

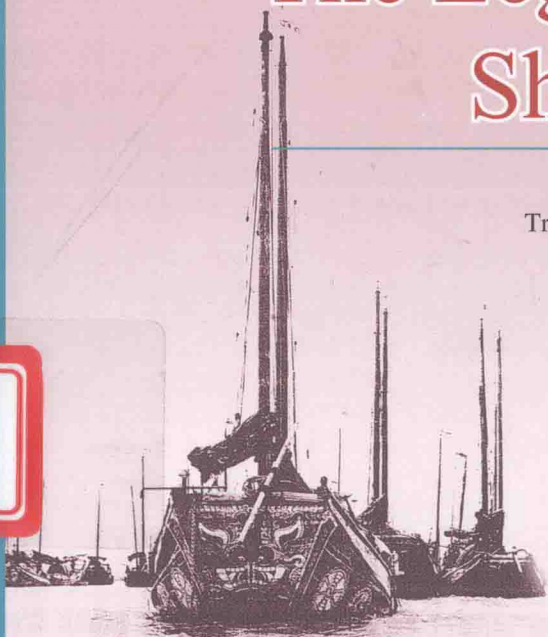
Rediscovering China



The Legend of Shanghai

Written by Suwen Luo

Translated by Shiyang Pang

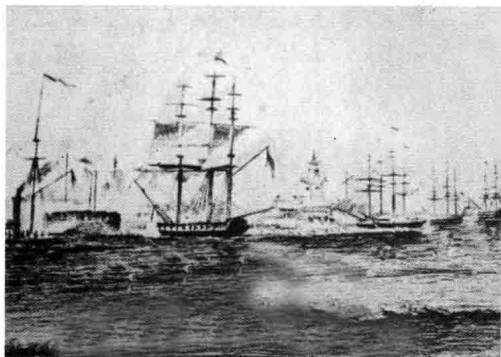


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Shanghai People's Publishing House

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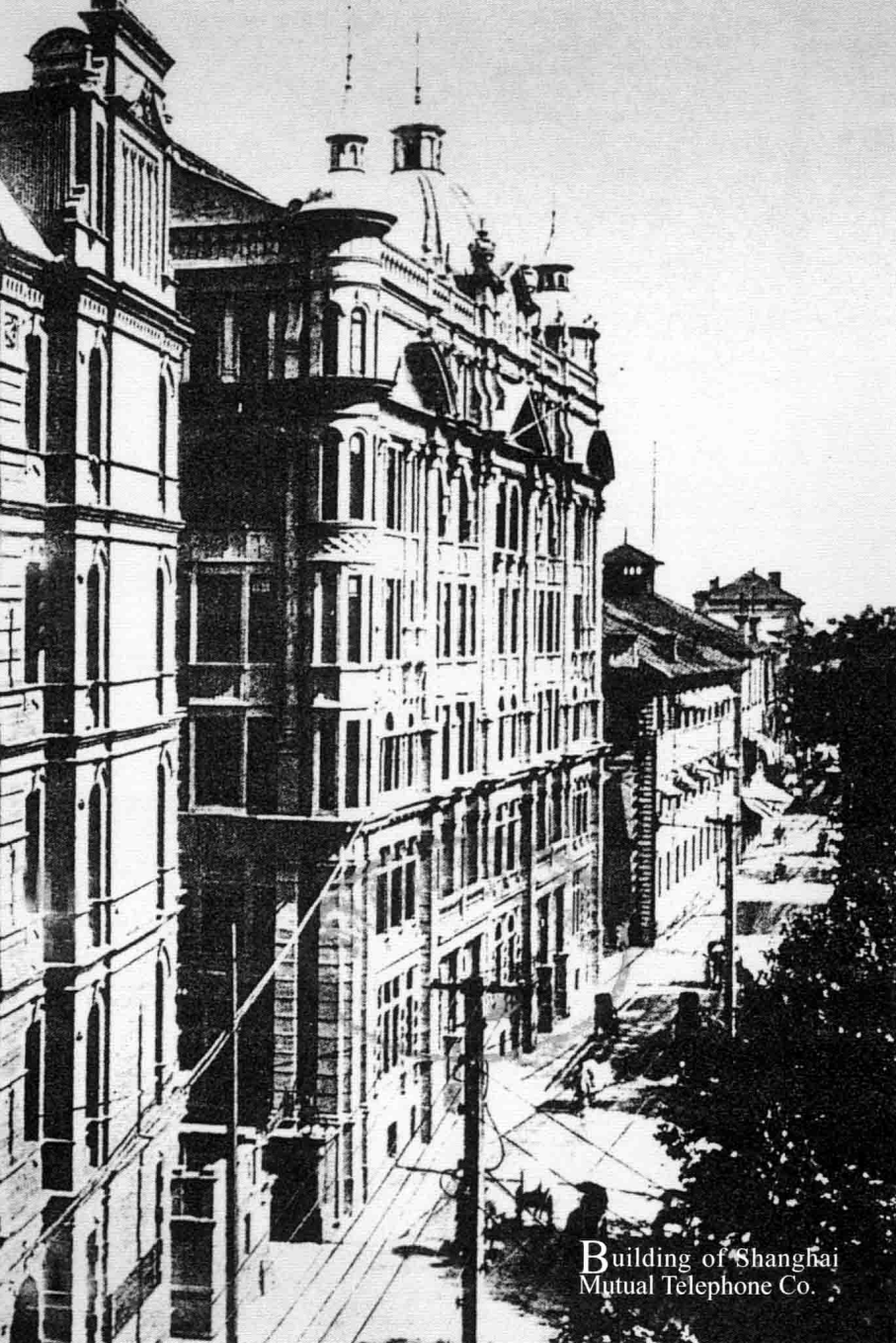
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Building of Shanghai
Mutual Telephone Co.



