The Shanghai Bund: A History through Visual Sources

“Shanghai!
Shanghai, sixth city of the World!
Shanghai, the Paris of the East!
Shanghai, the New York of the West!
Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city in the world, the fishing village on a mudflat which almost literally overnight became a great metropolis.”

“Fifth AVENUE, the Strand, Unter den Linden, the Rue de la Paix, and The Bund, – five great thoroughfares of the world, each with an elusive individuality which unites with the others to form an imaginary barrier to that mystic hinterland [...] On one side flows the Huangpu upon whose waters sturdy grey battleships and swift destroyers, flying the flags of many nations, swing lazily at anchor. They convey a poignant touch of homeland and personal safety. On the other side rise buildings which might have been transplanted from along the Thames or the banks of the Seine. From the sedate and ultraconservative British Consulate and Law Courts, set deep within green, close clipped lawns, past white marble hotels and office buildings, the Bund swings in a wide semicircle to include the twin towers of the Daily News and the golden dome of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank.”

While Shanghai evokes mixed images of glamour, exoticism, Sino-western hybridity, the Bund has become its metonymic name par excellence. The Bund ranks first in any introduction to the city in contemporary guides as THE place to go to discover the wonders of Shanghai and its now sanitized and non-controversial past. Current accounts usually point to the bizarre architectural heritage that the municipal government lately, but definitely has chosen to turn into a tourist attraction for domestic and foreign consumption alike. Although the Bund fell into complete obscurity – literally – after 1949, it returned to life with brightly illuminated façades in the late 1980s and, more recently, with expensive and chic coffee-terraces on top of its ‘old’ buildings.

The present essay aims to tell a different story and to unveil a much more complex and multi-layered history. It relies on a large body of materials, especially visual sources, to document the transformation of an undistinguished space – a riverfront – into a central place of political, social and architectural contest. Our exploration will start from the earliest visual records of the place by Western or Chinese residents and travelers and move into the late 1940s. While brief references will be made to the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period, this essay focuses on the late Qing and Republican period. In terms of geographical coverage, our focus will be on the « conventional » Bund, namely the section of the riverfront that extended southward from Soochow Creek (Suzhouhe) to

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2 Kerby, Philip, Beyond the Bund, New York, Payson & Clarke Ltd., 1927, p. 11
the border with the French Concession. Nevertheless, we shall also take a broader view to include sometimes the riverfront of the French section, that of the Chinese walled city and finally the short strip east of the Garden Bridge.

A note on sources

The present study is based on a large part on visual materials, both paintings and photographs. It is only through such sources that one can hope to reconstruct the century-long transformation of this famous sector of the city, especially when it comes to a study of its architectural change. For paintings, we were fortunate to have the issue of *Arts of Asia* devoted to the Bund, with a series of six 19th-century views of the Bund. For photographs, however, we had to identify and glean them from a variety of sources, mostly books published before 1949.

Paintings may be considered as a questionable source for the historian, at least when taken as an “actual” source about reality in the past. Our approach, however, has been to test the limits of these – on the surface – imaginary renderings of the Bund. Of course, there was no reason to question the intent of the painters, most of them anonymous artists, to give a fair view of the riverfront. Yet, as for drawings and paintings by military painters, there is a significant margin for imagination, beautification, and other involuntary or voluntary modifications. Arguably, the stakes in landscape are much less salient than when it comes to come up with a visual report on a battle and other heroic moments. There is less risk of a major deformation. The artists, however, could have simplified the view, or skipped an ugly building or ”improved” it with a more decent appearance. While we had access only to the reproductions published in *Arts of Asia*, the quality was high enough, especially after digitizing, to allow for close-up examination of individual buildings.

Photographs, contrary to paintings, provide a reliable view of reality. In our case, we were dealing with panoramic views of the Bund that left no room for “framing” the picture. What is on the photograph was there. The issue was to find as many images as possible that covered the entire Bund through its pre-1949 history. In the same way as the riverfront had attracted the eye of painters, photographers also endeavored to provide panoramic views of the Bund. They were initially limited in their attempt by the technology of the time that did not allow wide-angle shots. Creativity and skills, however, made up for this deficiency and the Bund was photographed section by section. Eventually, the photographer reconstituted a panoramic view in the darkroom. These views were taken from the other side of the river, sometimes from a tower, with varying degrees of clarity for our purpose. The major limitation was that of the quality of these

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3 By convention, throughout this text, we shall use the original names for places in English for the pre-1949 period. We refer to these places in post-1950 Shanghai by their Chinese names in *pinyin* transliteration. Whenever necessary, we add the current Chinese name in brackets.


5 In one case – the 1898-1900 photograph – we did the reconstitution ourselves from three individual shots.
photographs that we obtained second-hand from books. Digital tools and software, however, helped improve the images. Overall, however, our collection of pictures offers detailed views of the Bund’s architectural composition.⁶

In using these visual materials, we had to address several issues. The first one was collecting a representative sample of pictures to enable us to see the transformation of the Bund over time, but also to have the possibility of comparative views. We tried to build a series that would cover as narrow time intervals as possible. The table below shows that our temporal coverage is quite dense, even if large gaps subsided. Yet all the major transformations took place during periods that preceded our views by just a few years. While we may have missed a few buildings, we believe that our net came out with almost all the major structures that were erected along the Bund. A second issue was the dating of the paintings and the photographs. For the former, we relied on the dates provided Eric Politzer in his Arts of Asia paper, although we made a careful study of their content to assess their credibility.⁷ Photographs, on the opposite, rarely came with an exact year. Usually there was a crude indication based on the date of publication (such as “A current view of”). By going back and forth between the images and the records we found on the date of construction/destruction of the buildings and other items displayed on the photographs, we were able to narrow down the time frame of several pictures. Unfortunately, at this stage, we are unable to pin most of them down to a precise year.⁸

### Time frame of the Bund views

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Painting</th>
<th>Photograph</th>
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<td>ca 1849-1850</td>
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⁷ Eric Politzer’s work is based on the use of visual (paintings), cartographic (the 1925 version of the 1855 map of the British Settlement and a cadastral map of 1864-1866) and textual (especially newspapers and Hong Lists) records. He has produced a very careful and well documented study of the Bund buildings in the 1849-1879 period. His approach was very similar to ours, but in our case, apart from extending the period of investigation into the twentieth century, the use of GIS-based maps allowed us to reconstitute the cadastral lots and location of buildings through time. For the 1849-1879 period, we found only one major inconsistency in Politzer’s work (the transformation of the Dent & Co. compound and that of the Smith, Kennedy & Co. building. Politzer, "The Changing Face of the Shanghai Bund", p. 80

