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The Bund

by Xue Liyong

Translated by Tang Haibo and Xu Zhenxu

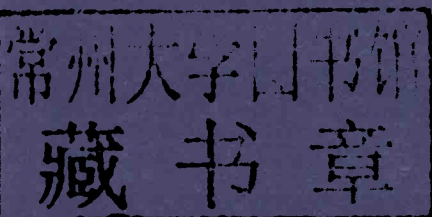


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1

The Bund before 1840

Building Shanghai as a City

When the Yuan Dynasty established its capital Da Du (now Beijing), in order to alleviate the grain shortage in northern China, the government decided to change the agricultural tax in the south to the real tax so as to directly collect grains and transport them to the north. This was called “Cao Yun”. The caoyun was first shipped north along the Grand Canal, but was later transported by sea due to heavy siltation of the Canal. This journey was mainly undertaken by large junks. Being a necessary stop on the journey, Shanghai contributed a fair share of work to the caoyun. In 1292, Shanghai was promoted from town to county, and August 19th



The Merchant Shipping Hall located at Tung Kah Doo was originally built in 1715. It was parallel to the large-junk-shipping company, and was the first guildhall in Shanghai

of that year is recognized as the Founding Day of Shanghai. It has been 720 years since then. In the 32nd year of the Jiajing Period in the Ming Dynasty (1553) the city walls (now Zhonghua Road and Renmin Road) were built in Shanghai. They determined the urban areas — inside the walls was the city proper, while outside was suburbs. The Huangpu River was outside the East Gate and the Small South Gate of the city wall. This was the early Shanghai Port, where sails and masts stood forest-like, with row upon row of wharves and stacks. A poem from the Qianlong Period in the Qing Dynasty depicts the prosperous scene:

*Matchless is the prosperity of this southeast city among all,
With trees between pink walls and red houses,
Great banquets last until late into the night,
Songs and dances in the light never end in March.*

Early on, the prosperity along the Huangpu River outside Shanghai's city walls overwhelmed that inside the city. Now, the South Bund area still retains street names such as Doushi (Bean Market) Street, Miezhu (Bamboo Strip) Lane, Xianzhua (Salty Pig Knuckles) Street, Huayi (Colourful Clothes) Street, etc., which were named for various markets. The roads along the river, such as Youche Wharf Street, Wanyu Wharf Street, Wangjia Wharf Road, Huiguan Wharf Street, etc., are all relics of the former wharfs.

The Shipping Lane through Shanghai: The Huangpu River

The Huangpu River was formerly simply named “Huangpu”, “pu” meaning river in the dialect spoken by people living on the south side of the Changjiang River. When it comes to the origin of the name “Huangpu”, there are many versions, the most popular and the most influential of which is as follows: the Chunshen Prince, Huang Xie, who was one of the four lords of the Warring



Early ferries on Shanghai's Huangpu River

States, led his common people to dig the Huangpu River. Thus, there were many alias related to him such as Chunshen Jiang, Shen Jiang, Huangxie Pu, Xie Pu, Huang Pu, etc. Shanghai today is also known as “Shen” because of this prince. Another version is that Huangpu River is wide and its water is yellow (“huang” meaning yellow in Chinese), and thus is called “Huangpu”. In modern times, the emigrants in Shanghai wrote “Huangpu” as “Whangpoo River” in English and “Riviere de Whang- pou” in French, which is why “Huangpu” is now called “Huangpu River”.

The Huangpu River is a tributary in the lower reaches of the Changjiang River, originating in Dianshan Lake in the southwest of Shanghai, and flowing from east to north through the east of Minhang District into the Changjiang River in Wusongkou Port. The overall length is 114km, and thus is the largest river flowing through Shanghai. The Huangpu River runs through Shanghai city proper, dividing the city into Puxi (“west of the river”) and Pudong (“east of the river”). It twists and turns when it passes through Lunghwa area, which has led to the saying “Eighteen bays near Lunghwa, you can see the pagoda in every bay”, which means one can see the Lunghwa



The shoaly land along the Huangpu River at the Bund

pagoda standing on any of the bays. This is similar to the saying “All roads lead to Rome”.

After passing through Lunghwa, the Huangpu River nears Shanghai County and continues to flow east. Suddenly it turns to the north near today’s Nanpu Bridge and is much closer to Shanghai County. Among Chinese idioms about geographical names, the upper reaches are called “Li” (meaning “inside”) while the lower reaches of the river are called “Wai” (meaning “outside”). Ancient Shanghainese considered the Nanpu Bridge as the boundary between the two; the upper reaches of the river are called “Li Huangpu” while the lower reaches are called “Wai Huangpu”. The Huangpu River is a tidal river with a regular ebb and flow. The water level can rise by several meters within a single day. In ancient times, Shanghai had a small population and therefore there was no obvious manmade embankment along the Huangpu River. Instead, there was shoaly land which was submerged at high tide or even washed ashore, while the declining water level at low tide presented hundred meters of shoaly