Trolleybuses started to run on the road in 1914



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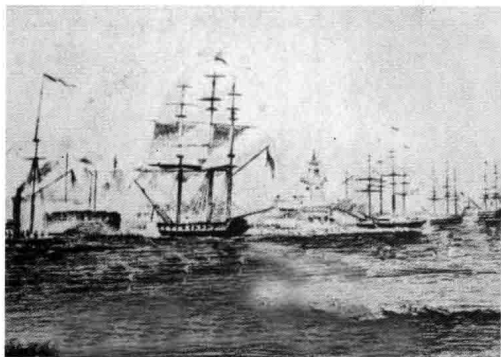
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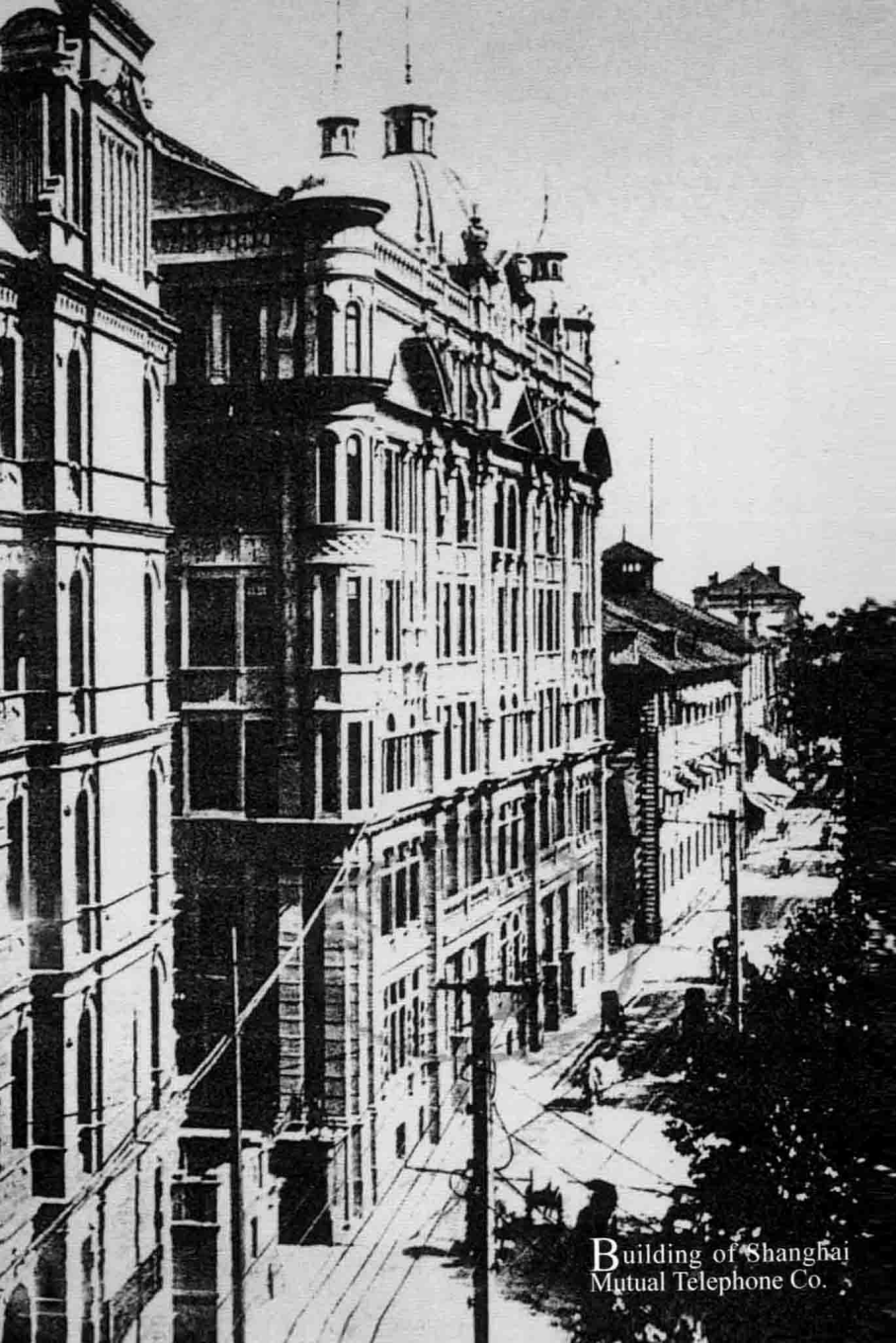
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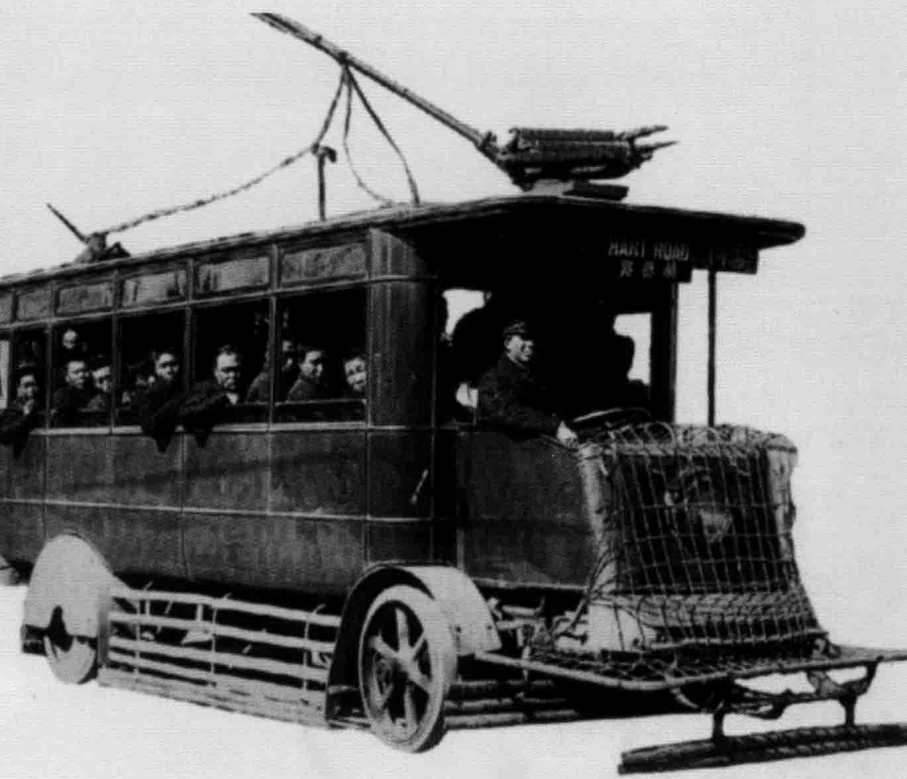


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Preface

In modern times, Shanghai is like an infant nurtured by both Chinese traditional culture and the process of urbanization. The adventures it has experienced eventually develop into impressive and memorable stories which are stunning with mixed feelings on the stage of modern China.