⁸ There were three photographs that came with estimated periods or no indication at all: one from Wright, Twentieth century impressions [no indication, book published in 1908]; Shimazu, Shanhai annai [“present view” of the Bund, book published in 1918]; Natsukashi no Shanhai [no date given]. The ‘internal critique’ of these documents led to the following dating: respectively 1907-09; 1910-12; 1914. For a discussion of the dating method, see individual photographs in the Virtual Shanghai image database.
The third source we mobilized for this study is maps. They were useful in several ways. First, because maps sometimes display specific buildings, we were able to ascertain the existence of buildings at a certain point in time, even if the accuracy of commercial maps is sometimes questionable. Second, maps provided the exact location of the buildings represented in our images. The general views of the Bund we used – both paintings and photographs – hardly showed any details about the space between the buildings, even when there was an empty yard. The streets are either not represented or hidden from view both in paintings and photographs. Perspective also introduced a deformation in assessing which building was where, or simply to make sure a building was indeed on the Bund (and not in the background). To overcome this problem, we reconstituted the cadastral lots on maps and traced their transformation over time.⁹

The textual records were also an essential part, both helpful but also misleading. The record may not be accurate for documents produced well after the period they study.¹⁰ Another problem in the written records is that buildings are usually referred to by the name of their occupant rather than by the structure itself. Conversely, some companies

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⁹ The major maps we used [see “Source maps” on the Virtual Shanghai platform] are: “Ground plan of the Foreign Settlement at Shanghai - North of the Yang Kang Pang Canal”, from a survey by Mr. F.B. Youel R.N., 1855; “Plan of the English Settlement at Shanghai”, Shanghai, Shanghai Municipal Council, 1864-1866; “Street plan of the English, French and American settlement”, London, published for the North China Herald and North China Daily New Offices, Shanghai, ca 1870; “Plan de la concession française à Shanghai”, Shanghai, Imprimerie de Erhard, 1882; “Cadastral plan of the (so-called) English settlement, Shanghai”, Shanghai, Shanghai Municipal Council, 1890; “Street plan of the British and French Settlements”, Shanghai, 1900; Saishin Shanhai chizu 最新上海地図 (The New Map of Shanghai City), Shanghai, Shōsuido Shōten, 1908; Street Plan of the Foreign Settlement (Central District) & French Settlement at Shanghai in The Chronicle and directory for China, Corea, Japan, the Philippines, [Indo-china, Straits settlements, Siam, Borneo, Malay states, etc., Hong Kong, "Daily Press" Office, 1895 & 1926; Saishin Shanhai chizu 最新上海地図 (The New map of Shanghai), Osaka, Mainichi shinbunsha; Shanghai shi hanghao lutu lu 上海市行號路圖錄 (Shanghai Street Directory), Shanghai, The Free Trading Co. Ltd., 2 vols., 1939-1940.

¹⁰ A case in point is the 1857 picture of the Bund and its labeling by Morse in his 1910 book. The captions have been taken for granted and reproduced in various publications. Yet there is a major mistake on one of the buildings – Dr. Dixon/Oriental Bank – (location and attribution) that seriously flaws the distribution of the buildings on the Bund. The painting dated as of 1857 by Morse is actually a later work produced in 1862 as shown in Arts of Asia. Morse, Hosea Ballou, The international relations of the Chinese empire, London, New York [etc.] Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910-18, Vol. 1, p. 464; For a full discussion of Morse’s captions, see Politzer, “The Changing Face of the Shanghai Bund”, pp. 76-77.
remained on the same spot, but rebuilt their premises two to three times. Finally, some companies moved their offices to different locations on the Bund. In other words, one can be led to believe there is a new building where there is only a change of owner or tenant. To avoid seeing a new building where there was only a new tenant, we had to trace the occupancy of the buildings. The second case – reconstruction of premises – was of course easier to solve through the visual record, while the “intra-Bund” moves were indeed limited.

By going back and forth between the maps, the images and the textual records on individual buildings, we were able to build a small database that identifies almost every building on the Bund and provides a timeline of its transformation. We then matched the transformation of the buildings over time with our visual sources. There remain a few gaps for minor buildings that we were not able to identify. Finally, although this was not exactly within the scope of our project, we also tracked down the fate of these buildings up to the 1980s and supplied a link to views of the Bund in present-day Shanghai.  

The Bund through words and works

The conventional explanation for the use of the term ‘Bund’ is to trace it to a Hindi word [band] meaning ‘embankment’. It was part of the general phenomenon of using foreign words in the pidgin that served as a lingua franca among merchants in the various ports from India to China. Some authors argue this was part of a general process of appropriating words from various colonized countries as British imperialism made its progress to the east and to ‘mark’ newly conquered spaces with a symbolic meaning. How the word ‘Bund’ came into usage in Shanghai has not been documented. It appears

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11 For 1987, we used a remarkable cartographic document produced by the Shanghai municipality. It covers the whole municipality at the block level. Shanghai shi shangyong dituce 上海市商用地图册 (Shanghai business atlas), Shanghai, Shanghai fanyi chuban gongsi, 1987, 2 vols.
12 The term came to be used by civil engineers in Shanghai – “bunding” – to designate the action of placing sloping stone pavement against an earth bank with a foundation of fascine work and a stone wall at the toe of the sloping pavement. Heidenstam, H. von, The improvement of the Huang Pu River (Shanghai, China) for ocean navigation, Brussels, Permanent International Association of Congresses of Navigation, Office of the Secretary General, [1920], p. 16
13 Taylor, Jeremy E., "The Bund: littoral space of empire in the treaty ports of East Asia", Social History, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2002, p. 129. The argument is debatable. One can also read this linguistic process of appropriating foreign words as a form of spontaneous hybridization and practical way of working out a practical common language. The term ‘bund’, at least in Chinese, never had an impact on the native language.
to have been used quite early, although its adoption as the official name of the riverfront in Shanghai came at a fairly late date.