land along the bank. Therefore, many places along the bank were named “Tan” (meaning “shoal”). Various places such as the Pudong Riverside were called “Dong Tan” (meaning “east shoal”). Now Metro Line 7 has “Dongtan Station” along the River in Pudong. The bank of the Wai Huangpu River along Puxi was called “Wai Huangpu Tan”, “Huangpu Tan” or “Wai Tan” (now The Bund) for short. Consequently, the bank of Li Huangpu River along Puxi was called “Li Huangpu Tan” or “Li Tan” for short. Even today people say “Li Tan”, referring to both sides of the Lupu Bridge. There is no doubt that “Huangpu Tan” and “Wai Tan” were both abbreviations of “Wai Huangpu Tan”. The Huangpu River was a channel; it was not until the Qing Dynasty during the Kangxi Period that Shanghai became the center of China’s offshore trade and civil shipping. The riverside area between the East Gate and South Gate had become an assembly place for stacks. The shoaly land no longer existed but had been changed into wharves. Hence, the ranges called “Huangpu Tan” or “Wai Tan” specifically refer to the coast area along the Huangpu River from Shiliupu Wharf to the Suzhou Creek.



Chinese sailing ships on the Huangpu River



Lights along the Huangpu River



2 The Bund's Destiny after Shanghai's Opening Up

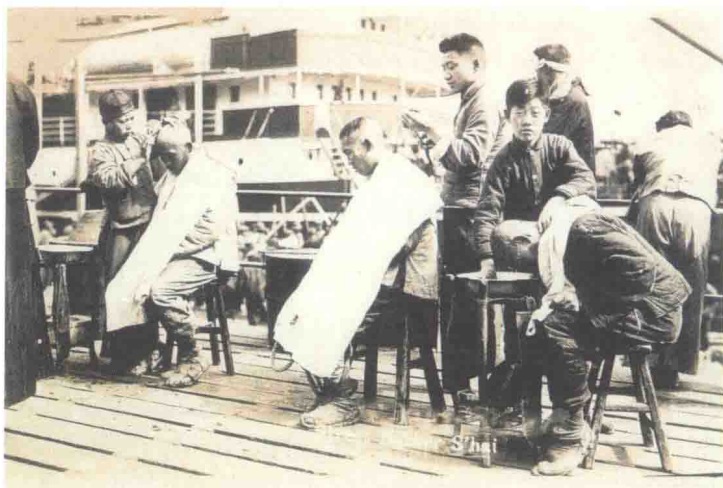
The Shanghai Concession

On November 8th, 1843, a group led by George Balfour, the first consul of the British embassy in Shanghai, arrived in the city after having exchanged ceremonial visits and negotiations with Shanghai's Tao Tai, Gong Mujiu. Both parties announced simultaneously that Shanghai would open as a trading port on November 17th, 1843, which was designated as the "Shanghai Opening Up Anniversary", and celebration activities would be held on this day each year. On November 17th, 1893, Shanghai held unprecedented activities to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Opening Up.

As a newcomer, Balfour located the British Consulate in a rented house in Yaojia Nong, Shanghai County. Through multiple



Sampans on the Huangpu River, mainly for shipping



The Shiliupu Wharf



The American Concession along the north bank of the Suzhou Creek in Hongkou District. From left to right: the first building was the German Consulate, the second and the third buildings belonged to the American Consulate

negotiations with the Tao Tai Gong Mujiu, in November 1845 the “Shanghai Lease Constitution” was signed. This constitution stated that “north of Yang King Pang and south of Li Jiachang will be leased to British businessmen for building houses”. This land is what

is now east of Middle Henan Road, namely the Bund area from East Yan'an Road to East Beijing Road, which covers an area of 830 mu (approximately 0.55 sq.km). Today's Middle Henan Road was once called Barrier Street, named after Concession boundaries. In 1848, the British Concession expanded to become the area which today includes west of the Bund, south of the Suzhou Creek, east of middle Xizang Road, north of East Yan'an Road, covering an area of 2820 mu (approximately 1.88 sq.km).

