

A silhouette of the Shanghai skyline, featuring prominent buildings like the Oriental Pearl Tower and the Shanghai Tower, set against a light background.

Shanghai

China's Melting Pot

Information Office of Shanghai Municipality
Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce
Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration



Shanghai Scientific and Technological Literature Press

A silhouette of the Shanghai skyline, including the Oriental Pearl Tower and other skyscrapers, set against a light green background.

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Shanghai and the process of globalization

When people consider Shanghai's "international" appeal, those familiar with the city may naturally think of the Park Hotel building, which stands at the intersection of West Nanjing Road and Huanghe Road, also known as the "International Hotel" in Chinese. Built in the 1930s, it was indeed worthy of its "international" reputation when we look back at its history.

First of all, the building was designed by the internationally-renowned Hungarian architect, L. E. Hudec, who designed more than 60 buildings in Shanghai during his nearly three decades living in the city. It is no exaggeration to say that the building not only represents Hudec's architectural genius, but also helped build Shanghai's image as a cosmopolitan city.

Secondly, the Park Hotel was the tallest building in the Far East when it was completed. The construction was financed by the Joint Savings Society, which was founded in 1923 by the merger of Yienyieh Commercial Bank, Kincheng Banking Corporation, the China and South Sea Bank, and the Continental Bank. The original intention was to promote the image of the Joint Savings Society to attract more depositors. When it opened on December 1st, 1934, the building had two gates: the south gate was the entrance

to the Joint Savings Society, while the southeast gate served as the main entrance to the hotel. With a height of 83.6 metres, the building was 11 metres taller than the HSBC building, which was the tallest building in Hong Kong at that time, and much taller than other buildings in Asia.

In addition, the building had the world's best facilities at the time. It had a total of 24 stories – 22 above ground and two underground. The 14th floor was named the “Sky Terrace Hall”, and contained a Western-style restaurant and late-night café. The building was also equipped with three lifts, which could move at a speed of up to 600 feet per minute. Guests could take the lifts to the rooftop to view the landscape of the city by night. At that time, Shanghai was the only city in the world other than New York to own a grand hotel with such advanced and modern lifts. It is no wonder that it became known as the International Hotel.

After its completion, the Park Hotel witnessed a number of international events: On February 18, 1935, Shanghai celebrities held a farewell banquet on the second floor to wish Mei Lanfang success ahead of his tour to the Soviet Union. On the evening of March 9, 1936, Mei Lanfang, Hu Die and other celebrities from Shanghai's literary and artistic circles hosted a banquet at the hotel to welcome Charlie Chaplin. On May 19, 1937, the US-China long-distance telephone call connection ceremony was held here, during which Soong Mei-ling, the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, made a phone call to Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, then First Lady of the United States. At the end of the war against Japan, Soong Mei-ling also held a celebration event at the hotel. Then, in the winter

of 1947, the engagement ceremony of Claire Lee Chennault and Chen Xiangmei (also known as Anna Chennault) was held on the 14th floor.

These are just a few events which demonstrate the city's international influence. It is relevant to now review the history of Shanghai's internationalization process.

It is commonly believed that Shanghai was just a small fishing village not long ago. But in fact, the Qinglong Port, located in the city's modern-day Qingpu District, was a busy trading port during the Tang and Song dynasties. After the decline of the nearby Qinglong Town in late Southern Song Dynasty, the shipping trade department and freight yard set up by Shanghai Town promoted the prosperity of the southeastern coastal area.

Shanghai was officially recognized as a county in 1292, during the Yuan Dynasty. It then started its long process of urbanization and internationalization when it officially opened its port in 1843.

In 1845, Shanghai's concession-era formally began. Western countries, like the UK, the US and France, brought their expertise in municipal construction planning and management to Shanghai when they set up concession areas in the city.

From the emergence of "avenues" in the concessions in 1851, and concession authorities' later attempts to build roads across concession borders, Shanghai started to name roads after Chinese and foreign celebrities, while naming south-north streets after provinces, and east-west streets after

cities. Meanwhile, modern city infrastructure also continued to spring up across the city.

The McBain Building (aka the Asia Building), located on the corner of the Bund and today's East Yan'an Road, earned the nickname of "Number One Building on the Bund" when it was completed in 1906. Since then, a number of buildings were built along the Bund to create the magnificent "world architecture expo" skyline, including the Palace Hotel, an imitation of the Italian Renaissance style (completed in 1906), the Baroque Revival-style Shanghai Club Building (1911), the classical Banque de l'Indochine Building (1911), the Jardine Matheson Building (1920), the HSBC Building (1923), the European classical-style Customs House (1925), the Art Deco-style Sassoon House (1928), the Broadway Mansions (1934), and the Bank of China Building (1937) with traditional Chinese architectural decoration-style.