Apart from hand-made rough schematic drawings, the earliest map of the English Settlement dates from 1855. While all the streets of the settlement bear proper names, the riverfront remains nameless. On later maps, as on the 1864-1866 cadastral map, the 1870 map of the English, French and American settlements or the 1890 ‘Cadastral plan of the (so-called) English settlement’ the road is designated as « Bund or Yangtsze Road », reflecting an ambiguity between usage (Bund) and the official designation established in 1865. Ten years later, however, the riverfront is clearly labeled the « Bund ». As we do not have maps in the interval period, we cannot ascertain when the name became official. Until we find other textual evidence, we can only assume the Bund became the official name of the riverfront some time around 1900. While there is no doubt that the word was in use much earlier and, most probably, a part of the common language, this absence of designation also points to a change of perception of the riverfront when it came to be associated with the more glamorous image that emerged at a later stage. We shall address this point in our study of the functions of the Bund.

The other major designation of the « Bund » is of course its name in Chinese. It has not changed since the 19th century, and probably earlier, when the term – waitan 外灘 – simply designated the « outside bank » of the Huangpu river. Before Westerners were allowed to settle in Shanghai on a small strip of land north of the walled city, the riverbank had been in use for many centuries. Of course, only the section that followed the riverfront along the city wall was actually used as a mooring and transshipment area. The reason for the distinction of an « outside » bank is one of geography in relation with the walled city. The upper stream of any river was called li 内 (internal, inside); the lower stream was called “wai”. The local Chinese therefore distinguished between the

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15 “Plan of the English Settlement at Shanghae” (http://virtualshanghai.net/Map_List.php?ID=343&CF=3).
18 In 1865, the SMC adopted the first general scheme that established the names of all roads in the settlement, with all North-South streets named after Chinese provinces and East-West streets named after Chinese cities. The road along the Huangpu was named “Yangtsze Road”. Yuan Xieming 袁燮铭, "Gongbuju yu shanghai luzheng" 工部局与上海路政 (The Shanghai Municipal Council and road policy), Shanghai yanjiu luncong 上海研究论丛, no. 2, 1989, p. 176
20 We have chosen to translate tan by bank. The actual meaning is closer to “beach”, which it actually was until the Bund was turned into an embankment by plating wooden posts along the bank. Up to then, at low ebb, the river withdrew and left a 30-meter wide open mud-bank.
21 Xue Liyong 薛理勇, Waitan de lishi he jianzhu 外滩的历史和建筑 (History and construction of the Bund), Shanghai, Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe 2002, p. 2. In several cases, the Chinese used the terms li 内 (internal) and wai 外 (external) to indicate the greater (nei) or lesser (wai) degree of proximity of a location. There was even an intermediate degree with the use of zhong 中 (middle) for places located
« inside bank » (neitan), south of an imaginary line set at the Lujiabang creek (陸家浜) and the « external bank » (waitan) north of that line.\textsuperscript{22} While the southern section hosted warehouses, wharves, and mooring areas, the northern section had very little relevance as it had no specific function besides a « rope walk » as we shall see below. The « active » part of the riverfront was named « shiliupu » after the administrative system that divided the walled city and its suburbs into various districts (pu).\textsuperscript{23} Although this system was abolished, the term shiliupu remained in the popular language to designate the Chinese Bund.

In the French Concession, the word « Bund » never made it into the local official or informal language. All pidgin notwithstanding, the French stuck to the conventional designation of « quai » (wharf) to name their section of the riverfront. That section was initially very limited as it stretched from the Yangjingbang creek that separated the two foreign settlements to the limit with Chinese-administered territory along the creek that bordered the Tianhougong (Temple of the Queen of Heaven). The riverfront was simply named after the river, Quai du Whampoo (Whampoo Wharf). In 1861, the French managed to obtain an extension of the settlement that included the area south of the initial border to the canal that flowed out of the Eastern Gate (Dongmen). This was precisely the section of the Chinese Bund called “Shiliupu”. To give it more grandeur the riverfront was christened Quai de France. Eventually, the name « Quai du Whampoo » was dropped and the entire section was officially called « Quai de France. This was part of a general movement in the early years of the 20th century that saw the French municipality get rid of most references to Chinese places in naming the streets of the settlement as had been the practice initially. The Chinese names gave way to those of local or national luminaries, or to names that highlighted French accomplishments overseas.\textsuperscript{24}

Before the opening of the harbor to foreign trade, the riverbank had no special equipment or infrastructure for junks or sampans. Although there was an active domestic and international trade going through Shanghai, ships simply used the riverbank as it was, except around the Eastern gate (Dong men) where a sort of embankment had been built. Depending on the time of the day, low or high ebb, the river left open a stripe of sand

\textsuperscript{22} Xue Liyong, \textit{Waitan de lishi he jianzhu}, 2002, p. 3

\textsuperscript{23} This system of defense administration was designed in the aftermath of the Taiping rebellion. Shanghai County was divided into 27 pu. It was an evolution from the previous system of local administration below the county level that comprised xiang (鄉), bao (保), and tu (圖). Altogether Shanghai county was organized into 217 tu. The main idea was to organize a merchant militia defense network based on a new territorial division. Shiliupu (Pu No. 16) was the largest in the city. Over time, the name “shiliupu” was adopted to designate the wharves along the river. By 1906, the Qing government started to introduce local self-government organs with a new territorial division in 9 districts. Xue Liyong 薛理勇, \textit{Shanghai tan diming zhanggu} 上海灘地名掌故 (Stories about the place name of the Shanghai Bund), Shanghai, Tongji daxue chubanshe, 1994, pp. 238-240

\textsuperscript{24} On the history of street names in the French Concession, see the very careful study by J.H. Haan, \textit{The Sino-Western Miscellany, being historical notes about foreign life in China}, s.l., s.n., 1993.
The name in Chinese took its origin from there. The only specific feature was a pathway traced by boat pullers along the riverbank. It was called xian dao (繊道), or “Rope path (or walk)” and constituted the only way along the river. When Westerners came to Shanghai, the area along the river north of the Walled city was just that rope path. Over time, the needs for smoother transportation called for the improvement of the « rope walk ». Yet in the English Settlement, the Land Regulations signed approved by the Chinese authorities prohibited foreigners from building right along the river. This was meant precisely to protect the « rope walk » from encroachment and allow the passage of the pullers.

