects of factory work and industrial conflict that I have traced through investigation into several Chinese handcraft and factory industries, and that I consider to support this conclusion, are substantial wage diversity between one enterprise and another in the factory industries, and the factory workers' manifest concern about security of employment. I consider that other evidence supplied by the sources available to me also points towards this conclusion. There is the confusion about the degree of skill and experience required for different types of factory work expressed in the flour mill representatives' statements to the investigators from the Bureau of Social Affairs, and in the match factory managers' ideas about men's and women's work. There is the Beiyang match factory workers' unsuccessful attempt in 1933 to enforce wage parity, dismissed eventually by the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch with the condition "Events at other factories are of no relevance". There is the greater
tendency to use lockouts as a bargaining technique by employers in factory industries. There is the much greater proportion of multiple enterprise disputes in the handcraft industries. There is the greater likelihood of workers in factory industries objecting to the sacking of one or a few other workers, particularly if it was a case of people making mistakes at work rather than political discrimination. There is the Suzhou silk weavers' and Tianjin carpet weavers' resistance to the foreman's authority, and the Tianjin factory workers' persistence in belonging to Guomindang unions (and trying to have them reformed) despite the Tianjin Guomindang's labour policy having turned rightward in the 1930s, while handcraft workers in Tianjin dropped out of the system.

I can visualise three major types of objection or subjects for further research offered by absences in this dissertation, though there may of course be many others. One is the random appearance of the wages in diverse small handcraft industries quoted in the Tianjin Bureau of Social Affairs' 1931 study, *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*. The argument I have presented here would lead one to expect that wages in these trades would be uniform. I suggested in Chapter 4 that this evident wage diversity came from the weakness of guilds in Tianjin and from rapid urban growth, creating a business climate in which close regulation of wages and prices was unnecessary. I suggested further that guild regulation of wages and prices was not a customary administrative expression of Chinese distrust of the free market but was linked to business conditions, while the contrasting wage uniformity in the handcraft industries in Suzhou is best understood as the response of self-regulating commercial associations to a stable or shrinking market and a free labour force. As the chairman of the Yunjin guild protested to the Guomindang, the guilds could not enforce wage uniformity if business conditions were against it.

However, all this is no more than half-informed speculation, and there is plenty of room for further research on what made and unmade the power of guilds to regulate wages and prices in Republican China. It is also possible, as I implied in Chapter 4, that the money figures recorded in *Tianjin zhi gongshangye* were not wage rates but earnings, which varied with the amount and type of business done in the shop, and that trade wide piece rates applied at least in the more established and economically important of the trades mentioned in *Tianjin zhi gongshangye*, such as gold and silverware and ironworking. This point might be cleared up quite easily by a visit to the Santiaoshi archives in Tianjin, if they still exist.

Another absence, which causes me great regret, is the workers themselves. While the aim of this thesis has been to establish what were the basic relations of power that determined the lives of workers, and what created them, it has been confined to investigation and discussion of physical, economic and political factors which affected relations between workers and employers, and has left undiscussed the issue of what these workers might have thought or felt
about their situation. They feature only anonymously and in the mass. In part, this is because I consider that Hershatter and Honig have already performed the task of individualising the workers. The peculiar difficulties caused by lack of contemporary written sources that might have given insight into the thoughts of individual workers, and by political over-determination of subsequent written sources under the People's Republic, meant that interviewing old workers was the only satisfactory means of achieving this. Because the argument I have advanced in this thesis occurred to me only after I had returned from China, and because while in China I did not wish to attempt unnecessary duplication of Hershatter's work, I did not attempt to organise such interviews. I remain unpleasantly aware, though, that this thesis would have gained quite a lot if I had been able to test my argument by asking a few old workers about factory floor politics, and about how they got their jobs and what their options were.

This leads to the third question, which for me is the most interesting theoretically and most suggestive of future research directions: the migration to the cities. I have argued above that factory workers banded together in native place groups under gang leaders to whom they owed personal loyalty and material assistance when wanted, not because this was the way Chinese late traditional village society was organised, but because the nature of factory work and of recruiting practises in the new industries made it necessary. I have suggested that peasants who moved to cities to work in factories did not first migrate on speculation, out of necessity or because they believed that there were job opportunities in cities, and eventually find factory jobs after looking for work for some indefinite time. Except in cases of emergency, they moved to the cities only if they already had jobs arranged through urban contacts. In cases of emergency, if the family had been made destitute by fighting or economic circumstance and faced starvation, they might drift to the nearest city, but once there, they would not necessarily find jobs in factories. Unless they were fortunate enough to have a relative or fellow villager who could help them, they would fade into the half-employed or criminally employed urban underclass. That is, because of the (inevitably) particularistic nature of industrial labour recruitment in Republican China, the labour market did not work as a cause of rural-urban migration or a means of raising material living standards in country districts.

None of this, though, is more than slightly informed speculation, and will remain speculation unless the rural-urban migration process is subjected to research and analysis as thorough and microcosmically focused as Hershatter's and Honig's studies of factory work and city life. There are two questions that bear directly on the argument advanced in this thesis which might require this argument to be confirmed, refuted or significantly modified if they are addressed by village-centred research. One, as suggested above, is the question of how people found jobs in cities. The other, less manageable, question is the extent to which relations of
production and exchange at the village level depended on particularistic relations of patronage and dependence.

I have argued that relations between peasant farmers, landlords and the local merchants to whom the farmers sold their produce were less particularistic and more "modern" than relations between workers, foremen and employers in the new factory industries. This is based only on my estimation of how the Chinese rural economy of the Republican period, certainly in the more developed eastern provinces from which most migrants to the cities came, would have discouraged landlords and merchants from trying to bind the peasants to them in fixed relations of patronage. I consider that proliferation of small scale commercial enterprise, the growth of off-land investment opportunities for those with something to invest, and a tendency towards labour surplus, rather than shortage, on the land may lead to economic crisis and impoverishment of the peasants if other factors are adverse, but do not usually lead to feudalism.

Perhaps future research will be able to build on or qualify this view of the Republican countryside. If it can be established that peasant farmers in Hebei and Jiangsu in the 1920s dealt with numbers of landlords and produce merchants, and moved their custom from one to another according to the terms offered, the native-place networks in the factories look less like a cultural practice so entrenched it reproduced itself in the factory environment, and more like an ad hoc response to material necessity. If it can be established that relations of production and exchange in the villages were strongly particularistic, in spite of contrary economic forces, there would appear to be a case for the cultural practice of *guanxi* as a sufficient cause.

In *Shanghai on strike*, Elizabeth Perry suggests that banding together in family or native place based gangs under the leadership of a gang boss or elder, to whom everyone in the gang owed personal loyalty, was the new factory workers' most natural response to the factory environment, because they drew on their knowledge or experience of secret societies in their home districts. I consider that this hypothetical explanation does not distinguish sufficiently between routine agricultural practice and the peasants' responses to destitution. This distinction, between routine agricultural practice and destitution, cannot be considered absolute. It might be argued that a certain degree of rural immiseration was an almost inevitable structural consequence of the organisation of the rural economy in these provinces in Republican China. But even so, this is not to say that peasants who owned or had the use of enough land to support themselves were subject to the same complex of social relations as peasants who had been squeezed out of the system altogether.

I have suggested that secret society organisation was not a universal or even very widespread feature of the life experience of peasants in Hebei and Jiangsu provinces in the
Republican period, but a last alternative to starvation for the destitute. Factory workers in Tianjin in the 1920s and 1930s were not destitute, though their lives look very grim by our present standards. The cash income of a factory worker in Tianjin could be quite respectable by contemporary rural standards, as long as he or she stayed employed. What they had in common with the dispossessed peasants who joined bandit gangs was radical loss of personal control over their means of earning a living. This loss of control could be the result of going bankrupt as a peasant farmer, or it could be the result of entering the factory system as an unskilled worker. Without material resources or qualifications of the sort that an employer would pay for, and without any basic guarantee of survival from the state, the factory worker, like the destitute peasant, could only commit himself or herself to the unqualified service of a patron who could guarantee survival. But this materialist account of guanxi will remain at the level of wild sociology unless tested by research into particularism versus "modern" rationalism in relations of production and exchange at the village level.

Another issue I have not addressed here is how well arguments like those above account for the character of relations between workers and employers in other parts of the world. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, Shorter and Tilly in Strikes in France describe a pattern of industrial conflict in what they term "the threatened crafts" - those in which changes in industrial technology and organisation cause qualified craftsmen to lose status, independence and earning opportunities - that is very similar to what took place in the carpet factories in Tianjin and the silk weaving factories in Suzhou. However, Shorter and Tilly give an impression of industrial relations in French factory industries very different from the typical situation in China, with strikes of factory workers "distinguished by no special acerbity" and confined to wages and hours issues. I suggested in Chapter 6 that the reason for such a difference between the patterns of industrial conflict in French and Chinese factories might be the existence in 20th century France of an effective universal social welfare system, and of institutions and practices - general adult literacy in itself would have made quite a difference - which facilitated potential workers' access to factory jobs.

However, like the hypothesis about particularism in relations of production and exchange in Chinese villages outlined above, this line of thinking will remain hypothetical without further comparative research across several countries in diverse states of economic development and political integration to establish whether or not there is a connection between the provision of social security and labour exchanges and the "French" type of industrial relations in the factory industries, and between the absence of both and the "Chinese" type. If the same kinds of things tended to happen in factories in quite different cultural milieus according to whether the workers' survival needs were guaranteed by some kind of extra-factory social welfare apparatus or not, the case for the material, economic origin of the phenomenon called guanxi in China would be
strengthened. Alternatively, the case for guanxi as a distinctive cultural practice that gets reproduced in quite diverse kinds of social environments by force of habit would be strengthened if the reverse were true.

Some suggestive evidence is provided by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his book Rethinking working class history: Bengal, 1890-1940, which concerns the jute mills near Calcutta. Chakrabarty comments on wage disparities between the jute mills similar to the wage disparities between the Tianjin cotton mills, describing the wage system as "inchoate". "The lack of standardisation of wages remained a problem even in the 1950s". Most of the jute mills in Calcutta were managed by Scots from Dundee, and they possessed a quite active trade organisation, the Indian Jute Manufacturers' Association. Standardisation of wages should not have been beyond the IJMA if a majority of its members had felt this to be necessary.

Then when discussing the recruiting of workers and organisation of work in the jute mills, Chakrabarty renders a detailed account of the role of the sardar, or foreman, which appears to duplicate everything that has been written about Chinese factory foremen. The management delegated the whole of its authority over recruiting and firing workers to the sardar, to the point where, as in the Chinese factory industries, jute mill managers typically did not know how many workers they employed. The sardar governed access to work, exacting a commission from the workers he found jobs for, and continued to exact "gifts" from the workers under his patronage at religious holidays. They were often allied with gangs of goondas (thugs, or liumang) outside the factories, and gang fights between one sardar's gang and another were common. They were also often found leading the workers' claims for higher wages.

However, Chakrabarty's explanation for the sardars' power over the workers recalls Perry's. The sardars' authority "derived from a precapitalist culture with a strong emphasis on religion, community, kinship, language, and other, similar loyalties". Although Indian and Chinese religious and sub-ethnic loyalties and conflicts were quite different - rural society in Hebei in the Republican period, while not exactly egalitarian, was without caste, and religion did not feature as a source of social distinction - and the cultures from which peasants in Hebei and Bengal drew their understanding of the world had nothing in common except by chance, these unrelated precapitalist cultures led to the same results when unskilled peasant workers went into the factories.

It is plainly not advisable to compare part of China to part of India, with a glance in the directions of France and England, and produce an argument meant to explain the sources and

subjects of industrial conflict in any place where there were workers and factories. At most, the prospects for comparative research are intriguing. If the systematic distinction between wages, recruiting practices, labour mobility and industrial conflict in handcraft and factory industries that I have traced in this thesis does turn up regularly in diverse parts of the world, this needs to be accounted for in any general theory which sets out to explain either the economic or the directly personal implications of relations of production and exchange. If the character of industrial conflict in factory industries varies along with such factors as personal mobility, literacy, social welfare and political enfranchisement, as the French example seems to suggest, this is not without political interest. If there is in fact no pattern, apart from a few odd coincidences between Bengal and Tianjin, and workers in the same industries, of similar background and skill level and in similar economic circumstances, prove to be concerned about quite different things in different countries and even different regions, then the tormenting spectre of culture, easy to invoke but excessively hard to define and even harder to incorporate into precisely expressed relationships of cause and effect, will need to be brought in again to account for how the actions of workers, supervisors and employers would have been understood according to current notions of reality, morality and correct behaviour, and what the non-economic social consequences for the participants would have been.

When reviewing the literature on labour in China, I argued that the tendency to explain workers' attitudes and actions by reference to cultural practice in the villages derived from the growing difficulty, after about 1980, of putting forward an argument about industrial conflict suggestive of Marxism. However, this use of culture is not restricted to left wing historians of labour repelled by the example of Chesneaux. The idea is given a neo-liberal economic equivalent in C.A.Bayly's book *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: North Indian society in the age of British expansion.* Bayly considered that economic development under the Raj "had not really initiated a free market or undermined the headman system". Commenting on the sale of jobs and economic perquisites, in particular by the sardars, Bayly wrote "But what made the sale worthwhile was that within the "little domain" that was being put on the market, competition and the free market were still excluded". Muramatsu Yuji makes similar statements in *Chugoku keizai no shakai taisei.* So culture may be an obstacle to economic growth explaining the late appearance or non-appearance of predicted features of modern industrial society, or an obstacle to the workers' evolution of class consciousness explaining why they failed to commit themselves to the class struggle, or even, as in *Shanghai on strike*, the source of sub-working class communal identity and collective action. What is common to all such uses of culture is that culture and modern industry are separate and opposed determinants of social relations.

Culture is generally conceived of as a field of signs, concepts and practices by which the world is represented and understood. Though it may have roots in prehistory, it evolves continually, being itself changed by the events and situations represented through it. But when pre-industrial (or pre-capitalist) culture is used to explain industrial relations and industrial conflict, this presumes (second) that modern industrial society does not generate its own culture, and (first) that elements of pre-industrial or pre-capitalist culture are related to the events and situations of the time at which they arose, if at all, in ways determined by a reified irrational cosmology and otherwise entirely unpredictable and unique, and because the sources of culture are transcendent and irrational, pre-capitalist culture could be transferred whole from village to factory. To put it more crudely, culture wasn't about anything real.

This is what I consider misguided about this use of culture in labour history. At one stroke, it severs pre-modern culture from its contemporary social and political referents, elevates modern manufacturing industry to a sphere of pure economic logic unsullied by representations of anything, to which the culture-bound workers adapt in their own fashion, and violates the principle of Ockham's Razor by choosing a remote and complex explanation when one close at hand will do. If one is to search for the cultural sources of factory floor politics and industrial conflict, I consider that the pre-modern/modern distinction, which denies pre-modern culture its social and political referents and denies modern industrial work its cultural meaning, needs to be avoided.

Finally, a few words on what I consider are the macro-economic implications of the argument advanced in this thesis: if it were the case that the market for unskilled labour was severely restricted, wages would not tend to rise in linked fashion, though they might creep up in an inchoate way in response to industrial action, action by the state, or employers' own perceptions of the workers' needs, and the results of economic growth would distribute themselves more slowly and imperfectly throughout the population of China than is predicted in *Economic growth in pre-war China*. However, this is a qualification of Rawski's argument rather than a direct rebuttal. Particularism in the recruiting of unskilled labour is not incompatible with economic growth, nor even with rising incomes for workers and peasants, if the retarding effect it might have on the flow-on of wage increases is compensated for by other factors. What it cannot accommodate is the view that the development of modern industry breaks down the authoritarian and particularistic social relations of the pre-modern era and leads to a situation in which both capital and labour are mobile, and access to work and other earning opportunities is decided by rational, universalistic criteria only. The origin and the application of this theory within the political culture of the West are easier to see than its ability to explain the characteristics of industrial conflict in Republican China.
APPENDIX 1

Disputes and strikes in Tianjin cotton mills

1. Beiyang, August 1921. 1,000 or more workers demonstrated against the Beiyang management shortly after the factory was founded. They claimed pay and conditions were not as promised. Demonstration broken up by police. 13 arrests. Dong, 1985 p.9; Beiguo chunqiu, no.3, 1960 p.26.

2. Yuyuan, September 1921. Over 20 workers, all experienced cotton mill workers from Zhangde in Henan, were sacked on September 7th. Armed with bricks they went to the personnel office and demanded to be given final pay and travel costs. The management called the police. 15 arrested. Dong, 1985 p.10.

3. Beiyang, October 1921. October 4th, several arrests after a demonstration by about 1,000 Beiyang workers. The workers filed suit against Beiyang, claiming the company owed them unpaid wages. Dong, 1985 p.11.

4. Yuyuan, 1922. The Yuyuan workers organised a union in 1922, but it was banned by the government. Wu Ao, ed. Tianjin shi fangshaye diaocha baogao, 1932 p.127.


6. Baocheng, July 1925. There was a one day strike on July 16th for a wage rise, meal breaks, recognition of the Baocheng union (a Communist union) and the reinstatement of a woman worker who had been sacked for bringing her baby to the factory and putting the child to sleep in a basket of yarn. The Baocheng workers claimed they were paid 10c a day less than workers at other mills. The management offered a 2c rise, which was rejected. The Chinese Cotton Mill Owners’ Association negotiated a settlement which awarded a 4c rise on the 17th. The woman got her job back. Dong, 1985 p.37; Hershatter, 1986 pp.214-215; Shuntian shibao, 17.7.1925 p.7; Zhao, 1989 p.67.

7. Baocheng, August 1925. The Baocheng workers struck again on August 8th in response to the management’s failure to implement the 4c wage rise granted in July, to new and stricter penalties and to a fine of 40c (roughly one day’s pay) exacted on a woman, Yu Aying, who had left her machine to eat. A group of workers went to the office and demanded back payment of the wage rise; also no fining of women, refund of the 40c fine taken from Yu, reduction of penalties, a lunch break, Baocheng to only employ workers recommended by other workers, pay for the strike period, and no beatings. The workers fought with the private factory guards, who were Chinese, outside the office. Property was damaged and a dozen or more workers and a policeman were injured. The manager refused terms and closed the factory. 10-20 were arrested. Dong, 1985 p.44; Shuntian shibao, 11.8.1925 p.1; United States Department of State, 1910-1929 files 893:5045/210, 893:5045/222; Zhao, 1989 pp.67-68.

8. Beiyang, August 1925. A strike took place at Beiyang on August 9th for a wage rise and abolition of penalties, also in response to the events at Baocheng. The Chinese Cotton Mill Owners’ Association conducted talks, decided wages at Beiyang were relatively low and awarded a wage rise on August 11th. Dong, 1985 p.44; Shuntian shibao, 11.8.1925 p.1.
9. Yuda, August 1925. On August 11th the Yuda workers raised 7 demands including wage rises, recognition of the union at Yuda and Japanese cotton mills in Shanghai and Qingdao, an 8 hour day with a half hour meal break, a minimum 4 yuan per month for apprentices, reinstatement of sacked workers and abolition of unreasonable punishments. The management’s first offer was rejected and a strike was declared. The management closed the factory. The military police tried to enforce the lockout and a mass brawl between workers and police started. A second riot followed on the 12th, this time involving workers from Baoceng, Beiyang and Yuyuan who came to the aid of the Yuda workers. 40+ were killed and 420 arrested, with 500,000 yuan of damage to the factory. The Baoceng, Beiyang and Yuyuan workers went out in sympathy. Yuda stayed closed for the rest of the year. Dong, 1985 p.47; Hershatter, 1986 pp.215-217; Shunfian shibao, 13.8.1925 p.1, 14.8.1925 p.1, 20.8.1925 p.2, 21.8.1925 p.2; Tang, 1929 pp.421-424; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, files no. 893:5045/210, 893:5045/223.

10. Huaxin, March 1926. The newly established Huaxin union called on all workers at Huaxin to join. The foremen Lin Shoudu and Chen Zixiang opposed this. The representatives of the new union forced the two foremen into the union office on March 17th and told them to pay a fine of 200 uniforms or else be handed over to the 1st Guominjun headquarters. The Guominjun intervened on the side of the management, and the union office was closed by police and troops. 3 picketers were arrested. This event followed news of the strike at Yuyuan on the same day - Dong, 1985 p.65. The U.S. consul at Tianjin reported that the Yuyuan strike was on March 20th, and did not mention the Huaxin incident.

11. Yuyuan, March 1926. The Yuyuan workers struck on March 20th (or 17th) for a 10c wage rise. There was some conflict among the workers on the issue of union dues. Some opposed paying. The management shut the factory. Sun Yue, general of the 1st Guominjun, closed the General Union. The strike was over by the 21st. Dong, 1985 p.65; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, files no. 893:5045/322, 893:00/7349.

12. Yuyuan, January 1928. The management cancelled the New Year break. The workers went on strike in protest and broke a large number of spindles. The factory closed for 5 days. Dong, 1985 p.74.

13. Beiyang, May 1928. There was a strike in protest against the sacking of over 700 workers. Four strike leaders were arrested. They were released in August after prolonged protests from other workers. Dong, 1985 p.74.

14. Hengyuan, June 1928. The Hengyuan management abolished the nightshift and divided the workers into rotating day shifts. Production was cut and many were sacked. The workers objected and raised four demands; a pay rise, a half hour lunch break, return of the nightshift and payment of wages "on schedule". They struck on June 18th. A worker was killed and two injured by police, who were called by the management, and machinery was damaged in the fighting between police and workers. The strike was broken on the 20th and two leaders arrested. One was eventually given 8 years. The management reintroduced the night shift and the previous pay system. Dong, 1985 p.75; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.39.

15. Yuyuan, August 1928. There was a brief strike shortly after establishment of the Guomindang union for the return of 2 sacked workers, one a union officer, and recognition of the union. The union had claimed interest on the compulsory 5% superannuation and the management had refused. The management eventually dropped the 5% superannuation rule in January 1929. Dong, 1985 p.77; H.D.Fong, Cotton industry and trade in China, 1932 p.189.

16. Huaxin, October 1928. 2 union officers asked for leave and were sacked. The
17. Yuyuan, May 1929. The Yuyuan workers called for a wage rise to meet the cost of living. The management declared that the economic situation did not permit it. Previously Yuyuan had raised wages every 6 or 12 months, depending on the amount by which they were raised, but there had not been a wage rise for over 12 months. The General Union negotiated with the management but the wage claim was turned down. There was no strike. Wu Bannong, 1932 p.68.

