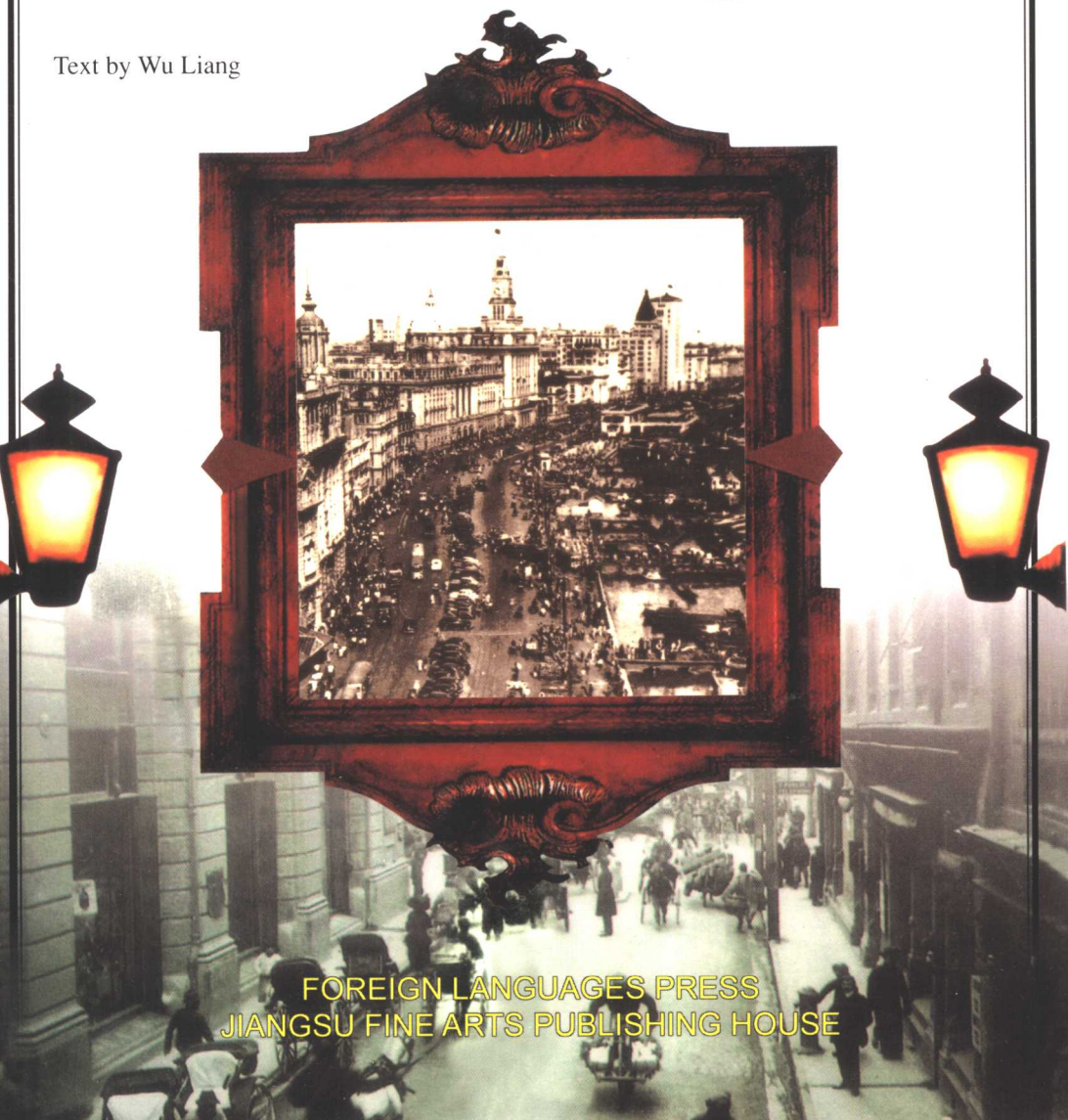


# OLD SHANGHAI

## *A Lost Age*

Text by Wu Liang



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
JIANGSU FINE ARTS PUBLISHING HOUSE