Article 3 of the Land Regulations set the location and width of the main streets within the settlement. One of the four main arteries was designated as “Old rope walk” (舊繊道) with its width defined by Chinese Customs at 2.5 Chinese chi (7.5 meters). Yet even before the Regulations were signed, foreign residents had started to consolidate and enlarge the original “rope walk” to twice its official width. Obviously technological progress would make the use of ropes to pull boats quickly irrelevant, but the rule remained in force. As a result, the riverfront remained free from construction and eventually transformed into a major 1,500-meter long thoroughfare.

By the late 1840s, all the British settlement offered to the viewer was no more than a few roads that crept into the newly built-up area behind the “Bund”. The early settlement was bordered by four waterways, with two main rivers, the Huangpu and Soochow creek in East and North respectively, and Defense Creek and the Yangjingbang in the West and South respectively. By all means, it was no more than a small flake of foreign presence amidst a landscape dominated by rice fields and waterways, next to a sturdy but massive Chinese walled city. Roads actually ranked high on the agenda of the new settlers. The first proto-municipal organization established for the management of the new land was designed to take care of “roads and jetties”. Little was done in terms of actual planning before 1854, but as early as 1846 the first mud roads were ploughed through the flat land: Barrier Road, Park lane,

25 He, Zhaoyin 柯兆银 & Zhuang Zhenxiang 庄振祥 (eds), Shanghai tan yeshi 上海滩野史 (An unofficial history of the Shanghai Bund), Nanjing, Jingsu wenyi chubanshe, 1993, p. 8 ; Xue Liyong, Waitan de lishi he jianzhu, 2002, p. 2
26 All about Shanghai, 1934, p. 45
27 “Shanghai tudi zhangcheng” (Shanghai land regulations) in Shanghai gonglu shi 上海公路史 (A History of Shanghai streets), Shanghai, Renmin jiaotong chubanshe, 1989, p. 201
28 Wu Jiang 伍江, Shanghai bai nian jianzhu shi, 1840-1949 上海百年建筑史 (The History of Shanghai Architecture), Shanghai, Tongji daxue chubanshe, 1997, p. 47
29 Wang Shaozhou 王绍周, Shanghai jindai chengshi jianshe 上海近代城市建设 (Shanghai Modern Architecture), Shanghai, Jiangsu kexue jishu chubanshe, 1989, p. 17
30 The “Committee on roads and jetties” was later renamed “Municipal Council” after the signing of the Land regulations between the British Consulate and the Shanghai Daotai. Initially there was a plan to have all foreign areas – British, American, and French – to come under a single municipal organization called “Executive Committee” (工部局 gongbuju in Chinese). Yet the plan for a single administration failed when the French decided to preserve their autonomy. The “Executive Committee” was renamed “Municipal Council” (Shanghai Municipal Council), though the Chinese name remained unchanged. In the French Concession, the process was very similar with a “Comité des routes” initially taking care of the first layout of roads. Maybon & Fredet, Histoire de la Concession française de Shanghai, 1929, pp. 264-265
Rope Walk Road, etc., and the Bund\textsuperscript{31} Along the river, the major endeavor was the construction of jetties. Like the Chinese, foreign ships initially simply moored along the bank from and to where the goods were carried over: “Early Shanghai knew nothing of wharves alongside which vessels could load and unload. All this was done from and into native boats in the stream, the cargo coming and going from jetties jutting out from the Bund”.\textsuperscript{32}

For about two decades, the Bund was left in its original state, even if private initiative started to transform it with the addition of jetties. Over time the path along the river was widened and covered with a mix of ashes and refuse. In the 1849-1850 painting one can see that the riverbank remains pretty much in its “natural” state, even if jetties can be seen protruding from the bank. In 1861, a pavement was created along the Bund as part of a general plan to improve the conditions of roads.\textsuperscript{33} It did not prove satisfactory, however, and one year later, the SMC decided to build an embankment.\textsuperscript{34} Consolidation was achieved by plating wooden posts all along the riverfront as the 1862 painting or a photograph of the Customs House show\textsuperscript{35}. This had the effect of delimiting more sharply land and water and lay the ground for further consolidation. The visual sources, however, tend to question this chronology. In the 1854 painting, the Bund appears to be carefully lined with wooden posts already. We initially questioned the dating of the picture, but its content makes it clear that it dates prior to our 1857 (on which the wooden posts are not visible) and 1862 paintings (on which the wooden posts are in evidence). The textual record will have to be revisited to solve this enigma.

On the 1867-1868 painting, the northern part of the Bund is already bounded by a more solid dam made of stone. This reinforcement was done in order to stabilize the land at the mouth of Soochow Creek. As land stabilized, the area was further widened and turned into a public garden.\textsuperscript{36} The work of filling the area to create the garden started in 1866 and was completed in August 1868.\textsuperscript{37} It is visible on later paintings and photographs of the 1870s. By “bunding” the river at the limit of the low-water, under the protection of the filled-in Public Garden, the SMC actually reclaimed a very large area outside the original line of the Bund by filling in the space under the jetties.\textsuperscript{38} Later, the enhancement

\textsuperscript{31} *Shanghai gonglu shi*, 1989, p. 27
\textsuperscript{32} Couling, Samuel; Lanning, George, *The history of Shanghai*, Shanghai, Kelly & Walsh, 1921, p. 389
\textsuperscript{33} Yuan Xieming, “Gongbuju yu shanghai luzheng”, 1989, p. 175
\textsuperscript{34} He Zhaoxin &Zhuang Zhenxiang, (eds), *Shanghai tan yeshi*, 1993, p. 8
\textsuperscript{36} The area where the Public garden stands was originally called the “Consular flats”. It was formed by the accumulation of mud and silt from the river around the wreck of a small vessel that had sunk near the site. Darwent, Rev. C. E., *Shanghai. A handbook for travellers and residents*, Shanghai, Kelly & Walsh, 1904, p. 3
\textsuperscript{37} Darwent, *Shanghai. A handbook*, 1904, p. 3
\textsuperscript{38} The photographic record documents the gradual process that turned the Bund from a small road into a wide area encompassing a road, a space covered with grass and trees, and jetties and pontoons. The earlier 30-meter long jetties were progressively turned into pathways on the newly reclaimed land.
of the Bund also benefited from the new technologies. Public lighting came on the heel of the establishment of the first gas company in 1865. The Bund was among the first streets to benefit from the new facility that same year when the previous oil lamps were taken down. Electricity followed not much longer later, in 1882 and again the Bund, along with Nanking Road, was first graced with the new electrical lamps. Having been built almost on barren land, the appearance of the early streets remained quite elementary. In 1865, the SMC started to plant trees along the major arteries, starting with the Bund.\(^{39}\) From the visual sources, however, it seems trees took some time to catch the eye of artists. Their presence becomes obvious only in the mid-1870s photographs or late-1870s paintings.