18. Huaxin, September 1929. The Guomindang tutelage committee ordered the General Union to expel and deal with workers sacked by Huaxin who had forced their way back into the factory and were continuing to work, and "agitate for industrial conflict". The Party branch ordered their expulsion from the factory on September 19th. On October 6th the General Union called on Huaxin to take back 4 workers. On October 19, a General Union meeting discussed a fight between Huaxin union member Zhang Wanming’s gang and Huaxin union officer Liu Mingsheng’s gang. The Huaxin union was reorganized under the General Union on November 25th. The General Union commented "The factional divisions are complicated" (fenzi you shu fuza). Dong, 1985 pp.98, 100.

19. Yuda, October 1929. A strike took place over the management’s refusal to allow the workers to join a union. The management eventually gave in but only 800 of the 1400 workers joined. H.D.Fong, *Cotton industry and trade in China*, p.159; Wu Ao, ed. *Tianjin shi fangshaye diaocha baogao*, 1932 p.284.

20. Yuyuan, November 1929. The Yuyuan workers protested the sackings of a fellow worker and a union officer, but the foreman Zhang Zhenxiao ignored them and penalised those who protested. The workers then presented 10 demands including wage rises, sacking of the manager, abolition of penalties for defects in yarn, a date for reopening of the weaving plant (which was shut) and increased huahong (the New Year bonus). They petitioned the city government. The dispute ran for 2 weeks. Some demands were met. The manager kept his job. Dong, 1985 p.102; *Tianjin shi Shehui Ju minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao*, 1929, p.69.

21. Hengyuan, January 1930. Secret Communist Party cell members called a party members’ meeting and a workers’ representatives’ meeting to organize a campaign for an extra fortnight’s wages at the New Year. The meeting was discovered and all who took part arrested. Dong, 1985 p.103.

22. Yuyuan, August 1930. 100 or more workers on the night shift commenced a slowdown over the sacking of 4 workers. The police enforced the sacking of 3, and redeployment of a supervisor and a foreman. Dong, 1985 p.108.

23. Beiyang, November 1930. Beiyang sacked over 200 women workers on the grounds that women were not as productive as men and the factory had to reorganise. On December 10th 600-700 still employed male Beiyang workers petitioned the Second Special District authorities for their reinstatement. The sacked women petitioned the Tianjin Guomindang in January claiming the factory had replaced them. The women were eventually paid off with 2 months’ wages. Dong, 1985 p.111

24. Yuda, November 1930. There was a further dispute over the right to organise, ending in a slowdown. The Bureau of Social Affairs instructed the management to allow the union. Dong, 1985 p.112.

25. Yuyuan, November 1930. "Tewudui" (special police) were deployed to all 6 mills by decision of the Bureau of Public Security, to guard against suspected Communist activity, but they were forced to withdraw from Yuyuan after a slowdown as the management feared damage to the factory. Dong, 1985 p.112.
26. Huaxin, December 1930. The Huaxin management had recently declared that workers were to tie broken ends of yarn by hand, instead of using a knife to cut them. The technique took time to learn, and there was a dispute over penalties applied to workers who were discovered using knives. Dong, 1985 p.112.

27. Hengyuan, January 1931. There was a slowdown on January 2nd because the end of year bonus was less than previously promised. 8,000 yuan was offered instead of 40,000. The Bureaus of Social Affairs and Public Security and the Guomindang branch negotiated a settlement. The factory offered 21,000 yuan, costs of the slowdown period were not to be borne by the workers, the workers were not to hold a grudge and the management was not to penalise workers for trivial reasons. Normal work resumed on the 13th. Dong, 1985 p.113.

28. Yuda, February 1931. There was a 2 hour strike over the factory’s refusal to award huahong. Dong, 1985 p.114.

29. Beiyang, February 1931. The workers’ demand for a day off on the New Year was acceded to by the management. Dong, 1985 p.115.

30. Huaxin, February 1931. There was a 2 hour strike over fining of workers who stayed home for the New Year. The Bureaus of Social Affairs and Public Security and the Guomindang branch instructed the management not to repeat this. The Guomindang branch told the management to retract the fines. Dong, 1985 p.115.

31. Hengyuan, February 1931. 7 workers were arrested on February 19th as agitators, then 3 more were sacked as "bad elements plotting disturbance" (bu liang fenzi qitu sandong). A strike followed to protest the arrests and sackings. No demands were met. Work resumed on the 21st. Dong, 1985 p.116.

32. Yuyuan, June 1931. There was a 2 hour slowdown on June 11th by men workers in the yaosha bu (reeling department) claiming equal treatment with women workers. Their demands were granted. Dong, 1985 p.121.

33. Yuyuan, June 1931. 1,000+ workers in the xisha bu (spinning department) struck for a wage rise on June 18, inspired by the success of the yaosha bu workers. The management shut the factory on the 19th. The workers commenced a hunger strike. The union and Party branch were opposed but the workers ignored them. The management insisted on the sacking of 6 strike leaders before opening the doors. Work resumed on the 23rd. Pay for the strike period was given but the strike leaders were sacked. Dong, 1985 p.121.

34. Yuyuan, July 1931. The management suspected a further strike in the spinning department, called police to the factory and threatened a second shutdown. No strike took place. Dong, 1985 p.123.

35. Yuda, November 1931. A Japanese staff member was attacked by a worker with an iron bar and injured. The Bureau of Social Affairs ordered the union to hand over the offender to the police, and the union did so. The management complained of several recent assaults on staff members. Dong, 1985 p.125; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, November 1931.

36. Yuda, December 1931. The factory closed due to debts on December 14th and all workers were dismissed. The management claimed Yuda had experienced nothing but losses since industrial conflict in the previous year, and business was affected by the boycott of Japanese goods. They said Japanese staff were afraid to come to work. The union raised 9 conditions: payment of the yearly huahong, wages to January 14th, workers to receive a compensatory payment according to the number of years they
had worked at Yuda, first rights to future employment, former union officers to keep their positions if work started again, travel costs according to distance, no time limit for workers living in the Yuda dormitory to leave their rooms, wages for the period the factory had been closed to be paid when it reopened, and the factory not to close for more than 1 month. The Bureau of Social Affairs set compromise terms: final pay as required by the Factory Law, 4 yuan travel costs, reduced pay for December 1st to 6th followed by normal pay for December 6th to 13th, workers to be allowed to stay in the dormitory for 1 month from the 13th, first rights to future employment for ex-workers, and the union subsidy for November to be paid. On January 30th, the management tried to expel workers still living in the dormitory. The Guomindang was called on again. Work began on April 11th. Dong, 1985 p.126; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, 2nd Historical Archives; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao December 1931, January 1932, April 1932.


38. Baocheng, January 1932. There was a second strike on January 31st for three days off with 10 days’ pay at the New Year holiday. Previous demands from the workers for reorganization of the union, which they did not recognize, and a 5c pay rise had been turned down. The management threatened the workers’ representatives, who were not union officers and who had bypassed the union which opposed the holiday pay claim, with arrest. The workers threatened to burn down the factory. The management then offered three days off but no pay. The workers insisted on the full amount plus a 5c pay rise. The management then offered a 3c rise and agreed to reorganisation of the union. The workers accepted and prepared to go back, but the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch pronounced the settlement illegal and opened a new round of arbitration. The result was 3 days off with 3 days’ pay and rejection of the workers’ other demands on February 8th. The workers started a slowdown. Eventually the management paid eight more days’ pay and awarded a 3c rise, and the Guomindang branch agreed to reorganise the union. On February 18th, there was a reelection of union officers under supervision of the Guomindang branch which was denounced as illegal by the former union officers, followed by a second reelection on the 20th. Dong, 1985 p.131.

39. Yuyuan, February 1932. A 9 hour strike for a 5c daily rise in the Yuyuan spinning department was partially successful. Rises had recently been granted in other factories. The management awarded 2c. Other departments were not involved. Dagong Bao, 23.2.1932; Dong, 1985 p.132.

40. Beiyang, February 1932. A strike for *huahong* of two weeks’ pay and a paid New Year holiday was successful. Dong, 1985 p.134.

41. Huaxin, February-March 1932. A strike followed faction conflict in the first week of February for control of the union. The incumbent faction lost, and at once called a strike for wage rises of 5c, double pay on the New Year and *huahong* of 40 days’ pay. The Bureau of Social Affairs offered compromise terms: wage rises of 3c, double pay on the New Year and the first of May, and the *huahong* issue to be settled at further talks. The management, and the current union leadership, accepted the terms proposed by the Bureau but the previous union leadership initially did not, agreeing to return to work after a day of discussions on February 14th. The union conflict was referred to the Guomindang branch, which called for punishment of three union officers and eight members on the 15th. Work began on the 16th. Early in March, the original union leadership which had conducted the February strike took over the union again. The Bureau of Social Affairs permitted the factory to close and stop wages. The Party branch took over the union. Zhang Wenliang, the union officer who had initially refused to sign the compromise agreement in February, and seventeen others were
sacked. 12 more were suspended for 2 weeks. The new union officers elected with the approval of the Guomindang branch pledged not to influence production because of factional disputes. The previous demands for huahong and payment of wages during the strike period were not met. Dong, 1985 p.135; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1932; Zhou and Ma, 1987.

42. Baocheng, June 1932. 7 workers were sacked from the niwa bu (bricklayers' department) "without reason". The Guomindang branch pressed the management to reinstate them. Three returned to work, two were given other jobs and the other two were to be re-employed when there was work available. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, 2nd Historical Archives.


44. Yuyuan, November 1932. Four workers in the yaoshao bu (reeling department) asked to be given uniforms, as at Beiyang. The union refused to support the claim. The management turned it down as it had not gone through the union. The four workers called a strike, which the union declared illegal. The four workers were sacked. Other workers in the spinning department struck in sympathy, still against the instructions of the union. The police arrested 12 including one woman. Those arrested lost their jobs, with the approval of the Guomindang branch. Dong, 1985 p.152; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.187.

45. Yuda, January 1933. Yuda workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs for reestablishment of their union, which had again been dissolved. The company had come under direct Japanese management. More than ten Chinese supervisors were sacked after the management change, remaining Chinese white collar staff were put onto the same form of employment contract as workers, huahong was cut to one day's pay and the union was abolished. Dagong Bao, 5.1.1933; Dong, 1985 p.153.

46. Baocheng, January 1933. There was a strike over non-payment of huahong, promised on January 13th after representations from workers but not paid. Dong, 1985 p.154.

47. Baocheng, April 1933. Over 600 workers laid off from Baocheng petitioned the Guomindang branch on April 11th. 200 were permitted to pass by the police. They asked to be paid off as under the new Factory Law and given first rights to future employment, for pay for the period that the factory had been closed to be issued and for travel costs of 10 yuan. These terms were partially accepted on condition that the management agreed; they could be paid off according to the Factory Law and given first rights to future employment, but received no pay for the time that the factory was closed and only 8 yuan travel costs. Dong, 1985 pp.160-161.

48. Baocheng, Beiyang, Hengyuan, Huaxin, Yuda and Yuyuan. April 1933. With the approval of the Chinese Cotton Mill Owners' Association all six mills decided on April 12th to cut wages 30% and stop paid holidays from economic necessity. An emergency meeting of cotton mill unions called on the city government to prevent this, and asked for tax relief for the factories. At negotiations with the Bureau of Social Affairs the unions proposed a 10% cut. A 20% cut, with the issue of pay for holidays to be decided by each factory, was eventually fixed, to last 3 months from June 1st. This agreement did not apply to Yuda or Baocheng. Hengyuan closed for 6 months on May 5th. Yuyuan dropped the night shift on June 1st. Beiyang, Huaxin, Baocheng and Yuda followed. The Bureau of Social Affairs reported in June that its recommendations had not been implemented and things were growing worse. Hengyuan reopened on June 22nd after a concerted campaign by other unions. Dong, 1985 p.161; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, May-June 1933; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 59.
49. Hengyuan, May 1933. A holiday was announced May 5th, most workers left the factory, then it closed. Security guards drove the remaining workers out and locked the gates. The union called an emergency meeting and at once passed 5 disciplinary rules including prevention of evildoers taking the opportunity to create disorder. The industry-wide wage cut referred to above had not yet been implemented at Hengyuan. The Bureau of Social Affairs was contacted and tried to persuade the management that they had the resources to stay open. The Guomindang branch considered the lockout illegal. Debts exceeded assets by 200,000 yuan; this was not considered excessive for Hengyuan. The union passed more disciplinary rules on May 7th. Other unions including the postal workers’ union organized a relief committee, the Hengyuan union solicited money and the Guomindang branch sent food. The Tianjin Merchants’ National Salvation Society urged the management to reconsider on May 12th. 10 days’ wages were paid on May 20th. The Bureau of Social Affairs called a meeting of stockholders and creditors on May 22nd. Settlement of debts was postponed and the wage cut revised. The management fixed June 5 as opening day but failed to keep it. The workers were ordered back to the dormitory by the union but would not leave the factory, though there was no violence. After further arbitration a settlement was reached. Work would start June 20th on the following terms: 1) A 25% wage cut. 2) The union to take responsibility for running of the dormitory and shitang (workers’ dining room) with a subsidy from the management. 3) The union subsidy was cut. 4) Flour borrowed by workers’ families had to be paid back. 5) The attendance bonus was cancelled for 3 months. 6) The monthly bonus was cut 25%. More than 2,700 workers were then employed. One committed suicide in front of the factory gate on May 7th. Dong, 1985 p.162; *Ershier nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2 pp.117-123.

50. Yuyuan, July 1933. Production cuts were announced in May (see above) due to poor custom and approved by the union. The night shift was abolished and the day shift cut to 5 days. In July the factory did not restore normal production as promised but announced further cuts, including sackings and wage cuts, confirmed abolition of the night shift and distributed the night shift work to other workers. A strike was declared on July 22nd without the approval of the union, though workers’ representatives were talking with union officers at the time. Some other workers had been sacked as buliang fenz (bad elements) before the strike. The Bureau of Social Affairs told the strikers to go back. The union promised the Bureau that the situation would be dealt with. The Guomindang branch reported after investigation that the workers had been influenced by Communists. Dong (1985) said there were Communist workers in the factory who organized a "dagou tuan" (pickets, literally “dog-beating squad”) and a "fan Ri hui" (anti-Japanese society - Yuyuan was financed partly by the Japanese Okura company), and planned the strike on the 22nd. A workers’ representatives’ meeting was held on the 20th and final preparations made. 500 pickets were appointed before the strike, also "propaganda corps" and "communications corps". At the change of shift, the shift which had just stopped work surrounded the factory. 200 police were sen. Children and women workers had left by this time. The Guomindang branch and the police first commanded the workers to leave but they stayed. On the 23rd, the police entered the factory and arrested 73. Two fought with police. 33 were released after questioning. These were dismissed with nothing. Union officers asked the Bureau of Social Affairs and the guomindang branch to persuade the management to reopen on August 16th, as the factory was still closed by then. The management claimed trouble with creditors who wanted them to close and sell up, then offered terms including sacking of 1,000 which the Bureau rejected. The sacking decision was eventually upheld. 1,043 were sacked and given 8 yuan travel costs. The sacked workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch, calling for 3 months’ pay and half a year’s bonus. The terms eventually accepted were; 1) Sacked workers to receive 10 yuan minimum, otherwise payment as required by Factory Law. 2) First rights to future employment. 3) A list of sacked workers to be submitted to Party and government. The factory to begin
rehiring 1 month after reorganization. The order of preference in re-employing former workers to be decided by management. 5,000 workers were employed then. *Beiguochunqiu*, no.3, 1960 p.28; Dong, 1985 p.164; *Ershier nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2 pp.124-127; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 62.

51. Baocchong, September 1933. The management proposed due to losses to sack some workers and reorganize operations. The workers declared they would accept a 20% wage cut but no change to the 8 hour day and called for sacking of surplus staff. The management proposed to shut down from August 14th. The workers objected. The management sacked 600 on September 10th and reintroduced rotating 12 hour shifts. Both sacked and still employed workers disputed the terms. Sacked workers surrounded the manager’s office. Police were called. The workers refused "to leave without being paid off"; possibly they had not been paid off. The management shut the factory on September 12th. On the 16th, Baocchong workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs for reform of the Baocchong union. The petition was treated as illegal and the petitioners dispersed by police. With urging from the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch the factory opened on September 21st. Terms of the settlement reached on September 24 were: 1) The workers to be paid off with at least 10 yuan, or else according to the Factory Law 2) 4 yuan travel costs 3) Further special payment of 6 yuan 4) First rights to future employment, with a "zhengming" (certificate) from the factory 5) The work load to be lessened for those still employed. 2,000 were then employed. On September 27th, 10 workers were arrested as agitators and another 9 given "education" within the factory. *Beiguochunqiu* no.3, 1960 p.28; Dong, 1985 pp.165-166; *Ershier nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2 p.127; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives.

52. Beiyang, February 1934. Beiyang workers went on strike for a New Year bonus payment in defiance of the union, which opposed the strike. The pro-union and anti-union factions fought, damaging factory machinery. The factory closed on February 1st, claiming losses forced it to. After sacking over 200 "bad elements" and representations from the Bureau of Social Affairs and the remaining workers, the management agreed to open on February 15th, then announced they could not because of debts to the old owners by the new owners. The sacked workers were not paid off for some time, eventually receiving two weeks’ wages. The workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs several times. The Bureau and the Guomindang branch persuaded the new owners to pay part of the debt and the factory opened on May 20th. Dong, 1985 p.170; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, April, June 1934.

53. Hengyuan, February 1934. Hengyuan closed on February 13th due to losses. *Tewu dui* (special police) barred the factory entrance and prevented the workers from using the shitang (dining room). The workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch for opening of the factory and permission to eat. The company raised 60,000 yuan in March to liquidate accounts and pay the workers’ final wages and travelling costs. The eventual settlement was as follows: 1 month’s wages, travel costs of 4 yuan, 5 days’ wages as end of year bonus, the same for apprentices (with food costs), 85% of the usual New Year holiday pay, 85% of wages owing to workers to be paid, first rights to future employment, the factory to open again in 2 months. 2,300 workers were unemployed. Dong, 1985 p.170; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, files no. 893:00 (Tientsin) 69, 70, 89.

54. Yuyuan, March 1934. Yuyuan closed on March 2 due to losses. The company blamed dumping of Japanese yarn. The Guomindang sent police to the factory. The workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs to keep the factory open. The Bureau urged the management to stay open, which they eventually agreed to do after reorganizing. 4,000 workers were then employed (about 1,000 had been laid off in
1933). Reorganizing implied sacking of 1,605 and opening on March 15th. The workers were paid off as in 1933 and given an extra 4 yuan, also first rights to future employment. Over 800 of the sacked workers were from Henan. The Bureau negotiated 1/2 price railway tickets for them, and also arranged for Bureau of Social Affairs officers to escort them collectively back to Henan. Dong, 1985 p.171; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, March 1934; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 70.

55. Huaxin, March 1934. Huaxin closed on March 18th. 1,800 workers became unemployed. The Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch tried to persuade the management to reopen. There was no result by the end of March. 285 workers were eventually sacked and paid off. Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 70.

56. Huaxin, April 1934. There was a strike of over 100 workers in the spinning department on April 6th in sympathy with a strike at the Tangshan Huaxin mill. It spread to other sections of the factory. The union was not involved and opposed the strike. The factory did not close and wages were paid as usual. The strike leaders were arrested. The Guomindang branch discussed responses with the union and management. 40 strikers were sacked, and their wages confiscated for public use. Other strikers were obliged to find a guarantor and secure the approval of the union to keep their jobs. 30 of the sacked workers assembled outside the factory on April 7th but the meeting was broken up by the police. Dong, 1985 p.172.

57. Yuyuan, May 1934. On May 20th, over 100 workers in the weaving mill assembled and voted to call for a wage rise and return of "old workers" (those arrested or sacked after the 1933 dispute), release of those still under arrest and abolition of a 2 yuan fine, and declared their opposition to assault and beating of workers by "yellow union" staff. They appointed delegates to take their claims to the union. The workers' delegates were beaten by the union staff and escorted to the Bureau of Public Security. The management persuaded the union not to proceed with legal action against the workers. Dong, 1985 p.174.

58. Baocheng, November 1934. Shen Rugui, younger brother of union officer Shen Ruijiang, was transferred against his wishes to another section by a foreman. Shen Ruijiang and his gang beat up the foreman. Shen and some of his gang were arrested. The union then petitioned the gonglianhui (trade union federation) and the Bureau of Social Affairs for their release. The management then sacked 62 (Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao) or 63 (Dong) more workers and called the police, who arrested them. The National Salvation Society petitioned the Bureau on behalf of the union, saying the management had not gone through the necessary procedure before sacking the workers and the police had acted without authority. The dispute continued without result until Baocheng closed in July 1935. Dong, 1985 p.178; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, November 1934.

59. Yuyuan, January 1935. Yuyuan closed on January 12th putting 2,300 out of work. The workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch for reopening of the factory and wages for the time the factory was shut, or else to be paid off according to the Factory Law. In the final settlement; the workers were paid off with 1 month's wages and a few yuan jiegu fei (dismissal payment), and first rights to future employment. Dong, 1985 p.178; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 80.

Dong, 1985 p.182; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 102.

61. Huaxin, October 1936. 1,200 workers sacked from Huaxin appointed 7 representatives on October 25th to petition the Bureau of Social Affairs to be paid off according to the Factory Law. Dong, 1985 p.185.

62. Beiyang, January 1937. Beiyang cleared a 10,000 yuan profit in 1936 and the workers claimed a bonus but were refused. A strike followed. Bonus payments of 50c - 1 yuan were eventually given according to seniority. Dong, 1985 p.186.

62 disputes. 39 pay claims. 29 employment claims. 7 disputes linked to events at other factories, or 10 of them counting 3 protests by Yuda workers against the refusal of the management to allow the workers to join the union.
APPENDIX 2

Disputes and strikes in modern flour mills

1. Jiarui. February 1931. The Jiarui management intended to prevent establishment of a union, so closed the factory on grounds of a dispute with the Taifeng Flour Co. over rights to a brand name. The workers were paid off with 1 month’s wages, 1 month’s huahong and 10 yuan travel costs. They petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs. As the result of mediation, 2 months’ wages were paid but they were not rehired. Dagong Bao, 10.2.1931; Dong, 1985 p.114.