Before Shanghai was forced to be opened, it was an ordinary coastal county in east China. Its city walls, roads and lanes, as well as houses imprinted with marks of watery towns and cities in the lower Yangtze River area. Shanghai dialects is one of the Wu Chinese. It belongs to the linguistic branch of Su, Hu, Jia Chinese of the Taihu Lake dialect. The life in ancient Shanghai shared in common with that in other cities, the residents of which also spoke Wu Chinese. The food, entertainment and custom in Shanghai was nurtured and standardized by this dialect region. For nearly six hundred years, the history on the development of the city formed a contrail how the Han nationality dominated and cultivated the land, as well as how residents on the land took reference of other lower Yangtze River cities and obtained a membership of this cultural prefecture. Residents in Shanghai lived a self-sufficient life. They cultivated rice and wove cotton. As other cities on the Yangtze delta, the county had to pay a heavy tax placed by the imperial court. It enjoyed a small fame as a transshipment port for the sea trade between north and south China, but it had yet displayed the talents and advantages for doing long-distance sea trade.

After 1843, based on *Treaty of Jiangning* signed by the Chinese and British governments, Shanghai became a new member to join network of port

cities which dealt with international trade. Foreign settlements were established. Western civilizations were introduced continuously to the mysterious eastern world. Foreign authorities founded a residential area for sojourners and immigrants in Shanghai, which later grew up into a fertile ground that held both Chinese and foreign resources, integrated multiple cultures and gave birth to the unique modern Shanghai urban culture. In less than one hundred years, a fundamental reform happened on this piece of tiny land on the east end of Chinese Empire which had been nourished by the lower Yangtze River culture for several thousand years. It suddenly changed identity as the first modern city in China and a well known metropolitan city in the Far East area. When Shanghai creates these cultural miracles which raise interests of the entire world, it also affords its audience an intriguing mystery for thought — What stands in the back of these wonders?

In Late Qing period, modern western civilizations were introduced into the foreign settlements in Shanghai. Each attempt to ignite curiosity of modern culture with western kindling left behind memorable stories in the city's history. Some attempts caused fundamental changes in daily life. For example, the institution of local autonomy was implanted, technological inventions which promoted the urbanization of modern city were imported and a market of modern entertainment and leisure enjoyment was established elaborately. These innovations brought splendid changes in urban life. These legends that after Shanghai served as an open port is a piece of precious memory for the city to give farewell to its old identity as a local county with unitary ethnic composition and evolve into an international metropolis. They are foundation of this modern city which displays the cultural enchantment during its transformation — Cultural differences caused by multi-nation and multi-

language found their way to adjacent coexistent and communicate, which on the contrary lead to the most optimum distribution of resources. The ability of cultural innovation was incited and upgraded. Shanghai established itself as an exotic flower cultivated by multiple cultures.

Looking back upon the history and summarizing the features that can supply the explanation to the making of modern Shanghai, we find the way to success is full of mysteries and hence irreproducible. Shanghai is just like a sea beads left at the confluence of rivers and oceans. It is lucky enough to be born in the mid-point of Asian continent and more than lucky to be chosen as the first city to be opened to the world as the East Gate of Chinese Empire in Late Qing period. Therefore, as a pioneer in China that headed for the modern world, Shanghai released its own unparalleled potential power by breaking the cultural boundaries and sharing mutual understanding with different civilizations. With a huge stage set up to concentrate and radiate the creativity of modern culture, Shanghai eventually added its name to the list of modern international cities.

As a symbol of modern culture, Shanghai not only represents the lower Yangtze region, the Yangtze River, east China and the whole nation, but also belongs to East Asia, Asia, the Pacific and the world.