On the French side, work to build a proper embankment started in 1855 on the initial section of the riverfront. The Small Sword rebellion had left much of the area in ruins. After removing the rubble and debris, French sailors traced a rough path along the river. A road was constructed along the river in 1856 by a group of 200 Christian refugees who were employed as coolies.\(^{40}\) Little progress was made, however, due to the lack of human presence in the French Concession. The French quarter still looked much like a Chinese suburb.\(^{41}\) Yet what constituted the French section of the riverbank soon became too small to accommodate all the requests for land, warehouses and jetties. In 1860, due to the pressure of private companies for more space along the river, the French consul initiated a new round of negotiations to obtain the stretch that ran southward to the Small East gate. Eventually, the concession was extended in 1861, which gave the French Bund an extra 650 meters.\(^{42}\) Yet, while more jetties were being constructed, the riverfront remained in a pitiful state. In 1867, the French consul, Breiner de Montmorand, described it in 1864 as “a badly drained and hardly leveled ground, often cut by large cracks after heavy rain. It narrowed between the low tide mark, a large strip of sand from which the summer sun caused unhealthy exhalations, and a few non-aligned and unassuming houses. In day time, it looked deserted and dreary; at night it was hardly lighted by a few badly kept gas lamps.”\(^{43}\)

One of the major impediments to the remodeling of the riverfront was clearly the lack of financial resources by the French Municipal Council. The priority was given to dredging and cleaning the creeks and moat along the wall and to remove the trash that had accumulated.\(^{44}\) The Messageries Impériales Company built its own wharf by 1863, but

\(^{39}\) Yuan Xieming, "Gongbuju yu shanghai luzheng", 1989, pp. 175-176 and p. 179
\(^{40}\) Maybon & Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession française de Changhai*, 1929, pp. 163-164; “Fa zuijie wantan de di yi tiao malu” (The first road on the Bund of the French Concession) *in Shanghai yanjiu ziliao* 上海研究資料 (Research materials on Shanghai), Shanghai, Shanghai shudian, 1984 (1st ed. 1936), p. 345
\(^{41}\) Maybon & Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession française de Changhai*, 1929, p. 61
\(^{42}\) Maybon & Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession française de Changhai*, 1929, p. 239 and p. 244. When solicited by the French consul, the Shanghai Daotai replied that while he fully understood the needs of the French merchants, he also observed that the areas coveted by the French consul were highly valued by the local Chinese merchants and that the price of land was expected to be much higher than the one previously acquired. Furthermore, he pointed that the owners of some buildings, such as the Tianhougong, would never accept to sell their land. Maybon & Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession française de Changhai*, 1929, p. 234.
\(^{43}\) Maybon & Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession française de Changhai*, 1929, pp. 287-288
\(^{44}\) Maybon & Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession française de Changhai*, 1929, p. 270
serious talks about improving the riverfront did not start until the following year. The French Municipal Council hired a British engineer, Freeman, to build a proper embankment along the northern section (Quai du Whampoo) of the riverfront. Work started in October 1864, but soon after, in January 1865, a part of the new Bund collapsed, causing a dispute between the French authorities and the British engineer, and giving an opportunity for sarcastic comments in the *North China Herald*. Eventually, that section was completed in 1867 with the cost borne mostly by a special tax on the lots along the newly build 30-meter wide Bund with several floating jetties. The southern section was initially simply drained thanks to a new canal and paved, while a new gate (Porte Montauban – Xin beimen 新北門) was opened in the wall to facilitate communication with the walled city.

The Chinese section of the Bund was the responsibility of the local authorities, but little work was done until the late 19th century. From the various records we have, it seems the anchorage was left much to its original layout, with boats mooring in front of the city walls and loading and unloading of the larger junks performed by small crafts. Due to its central role as a transshipment harbor between North and South China, and one of the major outlets for the Jiangnan area, a whole district had developed outside of the walled city since at least Ming times, as one painting shows. By the mid-18th century, there were 27 small streets that ran through the area. Shanghai received a very high number of boats and ships of all sizes. In 1701, a local literati noted in his “historical notes” (林年記) that “goods from the West as well as from Fujian and Guangdong all come to Shanghai, outside the Small east gate there are large wharves, this is a sign of the transformation of the cityscape”. On an average year, there were about 1,200-1,300 large ships (1,000-3,000 piculs of freight/80-240 tons) and 2,500-2,600 smaller crafts (less than 1,000 piculs/80 tons) that came through. Altogether this represented a total freight of about 280,000 tons. In 1849, a British visitor noted that “the suburbs on this side of the river is very extensive and densely populated”. His record, however, makes no mention of the riverfront, although he delves on shipping to and from the city.

As part of the modernization efforts of late Qing reformers, an arsenal and shipyard, the Jiangnan Arsenal (江南製造局) was established south of the walled city. To facilitate

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45 “Fa zujie wantan de di yi ge matou” (The first wharf on the Bund of the French Concession) in *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao* 上海研究資料 (Research materials on Shanghai), Shanghai, Shanghai shudian, 1984 (1st ed. 1936), p. 357
50 Cited in Zhang Zhongming, 张忠民 “Qing qianqi shanghai gang fazhan yanbian xintan” 清前期上海港发展演变新探 (New investigation in the evolution of Shanghai harbor in the early Qing period), *Zhongguo jinjishi yanjiu* 中国经济史研究 (Studies in Chinese economic history), no. 3, 1987, p. 88
51 Zhang Zhongming, “Qing qianqi shanghai gang fazhan yanbian xintan”, 1987, p. 91
traffic, a first effort was made to improve the road along the Huangpu.\textsuperscript{53} Although an English guide book argues the Chinese section of the Bund was built in 1894 after a fire that destroyed 500 Chinese houses, work on the Chinese Bund did not start before 1896 and was completed one year later. The road was nine meters large and had a full length of 2,412 meters.\textsuperscript{54} This improvement came with the establishment of the first proto-municipal organs in 1895. As with the “Committee on roads and jetties” in the British Settlement, the new organ, the South City Roadworks Board (Nanshi malu gongchengju 南市馬路工程局) was concerned by the construction and maintenance of roads. The history of this proto-municipal body has been well studied.\textsuperscript{55} The South City Roadworks Board was one of the main operations that brought together the local elites and officials. The Chinese Bund was its first project. By 1897, after a thorough job, the new Bund measured 2.4 kilometers.\textsuperscript{56} After its renovation, it came under strict supervision with new regulations about taxes, hygiene, traffic, shop signs, etc.\textsuperscript{57} Throughout the late imperial and Republican period, it remained a bustling commercial area and a densely populated quarter. It never developed into an architecturally distinguished riverfront. It accommodated dockyards, warehouses, hospitals, and various shipping, timber and rice offices: “An enormous number of boats of every description lined the river front”.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{Western visions of the Bund}