2. Jiarui, May 1931. Jiarui was by now producing again. The Jiarui workers claimed the management had refused to implement a previous agreement, and demanded the return of 90 sacked workers (gongren) and 31 technicians (jishi). After arbitration 39 workers and technicians came back on May 6th. The others were paid off with 300 yuan each. Dong, 1985 p.119.

3. Jiarui, December 1931. There was a dispute for an unspecified cause. The Bureau of Social Affairs conducted negotiations, and reported "The actions of workers on their way out of the factory should be watched". Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, December 1931.

4. Minfeng, March 1932. Minfeng cut production, abolishing the night shift; previously had worked rotating 12 hour shifts. Also the management demoted all workers still employed to casual status. The union claimed the management had failed to honour a promise to hire ex-workers laid off previously before a temporary shutdown, and said it was trying to break the union. The management claimed they were forced to these measures by business failure and that the 16 sacked workers were bad elements. A Ministry of Industry report said the union had raised 6 demands: higher wages, Sundays off, compensation for anyone injured at work, huahong at the end of the year, no sackings at the New Year and "dianxin qian" (snack money) for night shift workers. The Ministry report commented "The Factory Law still had not been implemented at Minfeng, and the workers considered that they were being deliberately oppressed". The terms of the settlement by the Bureau of Social Affairs were:
   1. The night shift to be temporarily abolished. Workers still employed to be paid at the usual rate, and not made casual.
   2. No new workers to be hired. Former workers to have first rights to employment when the night shift started again.
   3. The 16 sacked workers to be paid off with 2 weeks’ wages as travel expenses, as well as final pay as required by the Factory Law. No precedent to be established by this.
   4. The union to give a list of sacked workers to the Bureau of Social Affairs.
   5. Both management and union to stick to Factory Law provisions for dismissing workers in future.

The union concerned was the "Mianfenye chanye gonghui" (flour industry union). The union claimed the management first announced in writing when closing for the New Year that the factory would open as usual after the New Year. 3/4 of the workers had turned up again when the management announced the production cut, saying first that half the workers would have to go. "The motive is to destroy a legally constituted organization". Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1932.

5. Qingfeng, March 1932. Closing down of the factory was overseen by the Bureau of Social Affairs. The workers were paid off according to the Factory Law and awarded first rights to re-employment. 156 workers were laid off. They were also given a
month’s wages as travel expenses. The union subsidy was to continue until the factory closed. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.

6. Fuxing, Minfeng and Jiarui, June-July 1932. The union branch at Jiarui made a wage claim in June, it was turned down and 14 were sacked. The chanye gonghui (industrial union) then claimed a 40% rise, pay on Sundays, snack money for the night shift, an eight hour day, huahong according to net profit, workers at Fuxing to receive at least 1 yuan per month more, and the 14 workers sacked from Jiarui to have their jobs back. The Bureau of Social Affairs mediated. There was a slowdown at Minfeng, and the workers at the other factories prepared to follow. Under the eventual settlement, 7 of the 14 Jiarui workers returned to work at the lowest wage, to be given a rise when Jiarui flour came on the market again. Workers on the minimum wage at Minfeng and Fuxing would be given 1 yuan more per month, and others at Fuxing would receive 50c to 70c when the flour was on the market again. The conditions were accepted. 1 yuan rise at Minfeng and Fuxing. Dong, 1985 p.139; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.

7. Minfeng, September 1932. There was a temporary shutdown for economic reasons. A dispute started over payoff conditions. The Guomindang branch and the Bureau of Social Affairs called a conference of workers and management. 5 terms of settlement were agreed on; 1. 2 months’ final pay, with travel costs of 5 yuan. 2. The union to be given running expenses for October only. 3. The new management would employ former workers as far as possible. 4. References to be written for former Minfeng workers. 5. Workers living in the factory dormitory should leave the day after receiving their last day’s pay. Both sides accepted. 120 workers were laid off. Dong, 1985 p.147; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2 pp.186-187; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.

8. Jiarui, January 1933. 11 jijiang (skilled workers) and 30 ordinary workers were dismissed due to poor business. There was no strike. Terms of dismissal were negotiated by the Bureau of Social Affairs, the Guomindang branch and the union. The jijiang were given 10 days’ pay and first rights to re-employment. The 30 other workers dismissed, (gongren, not jijiang), took part in separate negotiations. They received 10 days’ or two weeks’ pay (the Ministry of Industry reports are contradictory) and "choujin" (bonus). The jijiang were represented by the mianfenye chanye gonghui (flour industry union).

There was a further report of a dispute over payment of wages and huahong while the mill was closed for the New Year. Over 100 workers were concerned; perhaps these were the remaining workers who were not paid off under the agreements above. The company paid 28 days’ wages after representations from the Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch. Ministry of Industry files 422 (6) 639, 722 (4) 450, Second Historical Archives.

9. Minfeng, November 1933. Sacked workers were involved in a fight which caused damage to factory building. This was because three of them, unknown to the others, had signed an agreement with the management about leaving the factory. Police arrived and the workers challenged them to shoot. The Guomindang branch intervened and promised to seek a settlement.

The Minfeng workers demanded that they should be employed by Shoufeng, which was taking over Minfeng. When Minfeng closed in September 1932, former Minfeng workers were given first rights to future employment. But when Shoufeng bought the factory, only 50 or more former Minfeng workers were employed, and the other jobs were filled by outsiders. The former Minfeng union appealed to the Bureau of Social Affairs. The management offered first rights in future. The workers were not satisfied. The management then ran a test which only 34 of the ex-Minfeng workers passed, and dismissed the others.

They were paid off with 3 yuan each for travel expenses. Money owed by the workers to Minfeng for food was paid by Shoufeng. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao,
10. Shoufeng, December 1933. "18 workers were sacked for failing to come to the factory, and the workers took advantage of this to claim a wage rise". Union representatives and others petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs. There was no strike. Their claims included a wage rise, pay on Sundays and holidays, hua\-hong, no sacking of workers claiming leave for less than a total of 2 months in the year, and casual workers doing permanent workers’ jobs to be paid as permanent workers. The results were: a wage rise of at least 2c per day confined to permanent workers, according to proficiency. The paid holidays and hua\-hong claims were turned down. The claims for no sacking for less than two months’ leave and promotion of casual workers were accepted. Dong, 1985 p.168; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, December 1933.

11. Fuxing and Jialong, January 1934. Workers at Fuxing and its new subsidiary Jialong asked for a bonus according to conditions set by the Bureau of Social Affairs; 1 1/2 months’ wages if the company made a profit of over 75,000 yuan, 2 1/2 months’ wages if the profit was over 125,000 yuan. The management denied making such a profit. On February 1st, the workers raised further demands; an extra 3 months’ pay, double pay in retrospect for Sundays worked in 1933, and workers not to be sacked for leaving the factory over the New Year. After Bureau of Social Affairs mediation 80% of the hua\-hong claim was given, and the others were reserved. Dong, 1985 pp.169-170.

12. Fuxing, June 1934. The company changed the pay schedule to accord with the Western solar calendar, and cut out the 30 yuan Duanwu (the dragon boat festival) bonus and the 30c zongzi qian (rice dumpling bonus). The Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch mediated. The result was the bonus to be awarded as before. Dong, 1985 p.176.

13. Shoufeng, August 1934. The Shoufeng workers objected to new regulations published by the company in June. The Bureau of Social Affairs called a meeting of workers and management on July 31st. The workers called for rescinding of the rule abolishing pay on Sunday if the workers took 6 days’ leave, for leave without pay to be granted if asked for before work was due to start, for workers not to be sacked for absence unless they had been docked 9 days’ pay in a year, for guarantors or referees of workers dying on duty to be entitled to collect the corpse and compensation if not claimed by family in 2 days, and for the foreman to be entitled to collect them if the guarantor and referee were not in Tianjin. The terms of settlement were; Sunday pay only to be docked if workers took 6 days off in 14, no sacking for absence of workers fined less than 9 days’ pay. Dong, 1985 p.176.

14. Jialong (Fuxing), February 1935. Jialong stopped work before the New Year and closed formally on February 27th. Terms of dismissal were negotiated by the Bureau of Social Affairs. Jialong employed 135 workers. The terms of settlement were; first rights to re-employment, pay for January, final pay of 1 month’s wages, 10 yuan travel costs, final "ling huo" (milling of the grain still remaining) to be done by currently employed workers. Dong, 1985 p.179; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 81.

14 disputes. 10 pay claims. 11 employment claims.
APPENDIX 3

Disputes and strikes in match factories

1. Tianjin.


2. Beiyang, December 1929. The General Union petitioned the city government on behalf of workers involved in a long running dispute at Beiyang. They called for punishment of the manager, Yin Changgeng, said to have started the dispute. Dong, 1985 pp.102-103.

3. Beiyang, August 1932. The workers presented 13 demands; 1 to 3 for wage rises, 4 to 6 for union expenses, 7 to 10 for "gongren fuli" (welfare measures), 11 and 12 concerning the rights of the union and 13 for pay during the strike period. After arbitration by the Bureau of Social Affairs a wage rise was given. The management then refused to pay the wage rise. The workers protested to the Bureau of Social Affairs again. A fight followed on August 29th between pro-management and pro-union factions of workers. The management shut down the factory. Over 300 were unemployed. The conditions eventually fixed after 6 weeks’ negotiations by the Bureau of Social Affairs were; 1) The workers to return to work in shifts under Guomindang supervision on September 30, October 15 and October 16. The first group were workers who had previously lived in the factory dormitory, the second were "paid by the fortnight" and the third were "paid by the day". 2) Out of 15 workers previously refused work by the management under any circumstances, 10 were to be rehired if the court found them not guilty, and the other 5 after reorganization of the union by the Guomindang branch. 3) Wages for the 6 weeks to be reserved for future discussions, but guaranteed by the government. 4) The Guomindang branch to reorganize the union. There were also wage terms; contract workers paid at the high rate to continue to be paid at the high rate. Ordinary workers paid at the low rate to be paid the same rate as at Danhua. This agreement to come into force for packing workers paid piece rates from October 13th, and for ordinary workers paid monthly wages from October 15th.

Previously, after the workers raised the 13 claims, there had been "several rounds of talks" overseen by the Bureau of Social Affairs, Guomindang branch and police. The management accepted the final terms but then did not implement them. The union protested and the city government "instructed" the management to comply. The management "used a small number of workers" to confront the union; the nature of the confrontation was not specified but the August 29th fight followed in which people were injured. The *Dagong Bao* assumed the management were trying to have the union reorganized and the terms of settlement cancelled. Members of the match factory union and the "gonglianhui" (union federation) petitioned the city government and Guomindang branch for (1) the Guomindang branch to inform the court of the facts behind the fight (2) to instruct the management to open the factory again and implement the conditions (3) the release of arrested union members (4) wages to be paid while the factory was closed. The Guomindang branch and government agreed. The management first offered to open the factory again, then presented new conditions; (1) reorganization of the union (2) only workers with a guarantee signed by a person of the status of an independent business proprietor or employer to be hired (3) sacking of some of the workers. The Guomindang branch and government instructed the workers to wait for the outcome of negotiations. Eventually representatives of the Bureau of Social Affairs, Guomindang branch, gonglianhui and Beiyang workers met and agreed on the following; (1) Payment of wages for the period the factory was closed. (2) Re-employment of all workers except the ones the management had used to start the fight. (3) Reorganization of the union under the
joint authority of government and Guomindang. (4) All other terms to be reserved for discussion after the factory opened, and all agreements to require the approval of the responsible government and Party authorities. The head of the Bureau and a member of the Guomindang branch committee met with the management in person. The final agreement was as above. Dong, 1985 pp.144-145; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 pp.185-186; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.


5. Beiyang, March 1933. The management announced closing of the factory for economic reasons on March 13th. They gave overcrowding of the industry and dumping of imported matches, taxation, debts and the wage rise granted the previous year as reasons for closing. They said the factory would open again after "internal reorganization". "Over 3,000 people" were affected. The Bureau of Social Affairs and the Guomindang branch negotiated terms after an appeal from the union. The workers claimed the factory had been making profits of several hundred thousand a year and expanding the scale of production, so there was no real economic reason for it to close. They said the factory had disobeyed the Factory Law and the Union Law in closing without obtaining permission from the necessary authorities. The Bureau of Social Affairs called an arbitration meeting on March 11th but the management did not send anyone.

The Bureau declared; "at this time of national crisis it is important that there should be no more unfortunate incidents in Tianjin". They proposed the following conditions, to which the workers agreed. (a) If the workers were sacked; (1) Wages for the 32 days’ slowdown of last year, reserved by the company until this time, to be paid. (2) Wages for the 3 days the factory had been closed to be paid as part of the pay period ending April 5th. (3) All workers to be paid off with 1 month’s wages according to the Factory Law (4) Workers from outside Tianjin to be given 15 yuan travelling expenses (5) The yearly bonus to be paid as usual (6) Union expenses to be paid as usual (7) Whoever takes over the factory to award first rights to employment to former workers (8) All wages owing to workers for Guomindang-designated national holidays, which have not yet been paid, to be paid. (b) If they were not sacked. (1) The workers to stay in the factory, and receive a living allowance of 30c daily. (2) If work is not resumed within 5 months, the factory should prepare a "future fund" (qijin), with an appropriate guarantee. The Bureau and the Guomindang branch conducted several conciliation meetings on the basis of these terms, to which representatives of the management came. The workers returned to work on March 24th, on the following terms: 1) The workers to work as directed or be sacked. No illegal interference by the union. 2) 20 days' work for 20 days' pay per month. 3) All payments to workers except wages to be reduced 1/3 except a 50c flour subsidy and another weekly 10c food subsidy. 4) No pay for holidays if they fall on a non-working day. 5) The previous pay schedule to come back into effect if business picks up. If it deteriorates all workers will be sacked and the union must not interfere illegally. 6) 10c per day for the 14 days the factory was closed. It opened on March 24th. Ershier nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2 pp.127-129; Ministry of Industry files 422 (6) 639, 711 (2) 450, Second Historical Archives.

6. Rongchang, September 1933. 220 male workers claimed a wage rise and bonus on account of good business. The management initially rejected the claim, saying Rongchang paid better than other factories. There was no strike. A 1c daily rise was awarded. Pay to female workers packing different brands of matches was evened up. The issue of borrowing of flour was to be settled at the New Year. Dong, 1985 p.166; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives.

7. Beiyang, May-November 1933. There was a long running dispute from May to
November 1933 over the factory’s slowness or failure to implement terms of the March agreement. There was no strike. The union (huochaiye chanye gonghui) called on the Bureau of Social Affairs and Guomindang branch to make the management abide by the agreement. The eventual agreement signed on 16th November cancelled previous concessions by the management, curtailed the authority of the union and specified "Events at other factories are of no relevance". Dong, 1985 p.167; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives.

8. Rongchang. January-May 1934. Rongchang closed temporarily on February 7th. On April 19th, Rongchang union representatives petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs to stop sackings. The management wanted to dismiss 1/4 of the workforce due to poor business. Over 100 neigong (permanent workers, who worked on the factory premises) and several hundred women and children who stuck on labels at home were affected. The union first instructed the workers to "stay within bounds" then under pressure petitioned the Bureau. The Rongchang dispute continued until May when terms of settlement were accepted including no sackings and a 50c per month wage cut. Dong, 1985 p.169; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, files no.893:00 (Tientsin) 68, 69, 72.

9. Beiyang, January-May 1934. The factory closed for 10 days in January in protest against the new tax on matches. The north factory then opened as promised but the south factory stayed shut. On January 19th, the workers occupied the factory and called for 10 days’ pay, bonus and pay for the time the factory was closed. They were dispersed by police. The Bureau of Social Affairs offered 1.60 yuan for neigong and 1 yuan for waigong (outworkers), which they refused. On January 31st, Beiyang, Danhua, Rongchang and chanye gonghui (industrial union) representatives met to discuss the problems of the industry. The Bureau of Social Affairs voted on the same day to order the south factory to open provisionally for 10 days. The north factory then shut on February 1st. On February 5th, terms were set by the Bureau and Guomindang branch. 1) Neigong to be paid off with 1 month’s wages. 5 yuan for waigong. 2) 80% of the end of year bonus for neigong. 3) The usual end of year bonus for waigong. 4) First rights to future employment. 5) The 4th union branch to continue to receive a subsidy for 1/2 year 6) Changnei fuyi (factory labourers) not included in the settlement. 7) An extra 2 yuan each for sacked workers 9) Terms 1 and 2 to be fulfilled in 3 days. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 450, Second Historical Archives; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 77.

10. Danhua, February 1934. The company requested the Guomindang’s permission to close due to poor business and the new match tax. On February 19th, the 1st branch of the match industry union urged the Guomindang to tell the factory to stay open. Dong, 1985 p.171.

11. Beiyang, June 1934. The company was open by this time. Leaflets were circulated around the factory printed with "Down with (union officer) Deng Jinbo" and "Down with the union". The workers responsible said Deng refused to publicise union accounts and was suspected of graft. These workers slowed production, causing the day’s production of 40 crates to fall to 20. The Bureau of Social Affairs called a meeting of union and anti-union factions. 3 leaders of the anti-union faction were called to the police for questioning, one was arrested and all others concerned were sacked. Dong, 1985 p.175.

12. Rongchang, June 1934. A strike followed rejection of a wage claim. There had been a change in the product which workers considered led to an unfair piece rate. The company said it had been ordered by the government to make the product change (to non-poisonous safety matches) and had lost money in the process, so it could not pay more. The result of Guomindang settlement was; adjustment of the piece rate for packing workers, and other workers (neigong) to be given a 3c rise. Work started on June 9th. The Duanwu dispute followed immediately. Dong, 1985 p.175; Ministry of
13. Rongchang, June 1934. A strike was declared on June 13th against reduction of the *Duanwu* bonus. The prompt settlement included grant of the workers’ claim to full payment of the *Duanwu* bonus. The Bureau of Social Affairs reproved both sides for cutting the bonus without warning and for striking. The Bureau wanted the strike to end before talks could begin. The workers refused. The manager offered to make up the bonus personally. The workers went back on the 14th receiving "different amounts". Dong, 1985 p.175.

14. Rongchang, October 1934. Rongchang closed after having reached an agreement with the workers on October 28th. The Bureau of Social Affairs and Guomindang branch mediated. The workers claimed 1 month’s pay but the factory gave only 16 days. Dong, 1985 p.177; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 77.

15. Danhua, January 1935. 1,200 Danhua workers struck on January 28th against the management’s rejection of their claim for increased *huahong*. They protested the temporary closing of the factory from the New Year. They handed out leaflets, cut phone lines and blocked the factory door. The manager was surrounded in his office. Military police forced the door open and arrested four strike leaders. The factory closed, and the 1934 *huahong* was paid according to 1933. The arrested workers were released on bail from the factory and the union. Dong, 1985 p.179; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, file no.893:00 (Tientsin) 80.

16. Beiyang, January 1935. There was a dispute over payment of wages during a temporary shutdown. The workers first opposed the shutdown. The Bureau of Social Affairs called a meeting on February 12th at which the management agreed to pay 10c-25c per day living expenses. The agreement was then not kept by the management. On February 16th, the directors were surrounded by over 500 workers after a meeting. Payments to *neigong* and *waigong* were supposed to start on February 24th but did not. The workers marched to the Guomindang branch where their demands were rejected. The factory offered only half the final pay prescribed by the Factory Law. The workers then had a 3 day hunger strike at the factory from March 5th. The management agreed to pay living expenses on March 12th. The terms of settlement were; 1 month’s pay as final pay for *neigong* and 6 yuan for *waigong*, 1 yuan travel costs, maintenance cost for the period the factory was closed, first rights to re-employment. Dong, 1985 p.179; United States Department of State, 1930-1939, files no.893:00 (Tientsin) 81, 82.

17. Beiyang, January 1936. The factory was still closed. Former Beiyang workers called on the Bureau of Social Affairs for assistance. On January 29th, the Bureau instructed the management to open as soon as possible. Dong, 1985 p.183.

2. Suzhou.

1. Hongsheng, October 1935. This was the response of the match industry union to the factory closing. 1) Closing was opposed. 2) The 9 hour day to be observed as before. (Only "zhigeng gongren" - those who cut the slivers - were affected by these terms). 3) A food subsidy to be provided when there was no wood to cut. 4) A food subsidy to be provided when work was prevented by rain. 5) Union members were not to be dismissed before non-members and casual workers. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1449, Suzhou City Archives.

18 disputes, 11 wage claims, 10 employment claims.
Disputes and strikes in zhangfang and silk factories

1. July 1900. There was a protest by 7,000-8,000 weavers unemployed when the zhangfang stopped putting out work. The police dispersed the crowd and distributed food. Many zhangfang owners went into hiding. Duan, 1986 p.341.

2. March 1903. A strike followed a wage claim but ceased on order from Yuanhe, Changshu and Wu xians. A graduated wage rise was granted for plain and figured silk. Duan, 1986 p.341.

3. January 1906. Silk weavers petitioned the Chamber of Commerce for legal recognition and registration of the Xiazhang silk weavers’ guild. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 299, Suzhou City Archives.

4. February 1906. Silk weavers claimed higher wages. Employers had changed the wage medium from copper to silver currency just as the exchange rate began to favour copper. The claim was turned down, the weavers struck and the employers filed suit. One employer, Hangzuli, was listed as chief plaintiff. A graduated wage rise of 1c to 1.5c per foot according to the fabric was eventually granted. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 299, Suzhou City Archives.

5. July 1906. There was a wage claim and strike of silk weavers due to rice prices. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-2 49, Suzhou City Archives.

6. May 1907. Yunjin contacted the Chamber of Commerce, said there was a rumour of an approaching strike and asked for the assistance of the Chamber. No strike is mentioned in the Chamber of Commerce papers. Liao (1980) quotes an incident dated only 1907 in which a strike followed the death in prison of a silk weaver, He Xingshan, arrested for debt. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 300, (Yi) 2-2 49, Suzhou City Archives; Liao, 1980 pp.236-237.

7. January 1908. Silk weavers petitioned the Chamber of Commerce for registration of the Xiazhang guild. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 299, Suzhou City Archives.

8. May 1908. A wage claim and baodong (demonstration or street fight) took place at the Xinghe zhangfang. It was suppressed by police. Liao (1980) claims over 200 silk weavers took part, although Liao could be referring to a different incident. 1909 Xiazhang-Yunjin correspondence refers to a wage rise granted in 1908. Liao, 1980 pp.236-237; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 300, Suzhou City Archives.