In 1856, the Will's Bridge, the first bridge across the Suzhou Creek, was built at the confluence of the Suzhou and Huangpu rivers. Seventeen years later, the wooden bridge was replaced by a beautiful all-steel camelback truss Waibaidu Bridge.

In 1865, the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation was formally established in Hong Kong and opened its Shanghai branch.

Then, in the same year, a gas company invested in a gas plant and gas storage tank at Nicheng Bang on the south bank of the Suzhou Creek. Gas lamps were set up along major roads in the concession areas, and tunnels were built, extending from Nicheng Bang to the concessions, to provide gas to the 205 lamps. The use of kerosene lamps was

progressively phased out.

In 1871, the first telegraph company was set up on the Bund.

Then, in 1879, three years after Thomas Edison's invention, the electric light was introduced to Shanghai. The Shanghai Electric Company also installed US-made steam boilers and 100-volt DC generators to light up the 15 arc lamps along Nanjing Road to the Bund and Waibaidu Bridge.

In 1880, China's first water plant was established in Yangshupu, which was followed in 1881 by the introduction of the telephone to the city.

In 1902, Citibank opened a branch in Shanghai, and then, in 1908, trams started to run along Nanjing Road.

Along with the appearance of the modern urban architecture and improved amenities came European Renaissance literature, Florence aesthetics, and Shakespearean drama, while philosophy schools from Aristotle to Dewey were also introduced to Shanghai during a wave of Western scholarship. During this time, the Western lifestyle also had its influence, with the arrival of cigarettes, cigars, milk, coffee, bread, brass orchestra, Christmas festivities, and birthday parties.

Shanghai gradually developed its unique diverse and inclusive culture by blending and fusing Western modern civilization with traditional Jiangnan culture. As it rose to become the metropolis of the Pacific coast, Shanghai attracted celebrities from all over the world.

US philosopher John Dewey visited Shanghai in 1919, followed by British philosopher Bertrand Russell in 1920,

US educator Paul Monroe in 1921, Albert Einstein in 1922, Indian Poet Tagore in 1924 and 1929, British playwright Bernard Shaw in 1933 and the inventor of the radio, Marconi, both in 1933, and renowned comedian Charlie Chaplin in 1936.

All these renowned personalities were attracted by the prosperity of Shanghai.

Bernard Brizay, a well-known French historian and senior journalist at *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien*, wrote in the preface of his book *Shanghai, le Paris de l'Orient* (published in August 2014 by Shanghai Far East Publishing House), that “many authors of different nationalities, including historians, tourists, travellers, novelists, journalists and columnists, have tried to define Shanghai by comparing it with other cities around the world.

“Marcel Grancher then wrote in his colonial novel, *Shanghai*, in 1929, ‘the city is not just a port. She is more diverse and more peculiar than other ports. It is superior to a combination of the ports of Antwerp, Liverpool, Marseille, San Francisco, Rotterdam, Said and Yokohama.’”

Marie Claire Bergère, a historian specialized in Shanghai history, said that the city was well suited to its nickname of “Paris of the East”, particularly with respect to its entertainment options. From a business point of view, though, Shanghai could also be considered the New York of the East.

However, regardless of whether one considers it the “New York of the East”, the “Paris of Asia”, the “Oriental Manhattan”, or the “Paris of the East”, the whole process of internationalization in Shanghai that the Park Hotel building

has witnessed was strongly marked by colonialism, with Shanghai representing “the paradise of adventurers”.

The Chinese Civil War reached Shanghai in May 1949, and the flag of the People's Republic of China was subsequently raised on the roof-top of the Park Hotel in October that year. It was only after this time, and notably following the reform and opening up period, that Shanghai, the birthplace of the Communist Party of China, began to truly accelerate the process of internationalization. For over 30 years since, Shanghai has continued to demonstrate its metropolitan image to the world.

Shanghai has become an international transportation hub.

According to an index published by authoritative international institutions, in 2015, Shanghai ranked sixth among the top 10 international shipping centres, and had an established status as an Asia-Pacific aviation hub and a global international air cargo hub. The Pudong International Airport is considered world-class. 94 domestic and international airlines have opened regular flights to/from Shanghai. People can fly to 256 cities in 46 countries and regions from the city. The highly-developed air transportation options contribute to Shanghai's status as a leading international city.

Shanghai is also known for being a key centre for international shipping. The Yangshan Deep-water Port, along with the Yangshan Bonded Harbour Area, has the highest annual cargo throughput in the world. Shanghai has now surpassed New York as a top-class cruise home-port, ranking eighth in the world.