The history of Shanghai has been told many times as a “success story” entirely due to Western presence. Without the least hesitation, a 1934 guide of Shanghai boldly stated that “less than a century ago, Shanghai was little more than an anchorage for junk, with a few villages scattered along the low, muddy banks of the river.”\textsuperscript{59} As we shall see in this section this “anchorage” and its history is fully part of the mythical reconstruction of a Western-imagined Shanghai. In the same guide, the Bund comes first as the “natural starting point for our tour” of the city: “the muddy tow-path of fifty years ago which has magically become one of the most striking and beautiful civic entrances in the world, faced from the West by an impressive rampart of modern buildings and bounded on the East by the Huangpu river.”\textsuperscript{60} Of course, by the 1930s, the Bund had developed into a complex and sophisticated area where work easily overlapped with leisure. “The handsome boulevard is flanked by a park space which extends to the river-edge with its unobstrusive landing stages, where tenders bring passengers from great ocean liners.”\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[53] Wu Jiang, \textit{Shanghai bai nian jianzhu shi, 1840-1949}, p. 53
\item[54] Wang Shaozhou, \textit{Shanghai jindai chengshi jianshe}, p. 491; \textit{All about Shanghai}, 1934, p. 61
\item[56] Wu Jiang, \textit{Shanghai bai nian jianzhu shi, 1840-1949}, p. 53
\item[57] Yuan Xieming, “Gongbuju yu shanghai luzheng”, 1989, p. 201
\item[58] \textit{All about Shanghai}, 1934, p. 59 and p. 61
\item[59] \textit{All about Shanghai}, 1934, p. 1
\item[60] \textit{All about Shanghai}, 1934, p. 44
\item[61] \textit{All about Shanghai}, 1934, pp. 44-45
\end{footnotes}
These self-aggrandizing views of Shanghai by Western travelers or residents, with the Bund as the symbol of their success, is part of a myth to which some Chinese have subscribed. Cathy Yeh argues that for displaced literati in search of a new identity, Shanghai offered itself as a “playground”, as a place of “exoticism”, something that threw them off balance even if, in many ways, the physical surrounding of the early settlements was hardly different from a Chinese city (except for the neat grid of streets and the major buildings on the Bund, all other constructions bore the signature of Chinese traditional architecture). Nevertheless, if Shanghai came to be represented in a way that magnified its aspect and symbolized Chinese modernity, the way in which Westerners and Chinese perceived and described the city, especially the Bund, differs widely. Whereas the Bund figures prominently in all Western renditions of Shanghai, Chinese writers were far less sensitive to its assumed grandeur and glamour. The Western bias, however, was a late development. The first travelers to Shanghai were impressed by the Chinese Bund – obviously the only developed place before Westerners settled in Shanghai – and failed to harbor the prejudices of those who followed their tracks some years later.

The first visitors to Shanghai, Lindsay and Gutzlaff, reached the city in 1832. While they spent most of their time trying to obtain the right to trade in Shanghai, they did not fail to note the brisk trade that was taking place in the harbor. Lindsay reported quite favorably on the local facilities: “Commodious wharfs and large warehouses occupy the banks of the river, which is deep enough to allow junks to come and unload alongside of them; in the middle it has from six to eight fathoms, and is nearly half a mile in breadth”. Captain Monfort, traveling through Shanghai in the early 1850s, was impressed by the hustle and bustle in the city and its harbor: “there is nothing more active and animated than the aspect of the harbor and the wharves of the city”. These fairly positive visions of the city and its original Bund, along the walled city, would slowly give way to derogatory comments or simply complete omission with the rise of the English Bund.

When one reads through the travel accounts by early travelers to Shanghai, however, it becomes obvious that the Bund was not yet on their mental map. While a few words of praise are usually said about the British/International Settlement, it is about the buildings, the streets, and the modern appearance of the place: “Shanghai […] is laid like a city at home. It extends along the harbor for the distance of three miles and has a breadth of one mile”. We learn that the streets are macadamized, drained with brick sewers and illuminated by “an abundance of public lamps”. Then the early-1860s visitor turns his eyes to the houses, although we do not know if it is a general comment or a description of the houses on the Bund: “The residences of the merchants are large and elegantly finished, and admirably constructed for comfort. The rooms are high and airy, with windows

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64 Bell, George, Voyage en Chine du capitaine Montfort avec un appendice historique sur les derniers événements, Paris, Victor Lecou, 1854, p. 265
opening to the surface of the floor upon a wide piazza". The Bund itself is not mentioned as a noteworthy place.

By 1867, a major travel guide on China and Japan made one of the first mentions of the riverfront as the “far-famed Bund”. The author gives credit to the original towing-path and its preservation and successive widening for giving Shanghai a “noble quay along the entire length of its river-front”. A newly arrived German banker expressed the same view: “The beautiful city lay before us. With its lovely quay and high regal palaces, the city made a magnificent impression. This was, however, actually only the English settlement. The duplication of similar embankments in other Western settlements is said “to have made the Bund a prominent feature of European progress throughout China”. In 1867, however, the riverfront was still lined with only wooden pillars due to “the high cost of granite in this alluvial region”. At low ebb, a wide mud-bank of about 30 meters extended from the timber facing the roadway. The tidal movement explains why long sloppy jetties, as can be seen on 19th-century paintings, were built to secure an approach at all stages of the tide. By contrast, the French Bund paled compared to its neighbor. It was lined with “buildings of very inferior description”. The French municipality, however, was credited with success in building a permanent embankment with stone (said to have been taken from bridges and stone-work in the countryside after the retreat of the Taiping rebels). The guide emphasizes the “commodious wharves” erected by the China Steam Navigation Company and the French Messageries Impériales. The Chinese section is not worth much notice: “Beyond this point stretch the crowded tiers of the Chinese shipping”.