9. May 1909. "Several thousand" weavers took part in a wage claim and strike. Four zhangfang; Xuwantai, Lifuhao, Kangfengtai and Delongfeng; took the lead in petitioning the Chamber of Commerce for assistance. The weavers claimed the copper currency in which they were paid had fallen significantly with respect to silver. The zhangfang offered to change copper for silver for their employees at a rate lower than the market rate. The weavers said they wanted a wage rise and preservation of the market rate. Police from Wu, Yuanhe and Changshu xians broke up a weavers’ strike meeting. 2 strike leaders were later arrested after a complaint of shuttle theft from Xuwantai. A temporary wage rise was awarded, 0.7c-1c per foot according to the type of fabric, to be retracted when the exchange rate fell below 1,200 copper cash to the dollar. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 251, Suzhou City Archives.

10. January 1910. Zhangfang in Yuanhe xian asked the Chamber of Commerce for protection against a forthcoming strike. There was no subsequent report of a strike.
11. September-October, 1910. The Yunjin guild and the xian corresponded on the issue of weavers pawning material and loom components belonging to the zhangfang. Yunjin proposed to establish a silk weavers’ pawnshop; a temporary institution. Liao (1980) claims a collective wage claim and strike took place. A temporary wage rise was offered due to climate conditions. The pawnshop was established in 1911. Liao, 1980 p.237; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 300, Suzhou City Archives.

12. October-November 1911. There was a further petition to the Chamber of Commerce from Yunjin in October about weavers pawning zhangfang’s goods. Yunjin feared a riot or confrontation from several thousand unemployed silk weavers. Heavy rain had caused failure of the rice supply and sent prices up. Over 400 weavers assembled in mid-November and called for a wage rise. The police dispersed them. The xian had had word of the Wuchang uprising and the local authorities were afraid of repercussions. The weavers were given a rise of 6 - 10 wen for plain and figured silk and the Chamber of Commerce raised a relief fund of 50,000 yuan. Duan, 1986 p.342; Liao, 1980 p.237; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 254, (Yi) 2-1 256, (Yi) 2-1 300, Suzhou City Archives.

13. 1914. Over 10,000 weavers claimed a wage rise because of rising living costs. They were given a 3c rise. Duan, 1986 p.342.

14. June 1915. Silk weavers struck for a wage rise. They said living costs were rising. The strike was broken by the army with some arrests. A 2c - 3c wage rise was granted. Tao (1980); business was good so the zhangfang compromised. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-2 50, (Yi) 2-2 59, (Yi) 2-1 627, Suzhou City Archives; Tao, 1980.

15. June 1916. The wage rise awarded in 1915 was cut in half by Yunjin. Xiazhang protested to the Chamber of Commerce, and asked for the wage cut to be delayed 1 month until the next rice crop appeared on the market. The xian magistrate first thought the Yunjin action "considerate" then agreed to Xiazhang’s proposal. Yunjin petitioned the Chamber for abolition of Xiazhang. The chairman and vice chairman of Xiazhang, both elected in 1915, expressed their wish to resign. A strike followed the action against Xiazhang. The xian ordered the weavers to go back at once or face arrest. Delivery of goods from outside Wu xian to Suzhou zhangfang was prevented. Yunjin stated the strike was started by an unemployed bad character, and shuttles and other goods had been seized by unemployed weavers and stored at the Xiazhang guild office. Tao (1980) considered that the dispute extended to 1917. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-2 29, (Yi) 2-2 42, Suzhou City Archives; Tao, 1980.

16. August 1918. There was a Xiazhang - Yunjin conflict over Yunjin’s attempt to abolish the wage rise granted 1915 and confirmed 1916. First negotiations opened between Xiazhang and Yunjin. The Chamber of Commerce said the price of rice had not risen much. A trade-wide wage claim was presented on August 1st. While this was happening, weavers employed by the Tongyuanxiang zhangfang said Tongyuanxiang had refused to grant the wage rise given by other zhangfang. Tongyuanxiang denied that there was a general wage rise, and said it would act as instructed by Yunjin and that the weavers had started a disturbance while talks were in progress. A 2 months’ temporary rise was given, subsequently extended to 4 months, and the weavers went on strike on August 3rd. Xiazhang claimed the previous 1916 wage rise had been abolished. The temporary 1916 wage rise had in fact been cut by half, or abolished (sources conflict) when the price of rice fell. The Wenjin guild (which represented xian mai ji hu, or independent proprietors) complained that Wenjin members’ shop signs had been confiscated and members illegally detained by Xiazhang due to their refusal to pay Xiazhang dues. Signboards
were confiscated from the Yunjin guild, the Wenjin guild and from the Tongyuanxiang, Shihengrong and Yangchiuchuan zhangfang. Xiazhang returned two stolen signboards to owners on August 5th, and issued the order not to strike. Several zhangfang owners or members were seized by weavers or by Xiazhang; Zhou Botang of Hongfuxiang, an unnamed employee of Shihengrong, and Yang Yuting, a member of the Yang family who owned the Yangafu and other zhangfang. The first two were seized by weavers acting without word from Xiazhang, the last was detained at Xiazhang. The strike leader Li Jinshou worked at Yangafu. He was arrested and given 15 days. Yunjin said strike originated in a wage dispute between weaver Li Dongli and employer Yang Yuqing. Yang Yuqing told Xiazhang that the quarrel was with Yang Yusheng. In October, Yunjin petitioned the Chamber of Commerce again for abolition of Xiazhang, on grounds of frequent industrial disputes. Duan, 1986 p.343; Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.154; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 402, (Yi) 2-2 50, (Yi) 2-2 52, Suzhou City Archives.

17. March 1919. There was a further Xiazhang-Yunjin wage rise dispute. Xiazhang said it had alerted the xian and police to be on guard, and urged its members not to take action. The police issued a public notice to the effect that strikes were illegal. Yunjin referred to previous wage rises and said this could not be done every time the price of rice went up slightly. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

18. June 1919. There was a strike at new silk factories in response to May 4th. The factories involved were Sujing, Yanling, Sanxing and Suifeng, a Japanese factory employing women workers. Liao, 1980 p.261.

19. September 1919. The Chamber of Commerce referred to settlement of a strike by apprentices at the Zhenya factory. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-2 50, Suzhou City Archives.

20. January 1920. There was a Xiazhang-Yunjin conflict about Xiazhang membership dues. Yan Dagui was then director of Xiazhang. After the Xiazhang guild was founded there was provision in the guild rules for collection of membership fees. Xiazhang also borrowed 1,300 yuan from Yunjin. Dues were not in fact collected until Wang XX (Wang’s given name is suppressed in the original Chamber of Commerce correspondence) became director of Xiazhang in 1914. After that, there was “active resistance from the workers, who had given no trouble before” (Yan). Yan asked for Yunjin to provide Xiazhang guild officers’ pay. He said he would resign if he had to go on collecting fees from members. Yunjin agreed. Xiazhang membership fees stopped from January 1920. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

21. June 1920. "Several hundred" weavers took part in a strike at the Sujing factory, brought on by mistreatment from supervisors. The weavers asked for wage rise, and met representatives of management in a teahouse. The terms of settlement were; 1) a wage rise 2) no beatings 3) no insulting 4) working hours to be earlier. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.156.

22. June 1920. Xiazhang and Yunjin disputed over wages. A strike began on June 15th. The weavers called for a wage rise. The strike was stopped by police. The xian offered a temporary rice subsidy over the basic piece rate. The weavers then took possession of their looms and went to the zhangfangs to ask for food. A leaflet circulated by the weavers said the strike originated in the refusal of the manager of the Wangyifeng zhangfang to raise wages. Wangyifeng denied this, said they had raised wages. On June 21st, a crowd of weavers occupied the office of the Shixiang Baoguan (a newspaper) recently opened by zhangfang owner and Xiazhang chairman Yan Dagui and destroyed machinery. They then fought with the police. Some weavers were injured and 17 arrested. On the 22nd, other weavers assembled to demand their
release, broke into Wangyifeng and destroyed machinery. Policemen were injured in the brawl. The xian called for assistance from the army, but the strike continued. Bolts of silk were also stolen from Wangyifeng. Work began again on June 26th. A wage rise was granted. Pamphlets and newspapers issued by the weavers were confiscated by the daoyin (circuit intendant). The strike began again after the settlement awarding a 2c per foot rise was turned down by the weavers. The weavers burned looms and silk from Wangyifeng on 6th-7th July. Looms belonging to the Weiting and Lumu zhangfang were also damaged. More than 20 looms altogether were damaged. Three bolts of silk were stolen from Xiaji, and shuttles from Zhushenji and Liyongtai. Xiazhang said some weavers were killed by the army. Yunjin called for dismissal of the Xiazhang chairman. Xiazhang said Wangyifeng offered "illegal resistance" to a wage rise already authorised. Xiazhang also said said they had asked Suzhou rice dealers to release stocks to bring prices down, and the dealers had done this, but because the weavers lived in widely scattered areas the effect was not uniform.

Yan Dagui was still in charge of Xiazhang at the time of the strike. He was in Shanghai at the time but went straight back to Suzhou. Yan first met Yunjin representatives, and was offered possible terms for a conciliation meeting. He then conferred with Xiazhang officers and decided the members would not accept the first Yunjin offer. This was confirmed at a general meeting called by Xiazhang. Further negotiations with Yunjin took place, and Yunjin eventually agreed to a small rise but declined to publicise this, in spite of requests from Xiazhang. Yan considered this caused the weavers' attack on Wangyifeng. Yan announced Yunjin's concession but many silk weavers did not believe him. A large crowd of weavers assembled in front of his house on May 4th. Yan was engaged in talks with Yunjin, trying to convince Yunjin to strike out the "temporary" qualification from the 2c wage rise when news of the weavers' attack on Wangyifeng arrived. He announced to the Chamber of Commerce that he would retire and leave Suzhou. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.156; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 659, (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

23. August 1920. There was a strike at the Zhenya factory. The weavers complained of abuse by a foreman and demanded for him to be sacked. Zhenya filed suit against the weavers. Two of them were given 7 days for agitation. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.157; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-2 50, Suzhou City Archives.

24. May 1922. There was a 2 day Xiazhang-Yunjin wage dispute on 28th-29th May. There was no strike. The first Yunjin offer was refused. The final settlement granted a cost of living increase. The Chamber of Commerce took part in arbitration. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.159; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 940, (Yi) 2-2 53, Suzhou City Archives.

25. September 1922. There was a dispute over superannuation terms at the Zhenya factory. The weavers raised three demands; 1) Bank books to be issued to each weaver who had 50 yuan or more in back wages deposited with Zhenya 2) Immediate payment of interest due on back wages 3) Shortening of the period before which the money could be withdrawn. They threatened to strike if their terms were not met. Zhenya decided to "ask the guarantors to proceed as usual", dismiss the weavers and hire others. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-2 50, Suzhou City Archives.


27. June 1924. A dispute at the Sujing factory followed a quarrel with a guanche (supervisor). The weavers called a meeting. The supervisor was dismissed and a wage rise awarded. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.162.
28. August 1924. Iron loom (new factory) weavers called for a wage rise and were turned down. They called on the wooden loom weavers to take part in agitation for a wage rise. Both sets of weavers went to police headquarters and presented a petition. The Chamber of Commerce called employers’ representatives to a conciliation meeting. Over 10,000 wooden loom weavers and an unknown number of iron loom weavers assembled. Several were arrested. The wage rise was awarded. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.162.

29. December 1925. Over 2,000 iron loom weavers struck from December 3rd to 13th. A weaver was arrested after a confrontation with management and others ordered a sympathy strike. A meeting called which developed into a brawl between weavers and unknown supporters of the management. The weavers damaged factory equipment. The police were called. A wage rise and improved treatment were eventually granted. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.171.


32. May 1926. Gaoli sha (Korean silk) weavers struck after the example of successful strike by chou ye (another silk fabric) weavers. They petitioned the guild and met guild representatives. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.223.


34. March 1927. With the arrival of the National Revolutionary Army in Suzhou, iron loom weavers joined a Communist Party union, and declared their debts to the factory cancelled (dao ban qian zhang) causing a 10,000 yuan loss at Sujing. This probably refers to the conditions set out in No.36 below. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.

35. April 1927. The new "muji gonghui", the Guomindang union of wooden loom weavers which replaced Xiazhang, came to an agreement with Yunjin. The terms included a 20% wage rise and no closing of shops without good business reasons. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

36. April 1927. The tieji sizhi gonghui (silk factory guild) came to an agreement with the tieji gongren lianhehui (the new steel loom weavers' union). 1) Abolition of the deposit paid by weavers on starting work and payout of 80% of superannuation. 2) A 30% wage rise for weavers and 40% for auxiliary workers. 3) A 15c food subsidy. The accountant to be responsible for purchase of food for the dining hall. The weavers to be responsible for upkeep of the hall. 4) Measures to be examined and certified by the union. There was a supplementary condition; Tong huo shang xia gongzi (the money paid for putting on a new pattern), formerly 0.5c, to be lowered to 0.4c until the 1st of the 8th lunar month, then restored with a 30% rise. The Sujing management said there were 2 strikes after the arrival of the National Revolutionary Army in which Sujing was affected. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

37. October 1927. There was a strike by steel loom weavers in which they attacked the Chamber of Commerce. The Sanxing and Sanji factories first prepared to close. The weavers urged the management to enter discussions several times from September without effect. Weavers at 36 factories struck on October 1st. Some
managers left Suzhou, and others remained in factories but refused to supply food to strikers. The Chamber of Commerce urged the managers to come back for negotiations, and also responded to pleas from the steel loom employers’ guild by passing measures forbidding shops in Suzhou to give credit to striking weavers or pawnbrokers to lend to them. On October 18th, over 2,000 weavers broke into the Chamber of Commerce offices, damaged furniture and papers and forced the chairman and officers of the Chamber and members of the merchants’ militia (14 in all) out into the street. They were paraded through the streets, taken forcibly to the office of the Guomindang branch and locked inside, while the crowd insulted them. They were released the next day after the chairman of the Chamber signed a note promising 5,000 yuan. The strikers had given in unconditionally by late November. The Chamber said the weavers had distributed leaflets calling for overthrow of the factory owners and the Chamber and formation of secret organizations. *Jiangsu sheng zhengfii gongbao*, Nos.11 (October 1927) and 16 (December 1927); Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 659, (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

38. February 1928. The manager of the Zhenya factory resigned after a strike and a shareholders’ meeting in December 1927 voted to close due to economic difficulties and oppression by the workers. The manager returned after representations from the weavers but warned them the factory would close again if there was another strike. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 670, Suzhou City Archives.

39. February 1928. Closing down and paying off at Sujing was negotiated by the Chamber of Commerce, the xian government and factory and weavers’ representatives. Sujing was permitted to close. The management was obliged to pay off the weavers with a total of 6,500 yuan, of which 2,000 was to be paid within 2 days or Sujing’s property impounded. The weavers had asked to be paid off "as at Sanxing", which had closed. The Chamber of Commerce advised that the factory’s capacity to pay was the determining factor. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.

40. February 1928. Yunjin and the wooden loom weavers’ union were in a dispute over wage cutting. Some employers had cut wages. The *zhangfang* reported to Yunjin; "This year changes in silk products have been made. Coarse products have been raised in quality, and the price has correspondingly been raised. Heavy products have been lightened, and the price lowered. The workers find the improved products harder to make than the old ones. So the higher quality products are paid for at a higher piece rate. However, they sell more slowly than the cheap ones, so the workers’ income is more or less the same whatever they make...The union has said nothing about wage rises for high quality products, but has taken issue against wage cuts for low quality products". Wage cuts of 1c to 3c per foot were reported. The Jiangsu Bureau of Agriculture and Commerce (*Nonggong ting*) ordered the xian to instruct Yunjin to tell employers to abide by the wage contract. The Chamber replied that many *zhangfang* had not joined Yunjin and Yunjin had no authority over them. The Yunjin chairman declared; "we have guaranteed that employers will abide by a certain set of conditions but have no power to force them to do so." Negotiations between Yunjin, the union and the government continued into May. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.

41. February 1929. The Kanlu, Yanling, Jingye and Sanding factories were given permission to close due to losses. A list of dismissed workers was sent to the employers’ guild. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.

42. April 1929. Zhenya and 4 other factories were given permission to close. The weavers were paid off with 12 yuan each. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 659, Suzhou City Archives.
43. February 1935. The weavers started a slowdown in the Minsheng factory due to a wage cut. 30 male and 3 female weavers were involved. The xian government called a conciliation meeting. The slowdown lasted 1 day. Wages were paid as usual, the production loss was subsequently made up by the weavers, and there were no sackings. The management was asked to plan for survival by maintaining high product standards rather than cutting wages. The cut was from 11.8c per foot to 11.5c. The terms of settlement were; 1) The original wage restored 2) Attendance bonus to be paid. Pay not to be cut for enforced idleness due to breakdown of machinery. 3) Apprenticeship to last no longer than 3 years if apprentices are over 20. If under 20 it can be increased for six months to a year.4) No sacking without cause of workers or union representatives. Provisional employment contracts to be abolished. The new form of contract to be valid for 1 year. 5) The cost of any darning necessary to be borne by the weavers. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1443, Suzhou City Archives.

44. February 1935. There were wage cuts of different amounts in different zhangfang due to economic conditions. Previously the wage had been around 30c per foot at all zhangfang. The weavers met at a teahouse just before the New Year and agreed in view of poor business conditions to accept a cut to 27c. Then after the New Year they refused to work unless the zhangfang paid 27c. They elected a group of eight to negotiate with the zhangfang. Because there was no union of ling ji zhihu (silk weavers who wove at home on looms belonging to the zhangfang) they applied to form one. This implied that the wooden loom weavers' union had ceased to exist. The fee would be 10c per member, to be paid after starting work again. Peng, 1962 vol.3 p.607.

44 disputes. 34 wage claims. 5 employment claims.
APPENDIX 5

Disputes and strikes in carpet factories

1. Yishenggong, Sanshengyong, Qingfenghe, Yihegong, Tongxinggong, Yizuheng and Yushenggong, June 1914. "Several hundred" carpet weavers went on strike, according to the manager of Yishenggong, Feng Jiesan. The dispute began over a wage claim. The carpet weavers' wage claim was presented by their de facto leader, Li Yuheng of Yishenggong. Neither the carpet weavers nor their employers, at this time, had any form of union or guild. Li claimed that Feng and the managers of the other factories had lengthened working hours without raising wages. He asked on the weavers' behalf for a wage rise, to an amount described by Feng as more than twice the existing wage. Feng offered a smaller rise. Li rejected this and called a strike, which lasted for a few days. The carpet weavers used a teashop as a daily meeting place. Feng called on the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce for assistance, and the Chamber of Commerce contacted the police. Yishenggong was located in the old walled city, and came within the jurisdiction of the Chinese Tianjin police bureau headed by Yang Yide. Li was arrested and given 3 months' hard labour on a charge of incitement to strike, which was then against the law. The carpet weavers returned to work.

2. Yishenggong, December 1915. Feng Jiesan of Yishenggong petitioned the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce again to ask for its assistance in tracking down and punishing his apprentices, who had gone on strike and disappeared. This second dispute began with the apprentices asking for an increase in the sum of money customarily paid to them at the conclusion of their apprenticeship, from 18 to 40 yuan, and for freedom to terminate their apprenticeship if they wished. The foreman offered them 30 yuan but insisted that the terms of apprenticeship were binding. On December 8th, 1915, the apprentices declared a strike and dispersed. Feng called on the Chamber of Commerce to contact the police, and demanded that the striking apprentices should be sought out, arrested and severely punished. He gave the Chamber a list of their names. This 1915 strike affected the Yishenggong factory only.

3. Tavshanjian, 1925. There was a dispute over the beating of a weaver by an Indian foreman. The weavers described it as a strike. The weaver was named Liu Haifeng. The manager, C.M.Papaz, pressed for details by U.S. Consul-General C.E.Gauss, denied that Liu, who he could not name, had been beaten and said he had been trying to steal woollen yarn. A post-revolutionary source says he was searched, but does not mention that he stole any yarn. The weavers said Liu had been sacked, though Papaz said nothing about this to the Consul-General. Du, 1987 p.49; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, files no.893:5045/317 (translation of leaflet handed out by carpet weavers), 893:5045/322 (Gauss to Macmurray, 21.1.1926)

4. Tavshanjian, January 1926. On January 18th, the Tavshanjian weavers, claiming that five of them had been sacked for attempting to organize a union, presented a list of demands to the management; recognition of the union, reinstatement of the five sacked weavers, no whipping to be allowed, no sacking without the union's consent, no quality control of the carpets by "foreigners", an increase in the piece rate and fixed meal breaks. A United States naval intelligence report of January 28th lists demands made by the strikers "to the police"; it does not mention the wage claim, the weavers' opposition to having carpets inspected by foreigners for quality, or union control over sackings, and states that the workers asked to be paid while on strike. The striking weavers occupied the factory on the morning of the 19th. Papaz asked for the assistance of Consul-General Gauss, who contacted the Chinese chief of police and the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. The workers, of whom there were more than 600, were "assembled in the police compound" (Gauss) and offered an extra 3 days' pay if they returned to work, and immediate dismissal if they did not. They returned to work on January 22nd. None of their demands were accepted. Dong, 1985
5. Tavshanjian, January 1926. A second strike broke out at Tavshanjian on January 25th. This one followed a disagreement between pro- and anti-General Union factions among the carpet weavers over the issue of union dues (50 cents per month), which some of them opposed paying. Papaz again contacted Gauss, who again asked the Tianjin chief of police for protection of American life and property. Troops of the 3rd Guominjun seized control of the factory from the weavers, who had again taken possession of it, and arrested about 40 of them. Papaz decided to close the factory, but was persuaded not to by the Chinese police, in case of further conflict if all the weavers became unemployed. Gauss reported that only 280 or so of the 600 weavers returned to work after the military occupation of the factory. United States Department of State, 1910-1929, files no. 893:5045/322, 893:00/7032, 893:00/7219.

6. Qingshengheng, January 1926. Carpet weavers at Qingshengheng, a Chinese owned factory, were also on strike as of January 26th. Peking and Tientsin Times, 26.1.1926.