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Text by Wu Liang



Text by: Wu Liang  
Photos by: China No.2 Historical Archive  
Shanghai Library  
Translated by: Wang Mingjie  
English text edited by: Foster Stockwell  
Chinese text edited by: Wang Wentong

First edition 2001

**Old Shanghai**  
— A Lost Age

ISBN7-119-02845-6

© Foreign Languages Press  
Published by Foreign Languages Press  
24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China  
Home Page: <http://www.flp.com.cn>  
E-mail Addresses: [info@flp.com.cn](mailto:info@flp.com.cn)  
[sales@flp.com.cn](mailto:sales@flp.com.cn)

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

老上海:已逝的时光/吴亮著;王明杰译. —北京:外文出版社,2001.5  
(老城市系列)

ISBN 7-119-02845-6

I.老… II.①吴… ②王… III.散文-作品集-中国-当代-英文 IV.I267  
中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2001)第 18623 号

### 中文原版

**选题策划** 叶兆言 何兆兴 顾华明 速 加  
**主 编** 朱成梁  
**副 主 编** 顾华明 孙永鑫 张 伟  
**著 文** 吴 亮  
**图片供稿** 中国第二历史档案馆 上海图书馆  
**装帧设计** 顾华明  
**责任编辑** 顾华明

### 英文版

**策划编辑** 兰佩瑾  
**翻 译** 王明杰  
**英文编辑** 卓柯达  
**责任编辑** 王文通

## 老上海·已逝的时光

©外文出版社

外文出版社出版

(中国北京百万庄大街 24 号)

邮政编码 100037

外文出版社网址: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

外文出版社电子信箱: [info@flp.com.cn](mailto:info@flp.com.cn)

[sales@flp.com.cn](mailto:sales@flp.com.cn)

利丰雅高制作(深圳)有限公司印刷

2001 年(大 32 开)第 1 版

2001 年第 1 版第 1 次印刷

(英文)

ISBN 7-119-02845-6/J·1565(外)

08000(精)



老城市

OLD CITY



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## Foreward

Despite many years living in a city, a person probably still has a relatively limited knowledge of it because of the limited nature of what one can see, experience, and hear over a whole lifetime.

We are residents of Shanghai, yet we often feel as though we are but travelers passing through this city. Whenever we enter a hotel to stay overnight, we first locate a local map, leaf through recent newspapers, look for the telephone numbers of a few friends, and then gradually get to know the surroundings: supermarkets, restaurants, bookstores, cinemas, etc. Shanghai is much too deep to fathom. It reveals its glamour to us from time to time. Although we find ourselves at home in this city, we are still outsiders. This is because we are so often surprised by seeing something new, something just discovered, even though we may be used to seeing the unexpected and dramatic. Surprise after surprise shows us that we are still outsiders.

It was that way with me. When faced with a pile of photos of old Shanghai, I was astonished, as you



might be, even though there were a few that I had already seen. That was my first impression. Surprise stems from innocence. Surprise overthrows what I have already learned. What I am after is not knowledge but “surprise.” It convinces me that I am but an outsider. Therefore, what I do is to view the pictures, to look on. Apart from this, there is nothing else I can do. One must plunge into life in order to experience life. But what fascinates me in books of photos is what happens to our own imagination.

Just like life, photos have no particular order, no content, no superiority or inferiority. Our reaction needs to be spontaneous, scrupulous and from instinct. Naturally, knowledge comes in good time, telling us what this picture is about, when it was taken, where it is, who is in the photo, what is there, and how to judge its contents, as well as which one to pick. Okay, let’s say spontaneity and knowledge coexist. Knowledge serves as a tourist map that reminds us to catch the key points so as to avoid detours. It stresses effect. Spontaneity resembles a leisurely walk, which suits an outsider who may barge in or wander around. In these photos, let’s give wings to our imagination; let’s get lost or feel dizzy. There is always time to fish out the map to check where we are. There is no need to fear that you may not be able to find your way home.

One gets dual happiness from both a review and a trance in the lost age.