Close to the turn of the century, the riverfront seems to have taken shape both materially, but above all in people’s mind. The SMC seems to have decided to preserve the Bund into a major harbor area. In fact, while jetties and iron pontoons were constructed, actual wharves never developed along the bank. No ships or large vessels were allowed at the Bund. They could only moor at a distance and rely on cargo boats for loading and unloading. In 1897, as he approaches Shanghai from the river, a British traveler recollects his experience: “In front of the Bund, we look with wonder upon the splendid business houses, that seem like palaces […] A walk along the Bund tends to increase the admiration we felt as it seemed to move by us for inspection, when we looked at it from the poop of the steamer. The first thought that strikes one is the magnificence with which everything has been planned”. This commentary somehow echoes that by Wang Tao

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70 Kahler, William R., My holidays in China, Shanghai, n.p., 1895, p. 7
71 Macgowan, J. (John), Pictures of southern China, London, Religious Tract Society, 1897, pp. 10-11
arriving in Shanghai in 1848. But the contemporary British traveler continues his description: “The Bund is wide and spacious, and kept in splendid order by the members of the Municipal Council […] On one side is a broad pathway lined with trees that throw a pleasant shade upon the ground and keep off fiery rays of the sun when he feels his strengths in the hot months…. On the other side are the business houses, which are also residences, and which have been built […] with such artistic beauty and disregard of expense as would give the natives [the Chinese] the idea that the owners are all men of fortune before they began to trade”.72

From these descriptions, one can sense that the Bund was beginning to have a separate identity from the river and from the city itself.73 It existed by itself and stood as the most concrete evidence of Western modernity and achievement in Shanghai. With the characteristic enthusiasm of the time, the same author states that “there is a profound consciousness in many of them [Englishmen] that England’s mission is to elevate the world. This idea exalts commerce, and drives out the meager motives in connection with it, by surrounding it with beautiful houses, and exquisite gardens, and lines of charming trees.”74 Some newcomers are even surprised to discover there were Chinese in Shanghai, even on the Bund. They had to come to terms with their own prejudices and admit they could represent a challenge to the British. In 1899, upon her first trip to Shanghai, a woman traveler wrote: “I was not prepared for the Chinese element being so much en evidence in the foreign settlement. It is not only that clerks and compradors dressed in rich silk on which the characters for happiness and longevity and the symbols of luck are in numbers on the Bund, and that all the servile classes, as may be expected, are Chinese, but that Chinese shops of high standing […] are taking their places in fine streets which run back from the Bund.” Obviously, the first contact with the Shanghai Bund was an eye-opening experience that shattered – albeit partially – the biased view of the traveler. Her description, however, gives us a sense of the brisk activity along the Bund: “Single and two-horse carriages and buggies, open and closed, with coachmen and grooms […] dash along the drive. There are jinrickshas in hundreds, with Chinese runners, and Shanghai wheelbarrows innumerable…” All that, however, is due to “an honest and thoroughly efficient British local administration”.75

This line of discourse was usually continued and magnified in the following decades. In the first Western guide of Shanghai in 1904, the Bund comes first on the list of “Routes with chief objects of interest”. It is described as “one of the most interesting, famous, and handsome thoroughfares in the world”, with the Shanghai Municipal Council as the

72 Macgowan, Pictures of southern China, 1897, p. 13
73 Taylor’s interpretation of the Bund as a space per se fails to take into account the historical process of construction of the image/myth of the Bund. The terms did not create the space. The space came to be created out of necessity in different urban settings that Taylor does not discuss. The extent to which the term Bund came to acquire a specific meaning must have varied according to the cities, but above all it was a ‘myth-creation’ process that took place over several decades. It was also a process that took place within the Western world with a limited impact on local society. Taylor, Jeremy E., "The Bund: littoral space of empire in the treaty ports of East Asia", Social History, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2002.
74 Macgowan, Pictures of southern China, 1897, p. 12
valiant designer and protector of public interest that “fought against all attempts of the shipping interest to construct wharves for shipping” and made it “the great lung and promenade of Shanghai”. It is presented as an area for leisure, even if the author points to the active traffic that takes place on the Bund: “There is an alphated path by the river, a stretch of beautiful grass, a footpath, and the busy thoroughfare, on which carriages, Chinese wheel-barrows, jinrickshaws, passengers of all races, and bamboo coolies, present a picturesque and lively picture”. The Bund is also a place that extols the apparent cosmopolitan nature of Shanghai. There is movement, there are people from all over the world, they all go along the same street.

As waves of travelers and residents moved into Shanghai, the Bund became the main focal point, the place that gave Shanghai an identity, while the original city – the city once surrounded by a wall and canals – fell into oblivion. That part became unconsciously erased from history. Myths overpowered history. The Bund had come out of nothing: “The splendid Bund, bounded on one side by sightly bank and club, steamboat and insurance building, and on the other by the Whangpoo River, is the city’s pride and glory. It is hard to realize that this wide, white road, humming with life and swept by costly automobiles, was once nothing but a well trodden tow-path bordering a marsh.” As seen before, it is true there was only a tow-path, but it connected to the harbor that had been bustling for centuries along the walled city. Foreign trade and the development of “foreign Shanghai” metaphorically took off when it connected to the tremendous on-going trade that was taking place a few miles to the south.

The image of the Bund as a place for leisure and appreciation of architecture was taking roots. In his 1920 edition, Darwent had completely rewritten his introduction to the window of Shanghai: “The newcomer will observe a most striking difference between the river-front of the International Settlement and that of the French Settlement. That of the French Settlement has been captured by commerce; steamers line it, cargo and coolies litter it; it is not pleasant to promenade. That of the International Settlement is a splendid open space – save for a few launches and cargo-boats moored off it. Its pleasant grassy lawn and walks, with an unobstructed view across the open water, across which the cool breezes from the sea are wafted and borne in the heat of summer, make it of untold value to the amenity, the health and beauty of our river-front”. The tone is almost lyrical. The British Bund was no longer a place for trade and shipping, except for “a few launches and cargo boats” that seem to be there by tolerance. With stronger words than in the first edition of his guide, Darwent attributed this success to “the men of a past generation who fought and won the battle for this freedom of the Bund foreshore from all-devouring commerce.” In Darwent’s eyes the genesis of the Bund was almost worth an epic.