In addition to serving as an international transportation

hub, the city has also shown its strength in transportation infrastructure planning. The “three rings plus ten rays” urban highway structure, the Hongqiao transportation hub, where aviation, high-speed rail, and mass public transportation converge, the Maglev train extends to the Pudong New Area, the networks of high-speed rail connect Shanghai to other cities in the Yangtze River Delta, the Donghai Bridge connects mainland Shanghai’s Pudong New Area with the offshore Yangshan Deep-Water Port, as well as the Shanghai Yangtze River Tunnel and Bridge, and the Chongqi Bridge, which connect Shanghai to Chongming Island and Jiangsu Province, all these demonstrate the transportation infrastructures which live up to the standards of an international metropolitan.

Shanghai has also developed into a major international economics and trade centre.

Shanghai was a busy international trading centre from as early as in the 1930s. Now it oversees commercial trade with over 500 ports in over 200 countries and regions around the world, and is a critical stop for 183 international container direct-liner routes to and from North America, Europe, Australia, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. Shanghai is the No. 1 port in mainland China with the most container routes, the most flights, and the greatest coverage.

The establishment of the seven Free Trade Zones (FTZs) in Shanghai has further strengthened the city’s importance in international trade. These include the Waigaoqiao FTZ, the Waigaoqiao Free Trade Logistics Park, the Yangshan Bonded Harbour Area, the Pudong Airport Comprehensive FTZ, the

Jinqiao Economic and Technological Development Zone, the Lujiazui Financial and Trade Zone, and the Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park.

Shanghai's outbound investment also represents a new model of cooperation, which draw development momentum from the industrial, innovation and value chains, and the city has made significant progress in international cooperation on production capacity and equipment manufacturing. Shanghai's trade volume with, and investment in, the countries and regions along the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) has also seen impressive growth.

In addition, Shanghai has become one of the leading international financial centres.

Under the guidance of the national strategy to build Shanghai into an international financial centre, the financial industry in Shanghai has achieved unprecedented development. Lujiazui in Pudong has become the financial core area of Shanghai, while the West Bund has become a key cluster attracting a variety of domestic and international financial institutions. The total number of financial institutions in Shanghai now exceeds 2,000. To date, more than 400 foreign-invested financial institutions have settled in Shanghai, more than half of which have been set up as headquarters of foreign banks.

According to the 2014 Xinhua-Dow Jones International Financial Centre Development Index, Shanghai tied for fifth place with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the list of top 10 financial centres in the world.

Shanghai has a highly-developed financial market with a diversified range of products, including stocks, bonds,

currencies, foreign exchange, commodity futures, financial futures, over-the-counter derivatives, and gold, with a multi-level trading model. The China Financial Futures Exchange, Shanghai Clearing House, Shanghai Equity Exchange and other financial markets exhibit strong international competitiveness, which have helped Shanghai to rise up the rankings of major international financial centres.

With the development of the cross-border renminbi (RMB) business, Shanghai has established itself as the global RMB onshore centre, and a centre for the innovation, trading, pricing and clearing of RMB products.

The BRICS Development Bank, which was officially launched in Shanghai, is another good example of the city's role in international financial cooperation. It will enable emerging economies, represented by the BRIC countries, to become important forces for the future development of global governance and the financial order. Finally, the latest development focus is the integration of "Internet +" into the finance sector, thus creating even more space for Shanghai's financial development.

Shanghai has become an important international exchange platform.

Given its aforementioned attributes, Shanghai has become one of the favoured cities for hosting international conventions and exhibitions. Since the year 2000, Shanghai has hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and many other international conferences, serving as an international

exchange and cooperation platform for leaders and government from around the world. Since the 2010 World Expo, Shanghai's ability to host international forums has been improving. Events like the Lujiazui Forum, the Pujiang Innovation Forum, and the Shanghai International Forum of Creative Industries are building their brands in international circles. Shanghai is now among the world's top 25 cities for hosting international conferences.

Under the theme of "Better City, Better Life", the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai saw the participation of 246 countries and international organizations, and welcomed more than 73 million visitors, again showing Shanghai's strength to the world as a global city.

The city's inclusive culture makes it the ideal platform for international cultural exchange. From Andrea Bocelli's performance at the Shanghai Grand Theater, and Celine Dion's concert in the 80,000-seater Shanghai Stadium, to Isaac Stern's violin solo at the Shanghai Concert Hall which was built in the 1930s, and the concert presented by the century-old Philadelphia Orchestra, Shanghai has been host to grandiose international cultural exchanges.

Sporting events also represent important occasions for international exchange. The First East Asian Games and the 12th Special Olympics World Summer Games were held in Shanghai. And, in 2015 alone, Shanghai hosted more than 60 global sports events, such as the 2015 ISU World Figure Skating Championships, the F1 Chinese Grand Prix, the WEG World Extreme Sports Competition, the Global Champions Tour (Shanghai), the IAAF Diamond League (Shanghai), the World Women's Water Polo Finals, the ATP