Wu Liang

August 1998, Shanghai

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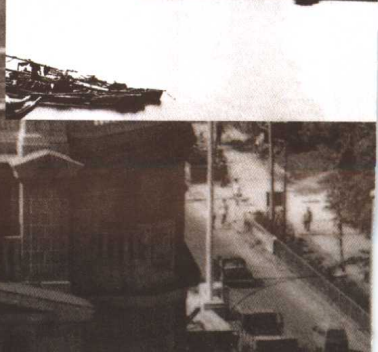
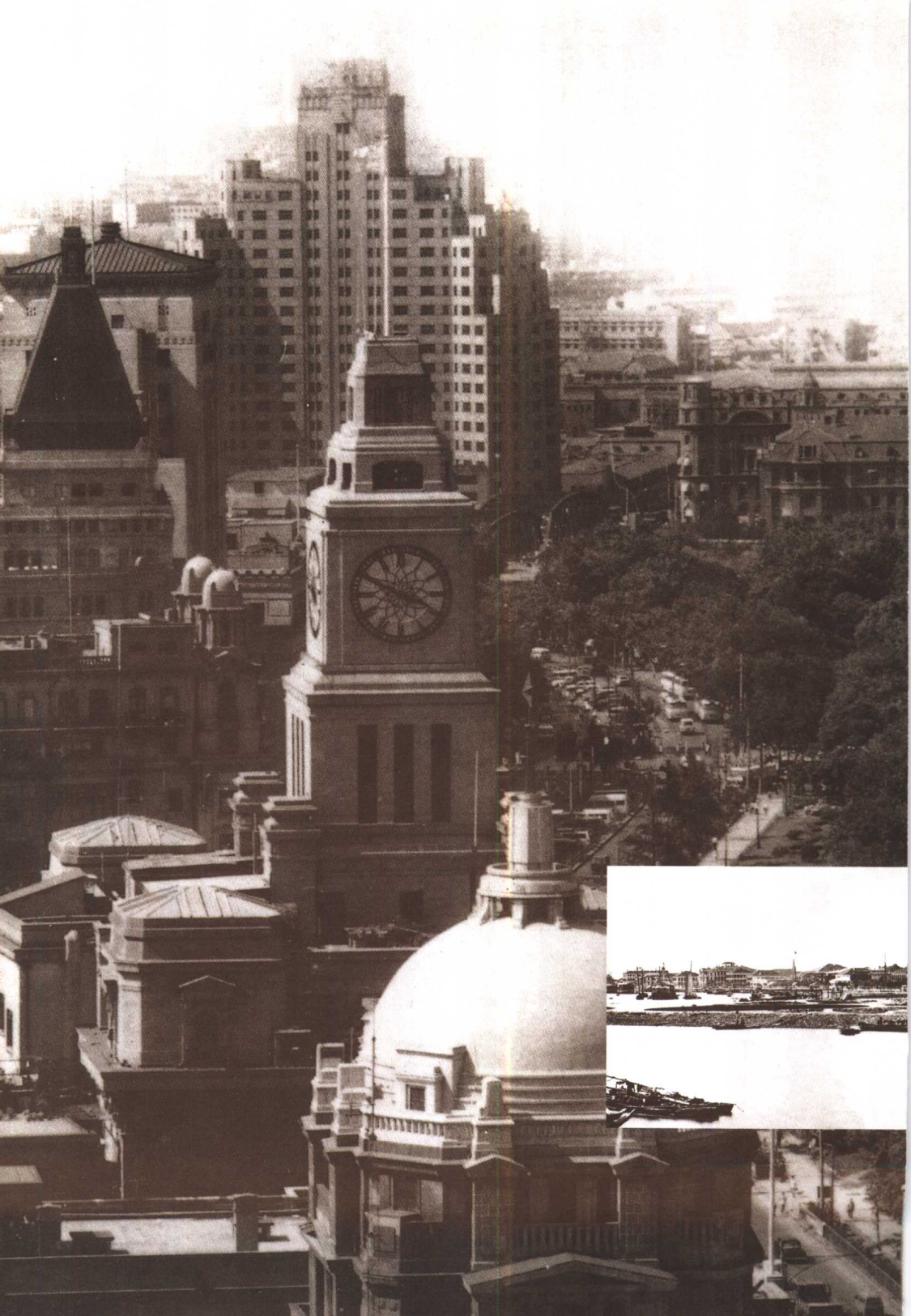


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