7. Elbrook, February 1926. Workers from the Elbrook No.1 factory went on strike on January 24th, following a major Guominjun political rally which several of the new Communist Party unions, including the carpet weavers’ representatives, attended. They took possession of the factory and of 60 or more finished carpets still there. The management, not inclined to negotiate, decided to close the factory, though the local Guominjun authorities opposed closing it. After about 1 week of negotiations between the weavers and the police, the weavers struck again in sympathy with the weavers at Elbrook No.2, and the management paid them off with 2 yuan each and closed the factory. Peking and Tientsin Times, 26.1.1926; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, files no.893:5045/311, 893:5045/322.

8. Elbrook, February 1926. On February 3rd, a strike broke out at the Elbrook No.2 factory. The Tianjin Commissioner for Foreign Affairs told Gauss that the strike had been started by weavers who had been sacked. Eventually the No.2 factory was also closed and the weavers paid off, though two of the strike leaders (six in another account) were arrested. The General Union successfully negotiated with the police for the release of the arrested workers, who had been sacked for organising a union, but could not prevent the closing of the factory. Dong, 1985 p.61; Peking and Tientsin Times, 26.1.1926; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, files no.893:5045/311, 893:5045/322.

9. Elbrook, February 1926. Workers at Elbrook No.1 went out on February 4th in sympathy with the workers at No.2. The management paid them off with 2 yuan and closed the factory. United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5045/322.

10. Tavshanjian, December 1926. A strike at Tavshanjian in December 1926 was led by a shortlived Communist union organised by the activists Li Peiliang and Tao Zhuoran. Tao was a printer by trade and in August 1925 had been elected chairman of the Communist General Union which then coordinated the August cotton mill strikes. A post-revolutionary source says the Tavshanjian weavers went on strike after a weaver was beaten by an Indian foreman. Du, 1987 p.49.

11. Unknown factory, August 1928. "An American carpet factory" shut down following presentation of a list of demands by the carpet weavers. The workers did 5,000 yuan worth of damage to the carpets and equipment after the factory closed. The Guomindang General Union was involved in the dispute. United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5045/11.
12. Two unknown factories, October 1928. Carpet weavers at two other American factories asked for a day’s paid holiday on October 10th, the national day, and were granted this without opposition by the management in each case. United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5045/11.

13. Breslin-Griffitt, October 1928. On October 21st, the Breslin-Griffitt factory sacked an officer of the newly organised union. He returned to the factory against the orders of the American manager. The Chinese foreman had been instructed by the Bureau of Social Affairs to allow him to remain, and obeyed the instructions of the Bureau of Social Affairs against those of his employer. United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5043/11.

14. Breslin-Griffitt, November 1928. On November 1st, the Breslin-Griffitt union branch raised demands for a union veto over hiring and dismissals, compulsory union membership, full pay for carpet weavers during temporary stoppages of production and full pay for any carpet weaver required by the union to cease work. These are the demands listed in the Department of State files. Those reported by Wu Bannong are slightly different; waste wool to be given to the workers as a bonus, "no locking of the factory door", which should be understood according to No. 15 below, union officers to be paid while at General Union meetings (rather than temporary stoppages of production) and union control over hiring and firing. After protests from the United States Consul-General, now Roderick Dorsey, the Guomindang authorities persuaded the union branch to withdraw its claims. There was no strike. United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5045/11; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.45.

15. Breslin-Griffitt, November 1928. On November 5th, further conflict occurred at Breslin-Griffitt; according to the Bureau of Social Affairs, which was involved in the settlement of the dispute, the management locked the doors of the factory while a union meeting was in progress, then cut wages for the duration of the meeting. The American Consul-General reported that a Guomindang union officer seized control of the doors and refused to allow non-union members to return to the looms. The Consul-General demanded of "the authorities", that the union officer should be sacked and kept away from the factory. The union raised four demands; waste wool to be given to the union to defray expenses, no locking of doors by the management, union officers’ pay not to be cut while they were meeting, and the union to veto appointment and dismissal of carpet weavers. The union officer was sacked. The Bureau of Social Affairs awarded the waste wool to the union and instructed the management not to lock the doors again. Dong, 1985 p.81; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5045/12; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.45.

16. Breslin-Griffitt, December 1928. On December 12th, thirty or more Breslin-Griffitt weavers protested to the General Union that they had been prevented from becoming union members. They claimed the manager had threatened them with a gun and called on the General Union for assistance. Dong, 1985 p.82.

17. Tailong, 1929. There was a strike at Tailong between January and May, 1929. The carpet weavers were successful. Fang, 1929 p.65.

18. Qingshengheng, 1929. Between January and May, the sixth branch of the carpet weavers’ union was involved in an unsuccessful legal dispute between three of its members and the Qingshengheng factory. The union branch spent most of its funds fighting the case but the decision went to the factory. Fang, 1929 p.65.

19. Breslin-Griffitt, April 1929. The management had not implemented its pledge to give the waste wool to the union. On April 1st, the weavers held a meeting and raised 5 demands The weavers commenced a slowdown on the 2nd, and the management responded by closing the factory, declaring that business was bad. Supply of food to
the weavers was stopped. After representations from the Bureau of Social Affairs, the management agreed on May 9th to continue production for 27 days only, then close on the following terms: 1. Work to cease 27 days after the factory opens. The weavers to receive 1 yuan bonus. 2. The authorities of the 1st Special District (the ex-German concession) to ensure that all weavers leave the factory on the 27th. 3. Any weavers leaving of their own accord before the 27th to be paid up to their last working day only. 4. Li Ziting, Wang Sheng and Gao Yongan not to be allowed back to the factory. If they have urgent business an officer of the 1st Special District should escort them to the factory. 5. Weavers must not leave their looms or hold meetings during the 27 days. 6. If any weavers disobey factory regulations or are absent without reason during the 27 days they will be sacked with the agreement of the union and the 1st Special District. 7. The 6 workers previously sacked for inferior work to be given low level positions. If they disagree they will be sacked with the agreement of the union and the 1st Special District. 8. In addition to the 1 yuan hongli, a further bonus of 40 yuan altogether to be divided among the weavers. 9. The union is not to prevent any weavers leaving before the 27 days expire if they so wish. Those leaving before the 27th to receive the 1 yuan hongli, but the amount is not to be paid before the 27th. These terms were accepted by the General Union and the Tianjin Guomindang Party branch. Bureau of Social Affairs, Mingwu shibian gongzuobaogao p.71, Yi zhou nian gongzuobaogao pp.319-321; Dong, 1985 p.88; Fang, 1929 pp.65-66; United States Department of State, 1910-1929, file no.893:5043/15; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.60; Zhao, 1989 p.129.

20. Qingji, April 1929. On April 9th, a brawl between pro-union and anti-union factions took place at the Chinese-owned Qingji factory. Dong Yongwu, an officer of the 7th branch of the Carpet Weavers’ Union, called on all weavers and apprentices at Qingji to join the union. The manager, Ning Zhongtai, summoned a group of loyal weavers to prevent the formation of a union branch at Qingji and the two factions fought, damaging windows and looms. Both sides then filed suit. Ning claimed he had been dragged outside and beaten by Dong’s gang. The Bureau of Social Affairs left the matter to be decided in court. The factory kept operating. Bureau of Social Affairs, Yi zhou nian gongzuobaogao pp.321-322; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1929 pp.194-195; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.64.

21. Tailong, May 1929. A second Tailong strike was settled after only 2 hours by unspecified concessions from the management. Fang, 1929 p.65.

22. Tavshanjian, May 1929. From May 12th, there was a 3 day strike at Tavshanjian, brought on by the refusal of the management to grant a paid holiday on May 1st and subsequent sacking of two union officers. The weavers called for their reinstatement, pay for May 1st, their union branch (4th branch of the Carpet Weavers’ Union) to be subsidized by the factory at 40 yuan a month, and the sacking of a Chinese foreman named Mao. After mediation by the Bureau of Social Affairs the management and workers agreed that pay for May 1st and the strike period was to be awarded, that Mao was to be kept on unless he gave further offence, and that the factory was to pay the union 40 yuan for May, 1929 only. The sacked weavers were paid off with 20 yuan each. The factory stayed open. Dong, 1985 p.91; Fang, 1929 p.67; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.66.

23. Elbrook, August 1929. Workers at the Elbrook No.4 factory struck on August 20th, after 12 weavers were sacked at the Mid-autumn Festival. The weavers had repeatedly asked the Chinese manager, named Yin, to promise that there would be no sackings at the Mid-autumn Festival, as in the past weavers had often been laid off at this time, but Yin had refused to commit himself, claiming he could not get a definite reply from the head office. The weavers then demanded the reinstatement of the 12 who had been sacked, the White Russian foreman refused and the weavers took possession of the factory. The manager contacted the Concession police. Four
Chinese constables and a British inspector were sent to put down the strike, but were
surrounded and imprisoned in the factory by the weavers. There were 302 weavers in
the factory. The American Consul-General, now George Atcheson, contacted the
Tianjin Bureau of Foreign Affairs, who referred the strike to the Bureau of Public
Security. The weavers told a representative of the police who came forward to
negotiate that they considered the sackings "deliberate", and raised four demands;
sacking of the Russian foreman and the Chinese manager, reinstatement of the 12
sacked workers (the phrase "zhun qingjia de gongrenfugong" implies that the 12 were
sacked for asking for leave) and leave without pay to be granted when there was good
cause, no sacking without cause, and all weavers to be advanced 1 month’s pay in the
event of the factory closing. Li Hanyuan of the Bureau of Public Security guaranteed
that these conditions would be accepted except for sacking of the manager and the
foreman (in fact the 1 month’s pay offer was eventually limited to weavers who had
worked for Elbrook for 3 years, the others receiving lesser amounts) and the weavers
released the policemen and called the strike off. The British Consul-General
demanded a written apology and a fine (of about 25 yuan) from the weavers for
imprisoning members of the British Concession’s police force, which Atcheson
persuaded Elbrook to pay in the interests of industrial peace. Bureau of Social Affairs,
Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao pp.68-69; Dong, 1985 p.96; United States
Department of State, 1910-1929, files no. 893:5045/441, 893:5045/442,
893:5045/448.

24. Tavshanjian, September 1929. On September 11th, Tavshanjian cut production
and dismissed half of its work force of 400, as business had been declining. Another
strike resulted. The General Union had previously agreed with the administration of
the ex-German concession and with the manager, Mr. Altounian (Papaz had left
Tavshanjian) that 120 weavers could be paid off before September 20th with 1 yuan
each, and 80 more could be paid off after the next pay period with 2 yuan each.
However the Tavshanjian weavers rejected the terms accepted by the General Union.
Eventually the head office of Tavshanjian in New York advised the Tianjin factory to
keep operating with all 400 weavers until the end of the year. The weavers returned
after striking for 6 days. The American head office eventually issued the order to
close down in November. Dong, 1985 p.97; Fang 1929 p.67.

25. Zhangji, October 1929. On October 8th, a member of the 7th branch of the carpet
weavers’ union employed at Zhangji approached the factory office to ask for a loan of
20 cents to pay his union fee, and was beaten up by a foreman. He called on the
General Union and the following (contradictory) settlement was worked out. 1.
Foremen not to beat up carpet weavers. Carpet weavers not to be near the accounts
office. 2. Union membership to be a matter of choice, and union members to receive
the same treatment as ordinary workers. 3. New workers to be recruited by the union,
and non-members to be sacked before members. 4. The injured weaver to keep his
job, and his medical expenses to be paid by the factory. Dong, 1985 p.99.

26. Hongxing, October 1929. On October 11th, the Hongxing factory closed due to
losses. Although a representative of the Bureau reported after visiting the factory that
all the weavers had left, the Bureau instructed the Chamber of Commerce to urge the
management to keep the factory open. Bureau of Social Affairs, Minguo shiba nian
gongzuo baogao, p.83.

27. Qingshengheng, March 1930. On March 20th, the Bureau of Social Affairs and
the General Union began negotiations with the management of Qingshengheng for the

28. Qingshengheng, August 1930. On August 16th all 280 or more weavers struck
after factory staff fought with a group of weavers who had been arguing unsucessfully
for the reinstatement of a sacked fellow worker, Tian Yuzhen, and four weavers were
arrested. The strikers called for release of those arrested, medical expenses for
weavers injured in the brawl to be paid by the factory, and Tian Yuzhen to return to work. Eventually three of those arrested were released, one was sacked and Tian was given his job back. Dong, 1985 p.108.

29. Tailong, August 1930. On August 19th, weavers at the Tailong factory went on strike for the return of four sacked fellow workers. The management announced that they would close the factory unless the weavers retracted their demands. After mediation by the Bureau of Social Affairs three of them were taken back and the waste wool, which was previously given to the weavers, was converted to a monthly payment of 15 yuan, to be raised when business improved. Dong, 1985 p.108.

30. Qingshengheng, September 1930. On September 9th, the Qingshengheng weavers complained to the Bureau of Social Affairs that the management had deliberately contracted all available work out to another factory and was paying them no wages. The Bureau of Social Affairs persuaded the management to start paying wages from the 14th. Dong, 1985 p.109.

31. Dalai, November 1930. A strike broke out at the Chinese owned Dalai factory over the supply of black bread to the carpet weavers instead of white bread. The manager was dismissed as a result. Dong, 1985 p.113.

32. Dalai, December 1930. The Dalai weavers were given black bread again in December. They struck on the 15th and locked the factory doors, refusing to let members of the factory staff in or out. The French concession police were also kept out for some time but eventually arrested eight of the weavers. Dong, 1985 p.113.

33. Nichols, November 1932. The weavers at the American owned Nichols factory struck in protest against "cruel exploitation and oppression" by a foreman. They called for the foreman to be sacked. The Bureau of Social Affairs negotiated a settlement by which the weavers went back to work the next day, though the foreman stayed. Dong, 1985 p.151; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.


36. Dafeng, August 1936. Carpet weavers at Dafeng joined a "Society of comrades for the preservation of virtue" (Cunyi zhiyou she) and went on strike for a wage rise (6 yuan/month to 8 yuan) and better food, and for no dismissals at the coming Chinese new year. The Cunyi zhiyou she was opposed to the recently reestablished Guomindang carpet weavers' union and was in contact with the Tianjin Communist Party, though its founder, Ma Jintai, was not a Communist Party member. The conditions were granted by the management. Dong, 1985 p.184; Rui, 1978 pp.77-78.

37. Huaxincheng, undated, probably 1936. Huaxincheng, apprentices (tugong) struck and called for an extra square foot of carpet to be paid for with an extra square foot’s worth of wages. Rui, 1978 p.77.

38. Nichols, undated, probably 1936. The workers called for a wage rise, medical treatment for a worker who had been beaten and injured, and better food. Rui, 1978 p.77.

38 disputes. 16 wage claims. 15 employment claims.
APPENDIX 6

Disputes and strikes in other handcraft industries.

Dyeing.

a) Suzhou.

1. July 1901. *Yinhua gongren* (fabric dyers) called for a wage rise. They struck for 1 day. A strike leader named Sun was arrested and "dealt with" by the Wu xian magistrate. Duan, 1986 p.341.

2. July 1906. "*Yinhua jiang hangtou*" (master dyers) seized material belonging to members of the Shangshi "*bu ye*" (cotton cloth trade) guild, who had left it with them for dyeing, and demanded "*jiu zi*" (literally, wine money) lower "*yang jia*" (the copper/silver exchange rate; dyers were paid in copper cash, but could exchange it at a favourable rate with their clients) and higher "*ran jia*" (the piece rate). The leaders were *hangtou* Wang Xiwei and deputy *hangtou* Hu Guishou. According to the chairman of the Shangshi guild, Hu was now "spreading the slander that we merchants have forced the "*ran jia" down". Previous rates had been fixed by collective bargaining. Originally "*ran jia" was calculated seasonally. The "*jiu zi" was commuted to monthly payment "out of sympathy for the workers". "However, they have now been keeping the goods for 3 months. They have forced the "*ran jia" up and the "*yang jia" down. In spite of Your Honour's (the xian official's) instructions they still have not dyed and handed over the material. How is it possible for dyeing of cloth to take 4 months?" A lawsuit followed, presented by Zhang Guoheng, owner of the Ruiji shop. There were four defendants including Wang and Hu. The deputy *hangtou* Xu Haoran, who had "summoned a mob" to enforce a wage rise and payment of "*jiu zi" and lower the "*yang jia" was under arrest. Wang and Hu accused Zhang Guoheng of forcing the "*yang jia" down. They also appealed to the xian magistrate for the release of Xu Haoran. The Chamber of Commerce tried to convince Wang and Hu to give the cloth back. Shangshi wanted the xian to issue an order forbidding future industrial action. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 299, Suzhou City Archives.

3. July 1907. The "*yinhua gongsuo*" (dyers’ guild) called for a further investigation of the "*jiu zi" case of July 1906. The guild said Zhang Guoheng initiated it by cutting the "*jiu zi". The Chamber of Commerce did not respond. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 299, Suzhou City Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. April 1929. A dispute over "*jiu zi" took place between the dyers’ union and 16 dyeworks employing 88 workers. The union claimed that dyeworks in the south of Tianjin paid *jiu zi* while those in the north didn’t. The dyeworks owners said this was because only the south Tianjin dyeworks dyed silk. Bureau of Social Affairs arbitration came to no result. There was a one day slowdown on May 16th. The General Union called for a wage rise for dyers. The results of the Bureau of Social Affairs settlement; 1) Workers earning over 10 yuan per month to receive a 50% rise. Workers earning less than 10 to receive a 70% rise. 2) No sacking without reason. Workers to leave employment freely. 3) All sackings for economic reasons to be approved by the union. Sacked workers to be registered with the union and other dyeworks looking for workers to approach the union. 4) Pay for legal holidays. 5) Sick workers, unless they have VD, to have their medical expenses paid and have extra vegetables.6) Counter-revolutionary workers and troublemakers to be sacked

2. December 1936. There was a strike on December 17th in the Xinhua Weaving and Dyeing Co. in protest against the management’s delay in paying wages. Dong, 1985 p.185.

**Cotton weaving.**

a) Suzhou.

1. September 1901. Workers at one particular weaving shop asked for a wage rise to keep up with the cost of living. The manager refused and they struck. Duan, 1986 p.341.

2. May 1925. There was a 1 day strike by over 100 workers on May 27th at the Tiansun weaving shop over a supervisor’s treatment of the workers. The police told workers to return and they did. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.166.

3. March 1926. Over 2,000 cotton weavers took part in an 11 day strike at the "Gongmin Zhibuchang" on March 5th to 16th. A 10% wage claim to follow the cost of living had been turned down. Police stopped the strike. A temporary rise of 60 wen a month was given. When the price of rice stabilised it was to be fixed at 12%, half of which would be permanently added to the existing wage and half to be withdrawn when the price of rice fell below a set level. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.220.

b) Tianjin.


2. November 1932. Shortly after a union was organised the manager of the Boming weaving mill shut down on grounds that business was bad and expelled the workers. 7 workers including the union secretary were first sacked, then factory closed. Over 100 were originally employed. The police were called. The workers petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs and the union federation. According to the terms of the Bureau of Social Affairs settlement, the factory was to reopen and employ at least 40, and all others were to be paid off and given first rights to re-employment. Dong, 1985 p.150; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, Second Historical Archives.

**Brush shops.**

a) Suzhou.

1. August 1910. Several dozen "wu lei tongye" (worthless tradesmen) broke windows and stole goods at the Yangerlin Tang brush shop. They fled when the police arrived. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 658, Suzhou City Archives.

2. February 1922. Workers at Yangerlin Tang called for a wage rise and seized goods belonging to the shop. The shop was run by two Yang brothers. They called for assistance from the magistrate, saying Yangerlin Tang had operated for more than 60 years without trouble except in August 1910. They called for protection of the shop and punishment of the workers. The Chamber of Commerce conveyed their call for protection to the police. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 658, Suzhou City Archives.
Jade shops.

a) Suzhou.

1. September 1910. There was a collective lockout at jade shops. The shops asked the Chamber of Commerce to preserve the peace. The Chamber requested police protection for "the area southwest of Bei Lu". The police reported that the shops were closed due to industrial action, not poor business. They said recently jade shop workers had often made demands from their employers, and the shops had taken measures to avert trouble. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1300, Suzhou City Archives.


3. June 1920. 1,000-2,000 jade carvers claimed a wage rise to follow living costs. There was a 2 day strike, June 22nd to 23rd, and a mass lockout by the shops in Guanqian Jie. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.209.

4. August 1934. 400 or more jade carvers employed in over 150 jewellers' workshops struck for a wage rise. A non-striker was attacked by strikers. The attackers were then arrested. The strike followed rejection of the wage claim. The Chamber of Commerce reported "The whole city is affected", saying all people in the districts of Huanglifang Qiao, Changmen Wai, Zhujiazhuang and Sanliuwan were in the jade and crystal jewellery trade. The products including spectacle frames and jade jewellery were widely sold, some being exported. Workers earned about 40c daily. "However most workers have lately started to feel that they have trouble making ends meet". So on July 20th they met and called for a wage rise. They assembled to declare the strike in the guild hall of the "Zhujing yuye tongye gonghui" (the Zhujing jade guild). The non-striker, Shen Maomao, was working at home on grounds that he could not afford to strike. Shen was brought to a teashop in Huanglifang Qiao, questioned, beaten and injured. Shen met one of the jade cutters who had assaulted him by chance on the following day and contacted the police, who arrested him (Shen's attacker). Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-11445, Suzhou City Archives.

Cotton carding.

a) Suzhou.

1. October 1926. Over 300 cotton carders struck on October 13th for 2 days after one of them was handed over to the police by his employer for asking for a wage rise. The police called a conciliation meeting. A rise was granted of 2.5c per jin (catty) and the employers offered to supply food. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.233.

Silk bordering (sibian ye)

a) Suzhou.

1. July 1928. The union contacted the Suzhou General Union preparatory committee, which contacted the xian government. They said employers were secretly hiring workers who had not joined the union in order to evade an agreement signed with the union, and many union members were unemployed. The employers were represented by the sibian gongsuo (silk border guild). They said business was bad and they had
only laid off workers for economic reasons. On the 15th of the 6th lunar month a crowd of unemployed sibian weavers surrounded and broke into the Juda shop. They beat up the proprietor, tore his clothes, took him to the General Union office and threatened to tie him up, then went to the xian Guomindang branch, where they were told to disperse. Four days later 20 or more workers assembled outside the Meilun shop protesting the hiring of women. The owner called the police. They arrived and the workers dispersed. The owner later was discovered by a group of workers in a public place; they surrounded him and forced him to go with them to the General Union office, where he "was forced to comply with insulting conditions". The arbitration committee settlement of July 12th was as follows:
1) All workers laid off at Duanwu to have their jobs back.
2) Men's and women's wages to be the same. Women to be allowed to join the union.
3) All shops to possess a 36" ruler stamped by the xian Party branch and to use it in the calculation of wages.
4) Wages to be calculated according to the former schedule
5) Workers to be paid 1 yuan each retrospectively for the time they were on strike.
6) All workers who were unemployed but had not joined the union before the strike began to join the union.
7) All piece rates on large and small machines to be the same as in Clause 5 of the previous schedule.
8) Both workers and employers to comply with all the above conditions.
9) A copy of this agreement to be left with all organizations participating in the settlement.