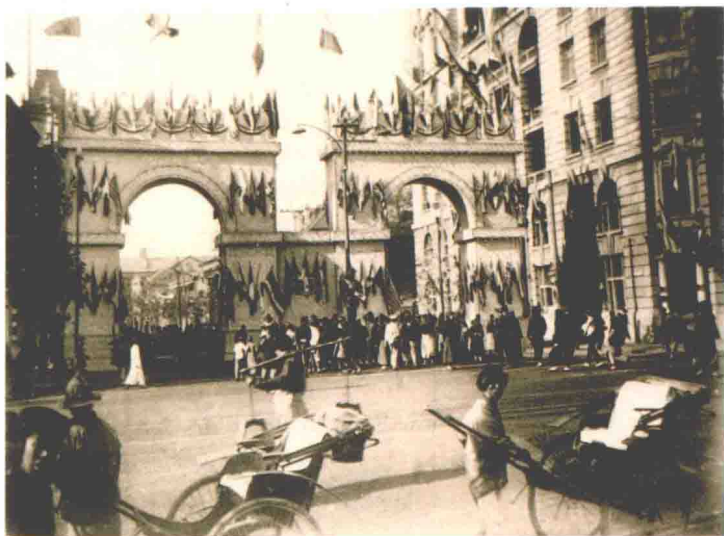
The American Concession was founded in 1848 in Hongkou District, which was along the north bank of the Suzhou Creek, but clear boundaries had not yet been delineated. It could only be generally called "the area on the north bank of the Suzhou Creek, which covers a few miles". Today it is along the north bank of the Suzhou Creek from Henan Road Bridge to Tilanqiao near the Suzhou Creek and the Huangpu River. On September 21st, 1863, the British Concession and the American Concession officially announced a merger, thus becoming the "Shanghai British and American Concession", or "Shanghai Foreign Concession", which was successfully expanded and called the Shanghai International Concession. It stretched again in 1899, east to the end of Yangtszepoo and west to Jing'an Temple, covering an area of 33,503 mu (22.3 sq.km).

In January 1848, Louis Charles Nicolas Maximilien Montigny arrived in Shanghai, and became the first consul of the French embassy there. On April 6th, 1849, he signed a treaty with Shanghai's Tao Tai, delimiting the French Concession as the area occupying the centre, south, and west of urban Shanghai, concretely speaking, east from the Bund to the south corner of Yang King Pang, west to Zhoujing (a small river, now Xizang Road), south to Shanghai County's river (now Renmin Road) and north to Yang King Pang. Soon thereafter, Montigny received a letter from the French foreign ministry, learning that France Steam Navigation Co. wanted to build wharves on the banks of the Huangpu. By diplomatic means, the French Concession was stretched south-east to the

north bank of Fang Pang (now East Fang Pang Road). The French Concession successfully expanded several times. In 1914, it stretched west to the Haig Avenue (now Huashan Road) and south to Route de Zikawei (now Xujiahui Road and Zhaojiabang Road), covering an area of 15,136 mu (equivalent to 10.1 sq.km). In the 1930s and 1940s, Shanghai's urban area was over 40 sq.km, while the Concession area was up to 32 sq.km, accounting for three-fourths of the total. Thus one can imagine the influence of the Concession on Shanghai's modernization.

The British Concession in the Bund

ARTICLE II of the "Shanghai Lease Constitution" signed in 1845 specified that "The area from the north of Yang King Pang, and bordering the towpath along the Huangpu River, is recognized as the western boundary of the concessions. The Westerners should maintain this road and broaden it to 2 Zhang long (a unit of length



Avenue Edouard II, the Bund. It is the French National Day on 4th, July. The Association of French Emigrants held the celebrating activities on this day every year

equal to 3.3 meters) and 5 feet wide. The Westerners should ensure that the road is unimpeded". It also stipulated that Western businessmen could build wharves along the river. The road mentioned in the article is what is now called the Bund Binjiang Avenue.

The Municipal organizations and lead agencies in the public concession were called the Shanghai Municipal Council. After the concessions were established, the emigrants called "Wai Tan" the Bund, a word originating from Hindi and meaning shoaly land. In the process of Britain's external expansion, they first occupied the land along the river as the bridgehead and then developed and expanded in all directions. So the word "Bund" refers to embankment, wharf and riverside road. In fact, besides Shanghai, Hankou, Ningbo, and other cities all have places whose Chinese names are similar to "The Bund"; they are all called Binjiang (meaning "riverside") Avenue. Therefore, "The Bund" was not merely the name of some road, but an appellation of the riverside area from Yang King Pang to the Suzhou Creek, administrated by the British Concession. The Shanghainese used to call it "the British Bund" or "the British Huangpu Tan". Several years later, the road project was completed according to the "Shanghai Lease Constitution", and the Shanghai Municipal Council named it "Yangtsze Road", or "Yangtsze River Road", since "Yangtsze River" was another name for the Changjiang River. Until 1890, the road was renamed "Whangpoo Road", or in Chinese "Huangpu Tan Road". The road was later renamed "East No.1 Zhongshan Road" in memory of Sun Yat-sen.

"The Bund" was not merely the name of a road, but referred to the area of "The British Bund" or "the British Huangpu Tan", which included "Whangpoo Road". Since the Bund was very well known, it was practical to use it as a street name as well. Similarly, people today still like to refer to the house numbers on East No.1 Zhongshan Road as "Bund No.3", or "Bund No.18". As early as the beginning of the last century, house numbers on the Bund were called "3, the Bund", "18, the Bund".



Neon Lights of East Zhongshan No.1 Road

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