Tailors' shops.

a) Suzhou.

1. March 1919. Over 1,000 tailors struck for 10 days. They objected to having to pay a fee for a compulsory guarantee, to be signed by the police. The tailors first petitioned the xian then struck. A hangtou (master tailor) was beaten up. The Jiangsu authorities intervened. The Jiangsu police declared (1) The introduction of "work passes" (yingye zhizhao) would be delayed (2) Guarantees would be registered. The trade rules had been changed, trade certificates would now cost 1 yuan stamp tax, and the hangtou were accused of taking the opportunity to monopolise the issue of the certificates to "yu li" (fish for profits). The new "yingye zhizhao", which was to replace existing trade certificates, applied to the "cheng yi" and "xin yi" trades. The order to implement the yingye zhizhao came from the civil governor of Jiangsu. The police announced "If anyone wants not to take out a zhizhao and go out of business they must have the approval of the guild". Tailors in obscure parts of the city who tried to evade the zhizhao would be punished. Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.155; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 669, Suzhou City Archives.

2. December 1921. The tailors first assembled and asked for a wage rise. The employers' offer was turned down as too low. They imprisoned one or more zhiangzhu (employers) in the Yunzhang clothing guild office and extracted a fine from him (them). Then two "self proclaimed masters" (zicheng hangtou), who Yunzhang said had organized the wage claim, established a workshop (chengyi zuochang) and a guild (chengyi gonghui) on their own authority, and published a schedule of trade rules, including penalties for breaking it. The usual practise was; the zhiangzhu gave work out to the tailors, work done was listed on the "zhe" and payment made at festivals. Yunzhang said they had met the tailors several times to discuss wage rises, and in some cases they had been given piece rate increases of over 100%. They said the new guild was trying to establish a monopoly, saying nobody was to work without their approval, and setting out penalties and a 5 yuan entrance
fee in order to hoard money. The Chamber of Commerce was asked to petition for suppression of the strike and the new guild. According to the schedule of the new guild; "jia" (member shops, not individuals) were to join on recommendation of 2 member jia. The fee was 0.5% of yearly profits. The money was to be safeguarded by the guild and spent as needed by the trade. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 669, Suzhou City Archives.


4. April 1926. A 2 day strike on April 13th-14th by "xin yi gongren" ("new clothing workers") followed rejection of a 25% wage claim. A 10% rise was granted after conciliation, and payment reckoned by "three seasons" converted to monthly payment. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.222.

5. June 1934. There was a tailors' slowdown over alleged abuse of power by a guild officer. It began as a contest for control of the tailors' guild (cheng yi ye tongye gonghui) between Chen Yulin, the chairman, and the guild officer Chen Ding. On June 1st, several thousand tailors surrounded the Suzhou Guomindang branch and petitioned for Chen Ding to be prevented from founding a rival guild to the cheng yi guild. The tailors suspected that the chengyi guild would be abolished and they would have to pay fees to Chen Ding's guild. There was a mass brawl between rival guild supporters outside the Guomindang branch. Several were injured. Some tailors were arrested, and Chen Yulin was also arrested and examined on suspicion of belonging to the "Axehead Gang", a term for the Communist Party derived from the hammer and sickle insignia. "Several thousand" tailors struck in protest. The theatrical costumers' and jewellers' guilds petitioned the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of Chen Ding. Some tailors returned to work on June 3rd and the strike was over by June 14th. The tailors petitioned the Guomindang branch for the dissolution and reorganisation of the cheng yi guild on June 7th and 22nd. Chen Yulin was committed for trial on July 17th. Peng, 1962 vol.3 p.606; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1442, Suzhou City Archives.

6. June 1934. There was a theatrical costume industry dispute concerning hiring of apprentices. This was a distinct trade from "cheng yi ye" and "xin yi ye"; its union was known as "xi yi ye zuo zhiye gonghui" (the theatrical costumers' union). The apprentices had been hired contrary to the trade practice. "Ye wai ren gongzuo" (people who are not members of the trade are working). The union asked the Chamber of Commerce to call a conciliation meeting. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1447, Suzhou City Archives.

7. July 1935. A dispute started between the silk shops' guild and the tailors' guild about contracting of tailoring by shops. A petition to the Chamber of Commerce by tailors' representatives said they had instructed the tailors to keep working and wait for a settlement but a minority of "bu liang fenzi" (bad elements) had convinced them to stop work. "We are afraid local security will be disturbed". Police action was requested to stop the strike. "Industry and commerce should support each other and not encroach on each other's business". According to the fabric shop owners; some shop assistants made use of family relationships and friendships to tailor clothing, but the number was not large and did not amount to infringement of trade rights. They said it had been going on for a long time, the shop employees made no more of a profit than the tailors did and there was no reason for them to start objecting now. They only contracted the work to tailors, not to just anyone, and took a commission but did no tailoring themselves. They said this created extra business for the tailors, and this practise was also followed in Ningbo, Shanghai, Zhenjiang and Wuxi. The Guomindang branch instructed yangbu (foreign cloth) shops and silk shops to stop contracting. The shops appealed to the Chamber of Commerce which appealed to the Guomindang branch. The Guomindang branch called a conciliation meeting. "Several
thousand" tailors were concerned. The tailors’ representatives petitioned the Chamber; when the Tianxiang shop was founded it made a few items of clothing on a very irregular basis. However their customers now are not travelling merchants but old Suzhou families, who go to them for wedding clothes and all other major items. The shop(s) do not do the work themselves, but pass the work on to a workshop specifically established by (and for) the two cloth guilds, to which the profits go. "Formerly if ten customers each bought one piece of cloth, ten of our shops would be occupied. Now all the custom goes to this shop". The tailors struck after reading a report of the silk merchants’ guild meeting in a newspaper. The tailors’ guild convinced them to go back to work and wait. The dispute was still not settled by September. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1446, Suzhou City Archives.

8. September 1935. There was a demarcation dispute between the tailors’ and theatrical costume makers’ guilds. The xi yi ye had exclusive rights to the manufacture of theatrical and religious costumes. In November 1934 the Zhangyuanlai tailors’ shop started making theatrical costumes. Zhangyuanlai belonged to the cheng yi guild. A dispute followed which led to legal action. There was no result by September 1935. The xi yi ye petitioned the Guomindang branch for arbitration. The Guomindang branch contacted the Chamber of Commerce. A conciliation meeting was called on October 2nd. The xi yi guild sent a theatrical costume made by Zhangyuanlai as evidence. At the meeting the owner of Zhangyuanlai (named Zhang) protested that the clothing concerned was not meant for the theatre. After "repeated persuasion and instruction" Zhang pledged not to make theatrical costumes in future and agreed to withdraw a lawsuit he was preparing against the cheng yi guild. The cheng yi guild also agreed to return the still unfinished costume it had confiscated.

b) Tianjin.

1. August 1913. Several tailors tried to set up a Tailors’ Study Society (fengren yanjiu hui). The Chamber of Commerce approved but the Zhili provincial government refused. The tailors claimed they wanted to reduce the power of shop owners over journeymen tailors. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/1414, Tianjin City Archives.

2. February 1929. The new western style tailors’ union (xi yi gonghui) raised demands affecting 610 tailors in 74 shops. They said employers had offered their staff a wage rise and paid statutory holidays at the New Year and done nothing since. There was no strike. The Bureau of Social Affairs mediated a settlement. 1) Paid holidays on October 10, Sun Yatsen’s birthday, the day of his death and the New Year 2) A rise in piece rates for all types of clothing 3) All other work to be paid by the old schedule. Bureau of Social Affairs, Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao pp.307-308; Dong, 1985 p.82; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1929, p.193; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.54.

3. June 1931. A strike at the Tianjin quilt factory (Tianjin beifu chang) followed a cut in the piece rate on June 1st. The union and Guomindang negotiated. The management refused to implement the settlement. 300 workers asked the union to oversee while they took their machines home to organize employment elsewhere. There were over 800 workers and 426 sewing machines. After 3 days they had removed 300 machines and announced they were breaking off relations with the factory. The machines still in the factory were all idle. Dong, 1985 pp.120, 122.

Paint and lacquer shops.

a) Suzhou.

1. 1919. There was a lacquer industry wage dispute, involving the Xingshan guild.
The workers wanted their wages changed from copper to silver currency. This was done. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 855, Suzhou City Archives.

2. March 1924. The lacquer makers’ guild (Danhuo gongsuo) asked for protection from the Chamber of Commerce in the event of the abolition of the traditional commission. The guild said the commission was originally introduced to save wage costs but it was now too high and should be cut. It could reach 20% of the sale price. Suzhou employers called for workers to be paid by weight of product sold as in other cities. The lacquer workers (represented by the Xingshan guild) claimed the commission was traditional and there was no need to abolish it now. An agreement keeping the commission was signed in May. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 854, Suzhou City Archives.

3. July 1924. There was a wage claim and strike in the lacquer industry. The workers assembled "in summer this year"and went to the guild office to claim a wage rise. The 3c rise offered was first accepted then turned down. There was some disagreement among the workers. Some put up strike posters, wanting wages raised to at least 40c. According to the Xingshan guild; lacquer workers’ wages had always been more or less the same as construction workers’ wages. Now they were paid 28c, and the construction workers only 23c. "Industrial conflict in other trades will follow". The leaders of the wage campaign met in teashop and put up strike posters. The guild called for the arrest of those responsible, and informed the police. Several workers were named. The strike ran for 3 days, 7th-10th July. The wage was not altered but a rise in the New Year food bonus was awarded. Peng, 1962 vol.3 p.356; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 855, Suzhou City Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. December 1932. Workers in the Dongfang paint factory raised several demands; sacking of a foreman or "thug" called "Fatty Chen", workers to organize their own food, higher overtime. The demands were rejected and a 7 day strike followed. The demands were finally accepted. Dong, 1985 p.153.

Chinese pharmacies.

a) Suzhou.

1. February 1920. There was a wage dispute involving the Taihe Chinese medicine guild. Taihe reported; the price of grain has been rising but there has been no trouble before. Recently wage discussions began in the pharmacy industry in Shanghai, so the Suzhou pharmacy workers asked for a wage rise too. However business has not been as good in Suzhou. A rise was offered but they wanted a higher one. Unemployed liumin (drifters) may stir up trouble. Taihe petitioned Wu xian and the police to issue a public order forbidding "outsiders" from interfering with the employers’ autonomy. The police issued the order and also (to the Chamber of Commerce) blamed "unemployed outsiders", who had sent an anonymous letter accusing the employers. The Shanghai pharmacy workers had established a friendship society (youyi hui), and the ones in Suzhou followed the example. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 669, Suzhou City Archives.

2. May 1926. There was another Taihe Chinese medicine guild wage dispute. "Half a string" or 1c silver was asked for. Taihe reported; prices have been rising in recent years but pharmacy wages have kept pace. The "friendship society" mentioned again but Taihe said they did not know what this was. The "half string" was to go 20% to the owner and 80% to the employees collectively, regardless of whether the drugs were sold at a discount or not. The 1c was to go to the employees, under the same
terms. "We can not let a small number of unemployed people cause trouble". The "friendly society" had published the wage claim in the press. The police announced; there is no such society, there is no wage claim, the newspaper story is false. Taihe should announce this. The police issued a second public order forbidding outsiders from interfering with the employers' autonomy. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 669, Suzhou City Archives.

3. September 1928. Pharmacy workers and the Taihe medicine guild disputed over terms of employment. The Guomindang pharmacy workers' union existed by this time. Taihe asked the Chamber of Commerce to petition Wu xian for mediation. The terms of agreement were;

1) The number of employees in each shop as of Mid-autumn in 1928 to be taken as the basic number. If a shop had no other recourse it could dismiss as many as necessary. It should raise the numbers back to the basic number when business improved. Union members entering the shop were not to sign pledges (zhuyuan shu).

2) Shops not to employ non-union members. If they were obliged to sack shop assistants, they should not be slow in replacing them. The means of replacing them, apart from promotion, should be according to the rank of the original job. A higher position should not be replaced by a lower one.

3) Shops should not employ "helpers". If they were found doing so, they would be stopped. When a new shop needed to use helpers, they were to be employed for one month only. They could not be union members.

4) When the union met, those attending the meeting should not have their pay cut, however they should present notification from the union as proof, and the shop had to be able to retain enough people to keep the doors open.

5) Apprentices could only study with union members.

The original 1927 agreement between Taihe and the union to remain in force. The terms of the agreement were;

1) The union is the legitimate representative organization of its members.

2) Shop assistants are to be taken on and dismissed at the New Year. If at any time of year an employee breaks the shop rules, it must be reported to the General Union Reorganization Committee. If the matter proves true after investigation the employee must be dismissed.

3) At the end of the year, employees may not be dismissed without reason or leave without notifying their employer.

4) Apart from the fixed wage settled in February 1927, everyone will receive a raise of 4 yuan per month. If the shop is unable to meet the additional expense, the employer must contact the Union Reorganization Committee, who will check the amount of capital in the partnership. Partners must not act without consulting each other. Apart from the owners' share, employees are to have a share of the profits every 4 months. Shares to be equal except for apprentices and servants, who receive half shares. Wages and monthly bonus (yuefei) to be paid on the 16th of each month. Yuefei to be 1 yuan per month. Wages for June to count as 45 days' pay, but the extra 15 not to be paid until the end of the year.

5) 70 days off a year. If any more time is taken wages will be cut. If less time taken, extra pay to be given. During working hours, an employee may not be absent for more than 3 hours per day, or more than 8 times a month. Slips will be issued to keep track of time off. Shop assistants living in Suzhou may not spend the night at home more than 10 times a month. Any further nights to cost a day’s pay. Working hours to be the same as in the original contract.

6) Hongli to be reckoned once a year. 10% for the manager, 30% for employees to be divided as above.

7) Apprenticeship to last 3 years. Apprentices to be examined by the management and union on graduation. If satisfactory they will be paid the lowest wage, 3 yuan a month. This will be raised in succeeding years.

8) Everyone to receive at least 6c per day food allowance. This does not include oil, salt, soya sauce or vinegar. The allowance to be issued meal by meal. If the caterer practises any form of dishonesty he will be penalised according to the severity
of the offence.

9) Employees who become sick while working will have their medical expenses paid by the shop. (Venereal diseases excepted). However they will have to pay for Western medical treatment themselves.

10) When an employee dies while at work, the employer must give his family at least 50 yuan.

11) The Taihe guild must contribute 50 yuan towards the founding expenses of the union.

12) Executive and general meetings of the union will take place in the Taihe guild office. The union will pay for the use of the office. However the guild must pay the union a 20 yuan rent subsidy in January and July.

13) All shops will implement these conditions within the first ten days of March.

Additional compromise terms of July 1st, 1927;

Medicine shops will be classed into three grades. Those with over 10,000 yuan capital are Grade 1. All employees will receive a raise of 4 yuan per month. Those with 5,000 to 10,000 yuan are Grade 2. All employees to receive a rise of 3.50 yuan per month. Those with 1,000 to 5,000 yuan are Grade 3. All employees to receive a rise of 3 yuan per month. If shops have already given or promised a rise of 4 yuan, they are not to reduce the offer to 3 or 3.5 yuan. Shops which sent no representative to the talks are assumed to have given their assent. Shops to be classed as Grade 1, 2 or 3 according to business conducted in 1926.

The September, 1928 negotiations concerned additions to the 1927 agreement. "Eight additional clauses were added". See above. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1448, Suzhou City Archives.

4. June 1937. The pharmacy workers’ union asked the Chamber of Commerce for protection against sackings at Duanwu. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1448, Suzhou City Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. November 1928. The new union presented a set of demands to employers. 670 assistants at 92 shops were involved. The most important were 1) shorter hours 2) a wage rise 3) a subsidy for apprentices 4) hiring and firing to be approved by the union. The employers resisted; said they could not afford the wage rise and 4) attacked their autonomy. Following negotiations by the Bureau of Social Affairs 4) was dropped and the following terms accepted 1) 15 hours in summer, 14 in winter. Excess time to be compensated with paid time off. Preparation of drugs to be from 8 to 6. No night work. 2) A subsidy of 1 yuan for apprentices after 6 months, to be raised at the employer’s discretion after 1 year; the minimum wage after 3 years to be 2.50 yuan 3) A 1.5 yuan raise for assistants earning less than 3 yuan. A 3 yuan raise for those earning 3-6 yuan, a 2 yuan raise for those earning more than 6 yuan. 4) Assistants not to be prevented from reading appropriate books and papers when business permits 5) The terms to be in effect from the date of signature. There was no strike. 5 union members had been sacked. The Merchants’ Union had called for the introduction of systematic written regulations. Bureau of Social Affairs, Yi zhou nian gongzuo baoga p.305; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.44.

2. January 1929. The pharmacy assistants’ union then said the employers’ association had met in secret in one of the concessions and on January 2nd 56 union members were sacked. Others were sacked from the 3rd to the 6th. Shops named were; Wanzhitang, Tianyitang, Tongyutang, Longshunrong. A total of 20 shops were involved. "Several dozen" who were not union members were also sacked. Tianjin shops were accustomed to hire and fire employees at the New Year. However the Bureau of Social Affairs considered that in this case some employers were using the New Year as a pretext. Police said after investigation that most had been sacked because business was bad, or for disobeying shop rules, but there were some who had been sacked for union membership. The Bureau of Social Affairs’ settlement; those
who had done nothing wrong to have their jobs back. Those who had made minor mistakes to be paid off with 2 months’ wages, and those who had made serious mistakes or found new jobs not to be compensated. Only 4 got their jobs back, and another 4 received 2 months’ wages. In March the Tianjin government passed legislation on shop employment and proposed deregistration of shop employees’ unions, but this was stalled by the Bureau. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.291; Dong, 1985 p.82; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, January 1929 p.220, February 1929 p.126, March 1929 p.193; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.48.

3. February 1929. The management of Yuanxingtang reneged on a previous agreement with the union and from the New Year cut the agreed wage by 2 yuan per month. The assistants complained to the Bureau of Social Affairs. The Bureau compelled the manager to pay the agreed wage. There was no strike. 12 workers were affected. According to the previous agreement all 12 should have received a wage rise. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao* p.324; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.65.

4. April 1929. There was a dispute at Longshunrong over sacking of a single worker. After mediation from the Bureau of Social Affairs the shop still refused to have him back but paid him off with 30 yuan. The owner said he talked, played chess and made political speeches during working hours and they would rather close down than have him working there again. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao* pp.295-296; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.51.

Construction.

a) Suzhou.

1. June 1920. The police notified the Chamber of Commerce of a wage dispute in the construction industry. The two trades involved were: "shui mu Hang zuo" (bricklaying and carpentry). Posters had been put up calling for a wage rise in all "small construction businesses" (shui mu zuo xiao hang). 32 da hang (big construction business) representatives, 24 xiao hang and 100+ workers met at a "gongsuo" (guild hall). The rise was claimed by xiao hang workers who wanted to be paid at the same rate as da hang workers. At a formal conciliation meeting the xiao hang workers asked for a 60 wen (copper cents) rise to bring about equality with the da hang. The two sides of the trade were also called "xiao bao" and "da bao" ("small contract" and "big contract"). Working hours were also fixed at the meeting. There was no street demonstration or violence (baodong). Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 658, Suzhou City Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. May 1926. Building workers employed on the International Bridge (now Jiefang Qiao, Liberation Bridge) walked off the job, saying the White Russian accountant was stealing from their wages. Dong, 1985 p.67.

2. January 1936. There was a street fight between building contractor Liu Changguei and his gang, and building workers to whom he owed over 1,000 yuan. After the fight Liu agreed to pay the 27 workers 42 yuan per week but failed to do so. The workers instituted legal action. *Yishi Bao*, 26.2.1936 p.5.

Incense.

a) Suzhou.

1. December 1920. Incense workers claimed a wage rise due to the high price of rice
on December 7th. The wage rise was granted. 

2. July 1921. A wage claim by incense workers was turned down by employers on July 30th. "Local and guest gangs" (ben ke bang) took part. Separate wage rises were eventually granted. The workers petitioned the Chamber of Commerce: "We have been in the incense trade since we came to Suzhou in our youth". In 1920, the Datong incense shop had raised prices by 3c but cut spending on material by 2c. Workers in all incense shops claimed a wage rise in April 1921. Because all the 30-odd incense shops in Suzhou were organized as limited companies, "dongshi quan xian" (the powers of the directors are limited) and there was no response. The workers then asked the "dianzhu" (managers) who offered 2c copper, to 200 wen. This was not enough. They were asking for 20c silver. They claimed all other industries had raised wages. The employers locked the workers out after the first wage claim. "They stopped providing work, food and living quarters". The workers then petitioned the Chamber of Commerce and the local government. "The employers have forgotten the relationship between master and apprentice". 

3. March 1924. Incense workers held a trade meeting and called for pay in silver instead of copper. 

4. December 1925. Incense workers struck after a wage claim was turned down. The police took charge of negotiations. A wage rise was granted on December 19th. 

5. March 1931. There was a wage claim and strike in incense shops. The strike began while employers were organizing a delegation to the conciliation committee. The union secretary was regarded as the strike leader. Strikers and non-strikers fought at the Yixing shop. Some strikers were arrested. The fight took place after strikers visited Yixing knowing workers there were still working. The guild said the union secretary Xu Jiujiang was not a union member but an army deserter. The workers were taken to a nearby teashop for questioning, then the strikers went back to Yixing and beat up the manager, who was injured. They were arrested. Another incident when workers still working were made to stop and a manager was assaulted followed. 

6. June 1931. The incense guild protested the decision of the Guomindang arbitration committee on the March dispute. They said there was no time limit on the temporary subsidy granted, therefore it was no different from a wage rise. They said the workers' income was unreasonably high. Member shops proposed a lockout but the guild opposed it. The guild proposed a compromise of a 2c rise for the "jin feng" part of "shui zuo" but none for other operations. The guild also offered to "release surplus work", or offer an overtime rate (kaifang yu gong) One employer proposed continuing to provide sleeping space but commuting food to a 1.8c cash payment. A workers' representative said they would accept the 2c rise. Two separate rounds of talks were going on; one at the Chamber of Commerce, at which the near compromise described above was effected, and one by a Guomindang arbitration committee which resulted in the grant of an indefinite 4c subsidy. 

7. December 1931. The local Guomindang cautioned the incense guild about discrimination against union members. Since the start of the Guomindang period wages had risen twice, and hours had been shortened. The employers had petitioned in Junethat they could not raise wages because incense was a product used in dying superstitions and sales were falling.
8. February 1932. There was an incense shops dispute concerning sacking of workers at the New Year. The union petitioned the Guomindang and xian government before the sackings took place, saying permanent workers were in danger of being reduced to casual status. Another petition claimed discrimination against union members and non-payment of wages on Guomindang holidays. The union claimed: 1) no sacking without cause 2) preservation of existing contracts 3) pay on national holidays 4) precedence for union members when hiring workers. The contents of the petition were approved by the Guomindang, and the Chamber of Commerce instructed to act accordingly. The incense workers' petition stated: "The established custom among employers is hard to break. Some sack workers to revenge themselves for petty grievances, some to break up existing contracts and some particularly evil ones in order to replace permanent workers with casual ones and bring down wages and conditions". The Guomindang branch considered shop owners were discriminating against union members. They said union members were refused employment, agreements were not implemented and shops refused to pay wages on national holidays. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1450, Suzhou City Archives.

9. May 1933. There was a conflict in incense shops over a contract signed two years previously governing terms of employment. Opposition to the contract had been voiced since the Shanghai incident. It fixed pay at a reduced level. The protest was led by an unemployed worker, who called for the restoration of the old terms of employment. A strike followed in which the union was not involved. The contract was signed on July 20th., 1931, the result of a dispute settled in June 1931. (No.6 above) It provided an overtime rate. This contract fixed pay at 30c for a luo (gauze bottomed tray) of 27 incense sticks (for the operation called shui zuo) and cancelled a previous 4c subsidy over the fixed wage, as a result of which the employers withdrew a lawsuit they had initiated. They said "There has been no trouble for 2 years". The chairman (lishizhang) of the union was now Gu Luquan. Gu had avoided legal action by dropping the union’s claim to the 4c subsidy. However the employers considered that the unemployed worker Xia Keping was now making trouble on the pretext of restoring the old contract. The text of the July 1931 agreement was; 1) Basic wages to be paid according to the old schedule. 2) From Chongyang (the 9th of the 9th lunar month) to Duanwu next year, a 4c subsidy to be given if workers produced at least five trays "yugong" (extra work). If they did not, "yugong" to be paid but the subsidy not to be paid. "Yugong", distinguished from "zhenggong", meant any work completed above the standard quota or "gong". 3) From Duanwu next year to Chongyang, the 4c subsidy to be paid if workers produce at least three trays "yugong". 4) Yugong to be paid for according to the old schedule. 5) The grinding room subsidy (mofang chaohe jintie) to be 3 copper cents. "Sandalwood wine bonus" (tan huo jiu qian) to be paid as before. 6) No shui zuo or mofang subsidy for workers contracted to either of the two contractors. 7) Yugong to be paid every 5 days, but if workers want it to be paid daily their employers should agree. 8) No subsidy to be paid to the workers in the event of the ingredients being faulty, just the standard wage. 9) To be effective from the date of signature. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1451, Suzhou City Archives.

10. September 1934. The Tongshengyu incense shop announced a wage cut at Duanwu. The workers appealed to the Guomindang branch which called a meeting. The manager (Jin Shouqi) insisted that wages had to be lowered. 123 workers objected and 40 accepted. They said the manager had wasted money on gambling and prostitutes, neglected work and hoped to make up the shop’s losses by cutting wages. The manager said business was bad and it was mid-autumn. The workers said there was no sign of loss of custom, other shops had not cut wages and there was no custom of cutting wages at mid-autumn. While talks were in progress Jin sacked everyone. All incense workers in Suzhou sent a delegation to the Guomindang branch. The xian called three successive conciliation meetings which the management did not attend. An arbitration meeting was called. The terms of settlement were;

1) Wages to be paid as usual.
2) The management to be permitted to sack up to 3 workers. There was no strike. 2 workers were sacked. They were paid a subsidy while looking for new jobs. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. September 1921. More than 100 workers from the Wenshenghe, Yideyuan, Dechangyong and Shenglecheng incense shops met at a teahouse and decided to strike for a wage rise. They were suppressed by the South 4th district police and baoan dui. Four strike leaders were arrested. The workers had handed out pamphlets announcing the strike. All shops involved closed. Dong, 1985 pp.10-11.

2. September 1926. Workers at the Wensheng, Desheng and Heyi shops struck on September 7th in protest against the British bombing of Wanxian. Dong, 1985 p.68.

Charcoal.

a) Suzhou.

1. April 1922. Charcoal burners organised a new guild - the Kunshan guild - and claimed higher wages. The wage claim was unsuccessful and the guild was abolished. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 625, Suzhou City Archives.

Stone masonry.

a) Suzhou.


2. February 1932. Stonecutters disputed the sacking of 5 workers. The employer said business was affected by the Shanghai incident. Only 5 were employed. The Wangting Zhen zhenzhang (township head) persuaded him to take them back. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives.

3. March 1932. There was a second stonecutters’ dispute between the same five workers and their employer over provision of food and sleeping quarters. The employer repeated that business was affected by the Shanghai incident. The Wangting zhenzhang persuaded him to go on providing food and sleeping quarters for another month.

Pipe making.

a) Suzhou.


Pastry.
a) Suzhou.


2. June 1932. Two workers sacked from the Yushengquan fried cake shop asked to be paid off with 1 month’s wages. The employer said business was bad and refused. The Wu xian 4th district gong suo mediated, and achieved a compromise payment to the workers of 5 yuan travel costs. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives.

Cupboard and bench making

a) Suzhou.

1. April 1924. Cupboard and bench makers struck for 4 days over a wage claim. The "xiao hang" (small enterprises) held a meeting with "tongye" (fellow tradesmen) and "zuozhu" (employers). The wage rise was granted. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.187.


Wooden bucket and bowl making.

b) Tianjin.

1. October 1932. Workers in several bucket and bowl shops petitioned their employers for a wage rise, saying that workers in other branches of carpentry earned 60c-70c per day but they only earned 35c. They asked for a 10c rise. The employers said business was bad and this was impossible. The dispute continued for some time but with no result. *Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2 p.218.

Candles.

a) Suzhou.

1. January 1926. 600 candle makers struck on 9th-12th January calling for a 40c rise, 9.6 yuan/month to 10 yuan, and 12 monthly payments a year instead of 10. At the conciliation meeting the 40c rise was granted but workers were required to catch up on work not done during the strike. *Di yi ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p.238.

2. June 1935. There was a candle factories dispute over a temporary rice subsidy. The subsidy, 1 yuan per month, was originally granted in 1930. "Yuefei" ("monthly payment") of 1.4 yuan per month was also awarded in 1930. Both sides had agreed that these temporary subsidies would be revoked when the price of rice fell below 15 yuan for a sack. All workers earning more than 11 yuan per month were to lose their rice subsidy, and all workers were to lose the yuefei. The employers were represented by the Guyue guild. The price had long since fallen below 15 yuan. However the workers objected to cancelling of the subsidies by working short hours. The employers asked the Chamber of Commerce to appeal to the Guomindang branch. The actual drop in the workers’ income was near 20%. There were over 100 candle factories in Suzhou, and more than 400 workers. Business had been bad recently. The
wage cut had the public approval of the guild. The workers said the highest paid of
them earned only 10 yuan a month. The lowest paid earned only 3-4 yuan. They were
represented by the laye zhigong hui (the candle industry union). Most workers were
"wai ji" (sojourners) from outside Suzhou. They claimed "Wages have always been
low, and it is hard to maintain a basic living standard". At Duanwu wages had been
cut and the yuefei dropped to 1 yuan, while the price of candles was increased. The
Guomindang branch called a conciliation meeting. The Chamber of Commerce wrote;
please communicate to the workers that they must maintain the principle of mutual
interest. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file, Suzhou City Archives.

Timber.

a) Suzhou.

1. May 1932. There was a dispute in a timber yard about money owed to the yard by a
worker. The Dongqiao Zhen gongsuo (township association) mediated. The worker
had been sent to collect a debt owing to his employer and had kept some, or spent it.
He was dismissed. The Dongqiao zhenzhang (township head) persuaded the manager
not to sack him on his guarantor's pledge that the money would be returned. Ministry
of Industry file 722 (4) 198, Second Historical Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. March 1932. Over 100 workers at the Xinji timber yard opposed new conditions set
by the employers and presented 4 demands. The Bureau of Social Affairs mediated.
The conditions set by the employers were revised. Dong, 1985 pp.135-136.

2. August 1932. A 10 day lockout at the Xinji timber yard followed an argument
between a group of waigong (outdoor labourers) and a foreman on August 8. The
foreman had ordered neigong (indoor workers) outside to carry wood. The
management first announced temporary closing and paid the workers off, then called
them back and announced bankruptcy. The settlement by the Bureau of Social Affairs
was; 1) Workers must work as directed and refer complaints against foremen to the
office. 2) 2 workers who minded the furnace and generator must take other jobs or be
sacked. 3) Management to decide whether to work or not when it rains. 4) If hours are
lengthened, pay to remain as before; if a night shift is introduced, hours to be cut 1/10
or pay raised 1/10. 5) Workers to ring the stop-work bell before changing the saw. 6)
Pay for the 10 days of the lockout to be decided at the end of the month. Dong, 1985
p.143; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2 p.185.

3. October 1932. More than 70 workers sacked from Xinji surrounded the Bureau of
Social Affairs on October 4th to demand reinstatement. They were eventually given 2
months’ wages and travel costs. Dong, 1985 p.147.

Shoes.

a) Suzhou.

1. July 1936. A shoe industry union was involved in a fee dispute with the employers’
guild. The union involved was the "fan xie ye zhiye gonghui". ("Fan xie" was the
operation in which the uppers and insoles, having been stitched together, were
stretched and turned inside out). The union first contacted the xian government. They
said work passes had been stamped with the union seal when reissued each year at
Duanwu, to stop workers avoiding the union fee. The union said the guild (Lu ye
gonghui, or the shoe trade guild) had called a secret meeting and instructed all dianzhu (shop owners) to stop using work passes to reckon wages, and "Yi lu xian gei gongzi" (pay cash on the spot). If passes were not used it would not be possible to ensure that the union fees were paid. They said the guild had voted to deprive union officers of work.

The guild said the union was agitating to consolidate its power. Disposal of work was decided between the dianzhu and the zuozhu, not the guild. The lu ye guild members were merchant-employers who put out work to the dianzhu, then sold the shoes. The fan xie union represented fan xie workers who performed work for the dianzhu, but the union was controlled by the fan xie zuozhu, who were themselves employers.

Contracts were settled or renewed at the festivals of the old calendar, according to the wishes of both parties, and if lu ye guild members did not wish to deal with a particular shop they did not renew the contract. Guild members had not demanded that fan xie workers withdraw from the union and publish their withdrawal. Dianzhu had used cash payments before when business was bad. Of late wages had been reckoned daily in cash due to business uncertainty, with the consent of workers who did not want to run up debts.

There was no worker-employer relationship between guild and union members, and no labour-capital dispute. The zuozhu and the dianzhu were in a capital-capital relationship, and only the dianzhu, their workers and apprentices were in a labour-capital relationship. The fan xie trade started more than 20 years ago. Since then shoe industry employers and the fan xie tradesmen had got along peacefully. Employers were forbidden to join unions but these zuozhu had done so for secret purposes. There were Class A and Class B union members in the fan xie union; Class A were the zuozhu. Their aim was to disrupt commerce. The guild called for dissolution of the union and punishment of offenders. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1447, Suzhou City Archives.

b) Tianjin.

1. June 1913. Several "qie pai" workers (this was the operation of cutting and stretching the leather) employed by the Yixinglong shoe shop complained to the Chamber of Commerce that the manager Yu Yaquan had cut their wages. The "Qie pai yanjiufen hui" (qie pai workers’ study society) sent its representatives to the shop to investigate. They had a fight with unspecified friends and supporters of Yu. After arbitration Yu admitted he had cut wages and in June 1913 agreed to abide by a contract previously in force. Yu was subsequently fined for not paying the wage deficit. Three workers named Xu, Wang and Zhao were sacked after the first protest. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

2. May 1914. 2 qie pai workers reported to the study society that Yu Yaquan had cut their wages again. The study society sent someone to the shop to investigate. Yu again confessed to cutting wages and promised to raise them. Shortly afterwards the same two workers reported to the study society that Yu had done nothing. On October 16th the study society investigated Yixinglong again. Yu repeated that he understood that he was committed to pay the agreed wage. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

3. March 1915. Qie pai workers Yao and Li, the two involved in the previous year’s dispute, reported to the study society that Yu Yaquan had cut their wages again. The study society sent someone to the shop to investigate. Yu again confessed to cutting wages and promised to raise them. Shortly afterwards the same two workers reported to the study society that Yu had done nothing. On October 16th the study society investigated Yixinglong again. Yu repeated that he understood that he was committed to pay the agreed wage. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

Between March and June, Yao and Li were sacked for poor quality work and
insubordination. Yu and the Xie shang yanjiu suo (shoe merchants’ study institute) called for the abolition of the shoemakers’ study society. The lawsuit had been prevented by an unspecified authority. 10 other workshop owners petitioned the Chamber of Commerce in support of Yu. By October 14th the qie pai study society had been abolished.

In November the workshop owners petitioned the Chamber claiming that the qie pai study society had reformed in the guise of a religious organization, and was calling workers to meetings and soliciting subscriptions. They called for the intervention of the police again. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

4. August 1921. Workers at several unnamed shoe shops asked for a wage rise in the summer of 1921. The Chamber of Commerce opposed it and contacted police who told the workers they were forbidden to strike. In October the workers sent a notice of their demands to the Chamber. 3 shoe shop owners contacted the Chamber, accusing a foreman named Wang of forcing workers in all three shops to strike. The three managers said that wages should be uniform in all shoe shops and could not be raised without the consent of the Shoe Merchants’ Study Institute. They said the workers were afraid to come to work because of intimidation by the foremen. The foremen in the three shops (Wang, Yao and Ni) then came forward and pledged that there would be no more strikes. The strike continued. "Nei wai zuo" (all shoemaking operations) were all on strike. The shoe merchants’ institute then said the strike was in response to a wage claim being turned down. The police notified the Chamber that the strike was illegal. The qie pai workers asked for a 1c rise per pair of shoes. The shang zuo workers asked for 4c more except for military boots. The feng zuo workers asked for employers to buy the thread themselves. Dong, 1985 p.9; Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

5. March 1922. A strike was declared at several shoe shops in March 1922 in defiance of police orders. A printed list of demands was circulated, and a strike meeting was broken up by the police. Two workers (Wang Shaoquan and Ye Baozhen) were arrested and questioned. After release they proclaimed a strike. It was settled on March 26th by a compromise involving a slight wage rise. Wang and Ye were arrested again and fined. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

6. April 1923. Shang zuo workers put in a claim for adjustment of wages because the copper currency in which they were paid was falling relative to silver. Similar claims by other zuo followed. They called for their pay to be determined by a silver standard. The shoe merchants’ study institute first signed an agreement with the shang zuo workers. The qie pai zuo then presented a claim, which was accepted. The feng zuo then went out on strike. This was settled by a compromise and work began on May 2nd. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

7. June 1923. Feng zuo workers Wang Si and Liu Da asked for a wage rise and organized a strike. Wang and Liu were summoned to court, tried and arrested. The shoe merchants’ study institute and the Chamber of Commerce were involved. After further negotiations the feng zuo workers were given a wage rise. Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/4095, Tianjin City Archives.

8. June 1924. Feng zuo workers issued a handbill calling for their wages to be determined by a silver standard, as had been granted to other zuo. They said they would strike in 3 days if this was not done. The shoe merchants’ study society suspected Wang Si and Liu Da. They acknowledged writing the handbills at the Chamber of Commerce office. Wang asked for clarification of the amount agreed to in the 1923 settlement; possibly this wage rise had not been implemented. The Chamber suggested that the matter should be settled privately through the original mediator (his legal status not explained), Qiao Qifa.
9. September 1928. After the Guomindang union was founded the manager of the Meihuaxm shop gave less and less work to union members. 124 workers were affected. Their spokesman Yin Guorui appealed to the Bureau of Social Affairs. Investigation proved their complaint was justified and the Bureau instructed the manager to distribute work as before. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao* p.317; Dong, 1985 p.80.

10. October 1928. "Xie shang ge fenhui" (all branches of the shoe trade union) took issue with the manager of the Ruichengxiang shop, who had cut wages to 30c-40c. The General Union also intervened. The management raised the wages again and guaranteed not to cut them in future. Dong, 1985 p.81; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.43.

Gold and silver.

b) Tianjin.

1. October 1928. The new gold and silversmiths’ union (*jinyin gonghui*) called for a wage rise, a rise in the apprentices’ subsidy, a day off each week, abolition of the contract system, a travel allowance, a union subsidy and shorter hours. 195 workers at 4 shops were involved. The employers said this was too much. The Bureau of Social Affairs drafted an 11 point agreement; 1) 2.7 yuan per month (20%) pay rise 2) If Sundays worked, 1 extra day’s pay per month 3) Pay not to be cut if union officers are absent on documented union business 4) 10 yuan monthly union subsidy from each shop. However the unions should not interfere with the running of the shop 5) Apprentices to be paid 2, 3, 4 or 5 yuan per month in their 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years 6) 1.5 yuan per month end of year travel allowance (a rise of over 50%). Apprentices to be paid 24 yuan on graduation, as before. Tianjin residents excepted. 7) New employees to be admitted to the union 8) Wages to be paid on public holidays 9) Wages not to be cut and 2 weeks’ sickness benefit for workers injured at work 10) Contract workers to receive a 2.7 yuan rise and travel allowance as per clause 6 11) Settlement to take effect from October 27. An 8 hour day claim was rejected. Abolition of contracts was rejected "because of the high value of the materials". There was no strike. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao* p.302; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.43.

2. January 1929. The 8 hour day claim was raised again, with a claim for a wage rise. The employers offered 20% and 10 hours. The workers called for 4 days off with pay per month, and the employers offered 4 extra days’ pay but no time off. The workers wanted contracting abolished and the managers wanted to keep it. A 20% increase in pay for night work was called for, also better treatment for apprentices and an 150% rise in *chuan zi* (travel allowance). The managers offered 50%. The *jinyin* union and the Guomindang branch were involved. Talks began on January 7th. On January 10th, two workers were expelled from the Tianbao shop as agitators with the approval of the General Union. Dong, 1985 p.84.

3. March 1929. There was a dispute at the Meifeng and Hengli shops after 5 workers were sacked from each shop. There was no strike. The *jinyin gonghui* said Meifeng and Hengli were trying to break the union. Both shops were in the concessions and therefore escaped investigation. Meifeng said one worker had been expelled for fighting, and the others were under contract to a foreman who had stolen some of the shop’s precious metals and vanished. Hengli said the workers there had been sacked by a supervisor who had since been sacked himself, and they would be given first rights to re-employment. The Bureau of Social Affairs accepted the statements of Hengli and Meifeng. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao* pp.298-299; Dong, 1985 p.88; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, March 1929, p.195; Wu
Bannong, 1932 p.55.

4. October 1929. The 1st branch of the jinyin union, representing workers in the Henglì, Tianbao, Wuhua and Meifeng shops, called for a wage rise, a subsidy for apprentices, Sundays off, travel costs after dismissal and employers to contribute to union funds: 10 demands in all. The employers refused. The Bureau of Social Affairs, the Guomindang branch and the General Union conducted talks. The terms of settlement were; 2.70 per month rise, an extra day’s pay if Sunday worked, no docking of pay for union officers on certified union business. Dong, 1985 p.100.

Brocade weaving.

b) Tianjin.

1. February 1929. Workers at the Liyuanheng shop opposed the sacking of two foremen. There was no strike. The Bureau of Social Affairs decided in favour of the employer and told the police to watch the factory. Bureau of Social Affairs, Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, p.300; Dong, 1985 p.88; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, February 1929, p.126.

2. March 1929. Workers at the Li Li workshop went on strike for better conditions. 125 workers took part. The Bureau of Social Affairs considered that though the demands were appropriate the strike was illegal and called on the police to stop it. The strike lasted only 4 hours. The union persuaded the workers to return, and with the Bureau and the police convinced them to revise their demands. The Bureau drew up the following contract; 1) The training room is to contain a portrait of Sun Yatsen, Party and national flags, and a blackboard. 2) Food costs to be deducted from wages according to the new calendar. 3) The shop to provide 2 footballs. 4) Sleeping quarters to be extended. 5) All hiring and sacking to be supported with specific reasons and submitted to the "gongshi" (chief engineer). Workers not to leave without reason. 7) With the foreman's approval casual workers could stand in for workers absent for 1 month or more. 8) Deliberate damage to lamps to be paid for, but not accidental damage. 9) Apprentices sick for less than 1 month not to have to make up the time before graduation. 10) Apprentices' savings not to be drawn on except in emergencies. 11) The factory to provide a clinic and food for sick workers. Bureau of Social Affairs, Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, pp.309-310; Dong, 1985 p.88; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.55.

3. April 1929. The managers of the Lishun, Xingxingji, Zhenji and Yixingcheng workshops met and agreed to lower wages. The Guomindang tutelage committee found out and informed the Bureau of Social Affairs. The city government instructed the Bureau and the police to cooperate in restoring the original wages. There was no strike. 11 workshops and 200 workers were affected. Wages were lowered by 20c. The employers restored the original wages after protests by the Guomindang, urged by the General Union. Dong, 1985 p.89; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1929 p.193; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.62.

4. April 1929. A second dispute at Liyuanheng concerned the sacking of 2 more foremen. There was no strike. The manager offered to take back these two but refused employment to the original two after mediation from the Bureau of Social Affairs. The sacking of the foremen aroused the opposition of the 546 workers who called on the city government via the union to intervene. The management was ordered to pay 40 yuan towards union expenses and "clear up misunderstandings". Bureau of Social Affairs, Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao, p.300; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1929, p.195; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.64.

5. May 1929. 9 workers were sacked from the Baofeng shop. They claimed this was
because they had taken part in the May 1st holiday. The shop owner had refused to grant a holiday. All the others then stopped work in protest. The owner denied to the Bureau of Social Affairs that they had been sacked. However he took them back after the General Union and the police became involved. There was a slowdown for 2 days. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.301-302; Dong, 1985 p.91; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.64.

6. May 1929. Workers at the Gongyiying shop complained to the Bureau of Social Affairs that the management had lowered the piece rate. The Bureau considered this defied a government order to brocade weaving shops to maintain the piece rate and sent someone to investigate. The manager said he had been forced to cut the rate by economic circumstances and had discussed this with the union first. The Bureau decided there were extenuating circumstances and warned him to return to the original rate as soon as possible. The union accepted this. The rate had been cut by 25c per bolt. There was no strike. 190 workers were affected. The rate was cut on May 2nd, and restored on May 17th.

Between August and December 1929, the Bureau of Social Affairs supervised the closing due to bankruptcy of 21 brocade weaving shops. Details are recorded in the Bureau of Social Affairs’ *Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.74-83.

7. February 1930. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th branches of the brocade weavers’ union petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs on behalf of over 3,000 workers on February 5th, saying the employers had made an agreement not to employ union members. Dong, 1985 p.103.

8. March 1930. The Guomindang branch called a meeting of employers and workers at the Daqing and Dawen shops on March 20th to settle a dispute. The General Union was also present. Dong, 1985 p.104.

Towel knitting.

b) Tianjin.

1. July 1929. 62 workers at the Deji factory considered forming a union to agitate for better conditions as their hours were relatively long and pay was low. There was a 2 day strike. Some workers were sacked. The factory objected to unionizing but agreed to negotiate on conditions. The Bureau of Social Affairs was called in by both sides to guarantee the result. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao*, p.68; Dong, 1985 p.95.

2. March 1934. Workers were sacked from Xiehe towel factory for trying to organize a union. There were between 30 and 40 workers in the factory, all men. The Bureau of Social Affairs and Guomindang branch intervened. Those sacked were paid off with 10 yuan. 3 workers were re-employed, the others given first rights to future employment. Permission for the union was granted on April 1. The management was instructed not to sack workers without reason in future. Dong, 1985 p.172; Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, Second Historical Archives.

Canvas.

b) Tianjin.

1. September 1929. The Huarong canvas mill announced closing due to bankruptcy.
The police were involved in talks. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao*, p.83.

Ironworking.

b) Tianjin.

1. November 1928. Former Beiyang Ironworks employees petitioned the Bureau of Social Affairs for return of the factory machinery. The retreating Fengtian army had tried to commandeer the equipment and the workers, but they resisted. Then the "jingbei silingbu" (Guomindang martial law authorities) commandeered the machinery and took it to the botanical gardens opposite the new Tianjin station. The Bureau would not return the machinery on its own authority, saying this concerned the military as well as the workers’ livelihood, and asked for directions from the city government. The factory had been founded more than 20 years before and turned out 60-70 product types. More than 600 workers were unemployed. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, p.288; Dong, 1985 p.82.

2. March 1929. 219 workers at the Ping Jin machine repair works raised the following demands after closing of the factory was announced; 1) Wages for March to be paid 2) First rights to employment if the factory opened again 3) The factory to be maintained with government assistance as a *minsheng gongchang* (public welfare enterprise). There was no strike. The factory agreed to some conditions. Wu Bannong, 1932 p.55.

3. September 1929. The Wanshunxing iron foundry announced closing due to bankruptcy. 6 workers were given expenses of 12 yuan each after intervention by the Bureau of Social Affairs. The Bureau confirmed the foundry owed 2,000 yuan. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Minguo shiba nian gongzuo baogao*, p.83.

Paper and cardboard.

b) Tianjin.

1. March 1922. Owners of card shops (*zhipian zuofang*) heard that over 1,000 workers had claimed wage rise and threatened to strike. The owners met in a teashop to discuss their response on 7th March. These were "shua hua gongren" (card printers). The wage claim was turned down, and a strike followed. The workers met at Shaojiayuan, declaring they would not go back unless it were given. Dong, 1985 p.16.

2. September 1926. Workers in *zhipai* shops in the 2nd special district (Hedong) called for a wage rise on September 8th. It was turned down. They met in an empty building to discuss striking. Dong, 1985 p.68.

3. January 1929. Weiyi cardboard factory workers presented 8 demands in response to sackings and beating of apprentices by the manager. 1) All sacked workers and members of staff ("zhiyuan" had also been sacked) to be reinstated. 2) Future sackings to be discussed with all employees. 3) 30% of takings to be distributed as bonus according to the previous agreement. 4) One "gong" (a day’s work, as a unit of pay) to be 10 hours. However "xiao pin" (sundry work) to be paid for as agreed previously. 5) Cases of misconduct by apprentices to be reported by the foreman or engineer. No beating or insults. 6) Pay rises at the New Year to be discussed with the work force first. 7) Ink mixing, firing and pattern cutting to be paid for according to the original agreement. 8) All finished work must be inspected and stamped, otherwise the
workers will take no responsibility for it. There was no strike. The union appealed to the General Union. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.318-319; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.53.

4. March 1929. The Weiyi factory announced closing in March 1929 and paid the workers off with two weeks’ wages. After urging from the Bureau of Social Affairs they agreed to pay 3 months’ wages except to apprentices. First rights to future employment were also successfully claimed 17 workers refused the initial 2 weeks’ wages offer and presented other demands to the Bureau. The Bureau considered the demands excessive and proposed terms eventually accepted by both sides; 1) Former workers to have first rights to re-employment. 2) 3 months’ wages and 4 yuan for apprentices. 3) Debts to the factory to be taken from wages. Debts to workers to be paid back. 4) The factory to repay 60 yuan paid by the Bureau and the General Union for the workers’ living costs. The Weiyi workers were members of the printers’ union. The government accepted bankruptcy as the cause. Bureau of Social Affairs, *Yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.318-319; Dong, 1985 p.88; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, April 1929 pp.130, 195-196; Wu Bannong, 1932 p.58.


Stocking knitting.

a) Suzhou.


126 disputes (including 21 tihua factories closing). 96 pay claims (including 19 tihua factories closing). 35 employment claims (including 4 tihua factories closing). Including silk; 171 disputes, 131 pay claims, 40 employment claims.
APPENDIX 7

Communist Party unions in Tianjin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory or industry</th>
<th>Details of Communist Party unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Railway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beiyang cotton mill


Hengyuan cotton mill


Huaxin cotton mill

CCP union founded May 1925. Closed August 1925. There were CCP members at at least one of the above cotton mills. Workers at all mills except Yuda founded a cotton mill workers’ general union in June. Closed August 1925, restored January 1926. Went underground March 1926. Secret organisation still active February 1927. Some Huaxin workers attended the first meeting of the CCP Union Federation Centre in September 1932. Zhao, 1989, p.48, 75, 86, 99-100, 107, Dong, 1985, pp.65, 146.

Tianjin-Pukou railway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Union Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beijing-Hankou railway</td>
<td>Changxindian workers’ club founded May 1921. CCP union founded May 1925 in Jing-Han railway’s Tianjin machine shop. The Jing-Han general union had moved its headquarters to Tianjin after the strike and massacre of February 7th, 1923. Zhao, 1989, pp.40, 49.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemakers’ shops</td>
<td>Shang zuo shoemakers’ union founded June 1925. Shang zuo was the operation of sewing the uppers onto the soles. The shoe trade in Tianjin was highly fragmented in its organisation. Each zuo or operation was performed separately by workers who in the 1910s and early 1920s were represented by separate sub-guild organisations. Union closed August 1925. Restored January 1926. Lapsed March 1926. Zhao, 1989, p.49, 75, 86, 99-100, Dong, 1985, p.65, Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2/4095.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shipping companies

Brocade weaving shops

Yuda cotton mill

Rickshaws

Iron foundries and machine mending workshops

Muqi shops

Heji canning factory union
Heji was a British owned export processing factory which was several times involved in disputes with the workers and the local government due to the British management and alleged bias or discrimination by the local government and press. Heji union founded between January and March, 1926. Went underground March 1926. Secret organisation still active February 1927. Zhao, 1989, p.86, 100, 107, Dong, 1985, p.58, 65, 136, 149, Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, April 1932.

Lixing canvas factory
Cigarette factories


Belgian tramways and electric co


Postal office


Jiarui flour mill


Dasheng (Yongnian) flour mill

Dafeng was founded in 1921, then bought by Sanjin Shoufeng in 1926, and known from 1929 as Sanjin Yongnian. Secret CCP organisation existed February 1927. Zhao, 1989, p.107.

Dongya woollen mill


Tianjin mint


Beiyang match factory


Jiuda salt refinery


Export processing workshops along Hai He, braiding hats. CCP organisation founded July 1936. Zhao, 1989, p.159.

Workers from one or more of these factories took part in the first meeting of the CCP "Tianjin Union Federation Centre" in September 1932. These workers were almost certainly from the Naigai Chemical Fertiliser Co., a Japanese enterprise which had been subject to protests and strikes since September 1931. Dong, 1985, pp.124, 143-144, 146, *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, November 1931.

Transport workers were represented at the Union Federation Centre meeting in September 1932. Dong, 1985, p.146.

Bristle sorting was a basic export processing industry: the bristles were stripped from pigskins and sorted according to length and texture, in warehouses along the Hai He. They were used to make brushes. Bristle sorters took part in the Union Federation Centre meeting in September 1932. Dong, 1985, p.146.

Waterworks employees were represented at the Union Federation Centre meeting of September 1932. They were likely to have come from the British owned Jia waterworks, which had experienced several anti-British strikes and protests and would have been seen by the Tianjin CCP as a potential support base. Dong, 1985, pp.133, 146, *Beiguo chunjue*, 1960, no.3, p.28.

Cleaners attended the Union Federation Centre meeting in September 1932. Dong, 1985, p.146.
Guomindang unions in Suzhou and Tianjin

Candle makers

Teashops

Iron loom silk factories

Incense shops

Rice shops
These were retail shops selling grain. In Suzhou the rice shop assistants’ union and the soya sauce shop assistants’ union were separate, but in the nearby Moduo and Mudu districts they formed one union. Rice shop assistants’ union founded March 1927. 400 members in January 1928. Still operating October 1928. Counted in Suzhou Chamber of Commerce survey October 1935. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, 2nd Historical Archives; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 1094, 1447, Suzhou City Archives.

Carpenters
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Union Description</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Match factories</td>
<td>Match factory workers’ union founded March 1927. 1,000 members in January 1928. 943 members according to Ministry of Industry survey in 1932. Still operating October 1935. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, 2nd Historical Archives; <em>Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian</em>, vol.2, pp.30-31; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 1094, 1449, Suzhou City Archives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerosene factories</td>
<td>Kerosene factory workers’ union founded March 1927. 60+ members in January 1928. No subsequent references. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, 2nd Historical Archives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rickshaws</td>
<td>Rickshaw pullers’ union founded April 1927. 4,000 members in January 1928. No subsequent mention. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, 2nd Historical Archives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden loom silk weaving shops</td>
<td>Wooden loom silk union founded April 1927, replacing Xiazhang guild. Referred to in Chamber of Commerce correspondence in February and June 1928. 14,153 members counted in Ministry of Industry survey of 1932. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 670, 1443, Suzhou City Archives; <em>Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian</em>, vol.2, pp. 30-31.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cloth importers

Foreign cloth dealers’ shop assistants’ union founded May 1927. 1,003 members in January 1928. This replicates the number of union members in soya sauce shops, either number could be a clerical error. No further reference. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, 2nd Historical Archives.

Chinese pharmacies


Silk border weaving (sibian ye)

Silk border weavers’ union founded May 1927. 260 members in January 1928. Still operating July 1928. No further reference. Ministry of Industry file 722 (4) 198, 2nd Historical Archives; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1442, Suzhou City Archives.

Bamboo carving


Transport (foot)

Transport workers’ union representing porters at Suzhou station existed in July 1931. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1327, Suzhou City Archives.

Timber yards


Cap knitting

Cap makers’ union founded September 1931. 193 members counted in Ministry of Industry 1932 survey. Still operating October 1935. Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian vol.2, pp.30-31; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1094, Suzhou City Archives.

Post office

Gold and silverware


Theatrical costumes

Theatrical costumers’ union founded November 1930. 102 members counted in Ministry of Industry 1932 survey. Still active June 1934, October 1935. *Ershi yì nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2, pp.30-31; Suzhou Chamber of Commerce files (Yi) 2-1 1447, 1448, Suzhou City Archives.

Paper sellers


*Fan xie* shoemakers

This was the operation in which the uppers and insoles, having been stitched together from the inside, were stretched and reversed (turned inside out). There was a *fan xie* union in July 1936. Suzhou Chamber of Commerce file (Yi) 2-1 1447, Suzhou City Archives.

Guomindang unions – Tianjin.

Baocheng cotton mill

Carters (dache, dice)


Telephone bureau


Brocade weaving

Four branches of brocade weavers’ union founded July 1928. 545 members. Combined membership of 2,815 in September 1928. Still active January 1929. All 4 branches in dispute over sacking of foremen at Liyuanheng in April 1929. 3,000 members in December 1929, 2,539 of them unemployed. 4 branches petitioned Bureau of Social Affairs on behalf of unemployed members February 1930. No further reference. Fang Xianting, Cotton and rayon weaving in Tientsin, pp.60-61; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, January, April 1929; Shehui yuekan, December 1929; Dong, 1985, pp.103.

Transport guilds (jiaohang)

Existing gang organisation recognised as 1st branch of transport union July 1928 – this was the former Shilong jiaohang. Chengyi, Gongyi and Dahongqiao jiaohangs then recognised as 2nd, 3rd and 4th branch unions. Still active January 1929. 4 branches and 290 members December 1929. 4 branches, number of members unknown in November 1930. 4 branches, 241 members December 1932. Involved in anti-monopoly dispute with cotton transport co. December 1933. Still negotiating turf disputes March 1936. Protest from union secretary and gang boss Ba Yanqing over abolition of guild boundaries May 1936. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, January 1929, December 1933, March, May 1936; Shehui yuekan, December 1929; Di er ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, pt.2 p.44; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, p.19.
Yuyuan cotton mill


Hengyuan cotton mill


Huaxin cotton mill


Tailors' shops

Gold and silversmiths' shops


Carpet factories

1st branch of carpet weavers' union founded August 1928 (Tailong). 2nd, 3rd and 4th branches (Xietai, Breslin-Griffitt and Tavshanjian) founded September 1928. 5th branch (Dafeng) founded October 1928. 6th and 7th branches (Qingshengheng and Qingji) founded December 1928. Still active January 1929. 1,692 members in 6 branches (3rd branch closed) in April 1929. 1,255 members in May 1929 (Breslin-Griffitt closed in April, 2nd branch dropped to 100 members). Only 7th branch remained in December 1929, with 42 members. Union closed 1930. No further reference. Fang Xianting, The Tientsin carpet industry, p.63; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, January 1929; Shehui yuekan, December 1929; Guohuo yanjiu yuekan, July 1932.

Belgian tramways and electric co.

Yongli soda refinery


Silk shops

Silk shop assistants’ branch union existed by September 1928. Involved in major dispute about discriminatory sackings January-April 1929. In Tianjin this and other commercial white collar unions were not affiliated with the General Union, but with the Merchants’ Union. No further reference. Zhao, 1989, pp.132-133; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, February, April 1929; *Tianjin shi Shehui Ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.296-297; Wu Bannong, *Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi*, p.59.

Shoe shops

Shoemakers’ union (zuo unknown) active by October 1928. At this stage it was a commercial association, like the pharmacy assistants’ and silk shop assistants’ unions; the "xie shang ge fenhui", which represented the wage-earning shoemakers, was affiliated with the Merchants’ Union. In January 1929 registered as shoemakers’ union (xiye gonghui); 5 branches. Separate shang xie union existed November 1930, other zuo not represented. No further reference. *Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi*, p.43; Dong, 1985, p.81; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, January 1929; *Di er ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, pt.2, p.44.

Leather


School maintenance staff

School employees’ union founded at Beiyang University November 1928. Still active January 1929. 4 branches, 266 members, 7 GMD members in December 1929. No further reference. *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, January 1929; *Shehui yuekan*, December 1929.
Printing presses


Chinese pharmacies

Pharmacy assistants’ fenhui existed by November 1928. This also was affiliated with the Merchants’ Union. Involved in major dispute over discriminatory sackings January-April 1929. Tianjin GMD recommended deregistration but prevented by Bureau of Social Affairs. No further reference. *Tianjin shi Shehui Ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.291, 295-296, 305; *Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi*, pp.44, 48, 51; Dong, 1985, p.82; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, January, February, March 1929.

British-American tobacco co.


Beijing-Fengtian (Bei-Ning) railway

Beiyang cotton mill


Water carriers (shuiche)


Dyeworks


Drivers

Drivers’ union registered (qiche gonghui) January 1929. No further reference. Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, January 1929.

Hai He docks


Tianjin-Pukou railway

Post office

"Western style" clothing
"Western style" tailors’ union active in February 1929, distinct from tailors’ union above. No further reference. *Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi*, p.54; *Tianjin shi Shehui Ju yi zhou nian gongzuo baogao*, pp.307-309.

Cleaners

River boat crews
Tianjin boat crews’ union (chuanye gonghui) founded March 1929 by amalgamation of Hebei province Xihe boat crews’ union and Tianjin boat merchants’ branch union (a commercial union). Further reorganisation in 1932; boat crews’ union preparatory committee existed in December 1932, 417 members. *Hebei sheng ji Ping Jin liang shi laozi zhengyi di fenxi*, p.58; *Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2, p.19.

Bristle sorting
Jiuda salt refinery

Jiuda union refused permission to establish itself April 1929 on grounds that it had not applied through the Tianjin General Union. Established by August 1929, made wage claim. No further reference. *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, April 1929; Dong, 1985, p.96; *Gongshang yuebao*, August 1929.

Match factories

1st branch of match industry union founded June 1929 at Danhua. 2nd branch founded October 1929 at Rongchang. 1,156 members in 2 branches December 1929. 1,377 members November 1930. 230 members at Rongchang branch in Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1931. Danhua union joined National Salvation Federation January 1932. Union founded at Beiyang by September 1932; management tried to break it up but GMD took side of union. 2,000 members altogether in December 1932. Beiyang branch still active but cooperating with management March 1933. Rongchang branch still active September 1933; *huochaiye chanye gonghui* (industrial union) took charge of wage talks at Rongchang. Beiyang branch and *huochaiye chanye gonghui* still active November 1933. *Huochaiye chanye gonghui* in talks with Beiyang, Danhua and Rongchang managements on crisis in industry January 1934. Rongchang union still active April 1934. Faction of Beiyang workers repudiated union June 1934, leaders arrested; *huochaiye chanye gonghui* led wage claim at Rongchang at the same time. Rongchang closed October 1934. Union still active February 1935 (in Danhua dispute). Beiyang closed March 1935. *Shehui yuekan*, December 1929; *Tianjin shi huochaiye diaocha baogao* p.57; *Di er ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, part 2 p. 44; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, May 1932, April 1934; Ministry of Industry files 711 (4) 05511, 422 (6) 639; *Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2, p.19; *Ershier nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, vol.2, pp.127-129; Dong, 1985, pp.167, 169, 173-175, 179; USDS files 893:00 TT/77, 80, 82.
Flour mills


Yuda cotton mill

Yuda union founded October 1929. No legally established union in Bureau of Social Affairs survey of December 1929. Established shortly afterwards following protest campaign from workers, but had become ineffective by November 1930, GMD prepared to refund it. Active by November 1931. Had been abolished by January 1933. No further reference. Tianjin shi fangshaye diaocha baogao, p.284; Fang Xianting, Cotton industry and trade in China, p.159; Dong, 1985, p.112, 124-125; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, November 1931; Dagong Bao, 5 January 1933.
Hai He conservancy union founded October 1929. Special GMD branch was attached to union "because this was a special type of union, in order to prevent it being broken up by foreigners". Three branches, 620 members in December 1929. 586 members November 1930. Still active, involved in major dispute April 1931. Still active July 1931. Had been abolished by June 1932. Bureau of Social Affairs received approval from Party branch for re-establishment of the union in June 1932, referred query to Ministry of Industry - this is a state-run communications enterprise and the 3rd article of the Union Law prohibits unions, the Special Union Law is not yet issued, please give instructions? Existed again by December 1932, 570 members. Shehui yuekan, December 1929; Di er ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, pt.2, p.44; Tianjin Hai He Conservancy Commission files 122, 126, Tianjin City Archives; USDS files 893:00 TT/35, 36, 37, 38; Dong, 1985, pp.120, 123; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, June 1932; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, p.19.

Waterworks union with 181 members existed by November 1930. Union was established in Jian waterworks by March 1931. Still active September 1931. In major dispute February 1932. 112 members December 1932. Di er ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian, part 2 p.44; Dong, 1985, pp.116, 124, 133; USDS files 893:00 TT/34, 35, 45; Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao, March 1932; Tianjin Chamber of Commerce file 2 lei/252, Tianjin City Archives; Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, 2nd Historical Archives; Ershiyi nian Zhongguo laodong nianjian, vol.2, p.19.


Chemical fertiliser factories

Fertiliser factory workers’ union waiting for permission to register November 1930. This was the Naigai co.union. Achieved recognition on company’s terms November 1931. Still existed August 1932 but took no part in dispute. Union no longer existed by April 1934; workers tried to found union again and 48 were sacked. *Di er ci Zhongguo laodong nianjian*, pt.2 p.44; *Tianjin shi zhengfu gongbao*, November 1931; Dong, 1985, pp.124, 143-144, 173.


Boming weaving mill

Union existed at Boming weaving mill November 1932. Relationship to former brocade weaving union not stated. Factory closed soon afterwards. Ministry of Industry file 711 (4) 05511, 2nd Historical Archives; Dong, 1985, p.150.

Laundries

Laundry workers’ union active in Chinese area and British Concession laundries in June 1933. Ministry of Industry file 422 (6) 639, 2nd Historical Archives.

Sack sewers


Xiehe towel factory

Xiehe towel factory workers had tried unsuccessfully in 1932 to found a union. Union recognised April 1934. Dong, 1985, p.172.
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