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76 Darwent, Shanghai: A handbook, 1904, p. 1
77 Darwent, Shanghai: A handbook, 1904, p. 5
79 Darwent, Rev. C. E., Shanghai: A handbook for travellers and residents, Shanghai, Kelly & Walsh, 1920, p. 1
80 Darwent, Shanghai: A handbook, 1920, p. 1
By the 1920s, the image of the Bund as the beating heart of the city, where powerful firms competed fiercely to build their headquarters, was well established. The competition, in fact, generated a movement for higher and more massive buildings. The shift of the gaze from the “promenade” to the line of buildings started after W.W.I. In the 1916 edition of the Travelers’ handbook for China, the Bund is praised as “shaded and inviting”, although it also points to the “proud buildings for the city’s principal banks and business houses”. Yet no single building is mentioned. In the later editions – 1921, 1925, 1933 – the guide dutifully listed all the “notable buildings”, updating along with the transformation of the Bund. By the beginning of the decade, the technology was available to erect high and heavy structures on Shanghai’s soft and water-filled soil. The 1921 edition of the guide predicted that “it is possible that in a few years time the entire Bund frontage will be filled with six-story buildings”. Reality went beyond this projection. By 1930 an impressive row of buildings took over the entire Bund, creating what a hotel guide called the “billion dollar sky line”.

Neither the French nor the Chinese sections of the Bund were ever able to receive but a very slight, and often derogatory, comment in the writings of British travelers. The French section partly redeemed itself through its installations. In 1899, the Quai du Whampoo is praised for its “fine wharves at which the big Yangtze steamers load and discharge their cargoes and [...] beyond which stretch, far as the eye can reach, the crowded tiers of the Chinese shipping”. The southern section of the riverfront retained its image of a place devoted to shipping and storage, even when improvements were made: “Away to the south, across what until recently was an ill-smelling creek, but is now being rapidly metamorphosed into a handsome boulevard, begins the French Bund, with its wharves and warehouses, and where it ends the Chinese Bund starts.” Except for a few major buildings, like the French consulate of the 1920 rebuilt seat of the Messageries maritimes, one has to acknowledge that the French Bund failed to attract major constructions on its section close to the British Bund. Further to the south, the Chinese Bund was most often overlooked. In 1916, an American resident offered an almost romantic view: “The characteristic feature of the Chinese Bund is its boat population. For more than half a mile little boats called sampans [...] line the shore and extend well into the river”. There were indeed differences between the various sections of the Bund, but as one can see from the visual record, a wide range of activities took place along the riverfront. The presentation of the ‘English’ Bund as a place for rest and leisurely walks fails to reflect the actual diversity of the place and its actual role as a bustling workplace.

83 Tourist Guide to Shanghai-North China, compiled by California Directory Association, compliments of Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels Ltd., [Shanghai], n.p., 1930, p. 15
84 Bird, The Yangtze Valley and beyond, 1899, p. 23. For this author, the French settlement is “small, markedly inferior, and gives one an impression of arrested development.”
85 Gamewell, The Gateway to China, p. 43
86 There will be a sequel to this paper in the form of a visual narrative on “The Bund at Work”.
Chinese visions of the Bund

By comparison with Western enthusiasm for the Bund, Chinese records fail to convey the sense of a similar fervor. The Bund almost never appears as a central reference for the city. Even if it struck the eyes of early travelers – such as Wang Tao in 1848 as we shall see below – and while it probably impressed scores of Chinese visitors, Chinese city guides glossed over the Bund.

In 1848, on his first visit to the city, Wang Tao seems to have been impressed by the row of buildings along the Bund that he viewed from the river: “As soon as we got up the Huangpu [river], it was all at once a different world. Looking out from the boat laid an expanse of mist and water with a forest of masts and sails. All along the bank of the river were the houses of foreigners, tall buildings whose roofs seemed to reach to the clouds, with elaborate gates and ornate flags.”

There are two problems with this description of Shanghai in 1848. The first one is the date of writing which, while unclear, was about three decades after Wang actually took his trip to Shanghai. While he may have kept a diary, his 1891 publication, first serialized in a newspaper, is the only evidence we have.

In other words, his memory may have been tainted by his more current view of the Bund. The second issue is that visual evidence from contemporary paintings does not fully support the view presented by Wang Tao. Paintings are of course imaginary recreation of reality. Yet these paintings were produced by local artists, both Chinese and Westerners, who cared less about the latest in painting than in describing what they saw.

In our study, we have matched all our paintings with actual photographs and established that these paintings were fairly accurate on all accounts: location of buildings, distribution, general appearance, etc. If we rely on the first painting known to us as dating from 1849-1850, about the time when Wang Tao arrived in Shanghai, there was hardly anything that should have impressed a young man fresh from Suzhou, a city of close to one million people at the time. There was less than a dozen buildings scattered along the riverbank, from the British consulate to the Russell & Co. compound. None of them could be confused with potential skyscrapers. Actually, the building of the Chinese Imperial Customs even appears as the tallest structure on the riverfront. The only major difference was certainly style, but quite opposite to the elegant Chinese Customs, Western buildings were sturdy and square, though their colonnades and balconies gave them an airy aspect. The unusual façades may have been an element of surprise, especially the columns which certainly gave the impression of “reaching to the clouds”.

Wang Tao also noticed the flags that hung in front of many buildings, either the company...
flag or the flag of the country the company represented.\textsuperscript{90} As to the “forest of sails and masts”, it is unlikely there was such a concentration of vessels in front of the British settlement. All paintings tend to show a more sparsely populated mooring. And aside from the visual record, we know from other records that if any such forest was to be found in 1848, it was across the Chinese section of the riverfront, along the walled city. This is where for centuries thousands of ships had been mooring every year.\textsuperscript{91}

The testimony of Wang Tao has remained an unchallenged view of early-treaty port Shanghai in Western and Chinese literature.\textsuperscript{92} This image is taken for granted and has been repeated up to this day without critical distance.\textsuperscript{93} Quite interestingly, it is not unlike the mythical and romanticized view of the later Bund we have inherited from the 1920s-1930s. What this parallel between the record by Wang Tao and visual sources suggests, apart from the issue of a distorted memory, is that the confrontation of textual records, from which historians elaborated their interpretation both of the appearance of mid-nineteenth century Shanghai and the reaction of a young Chinese literati to this scene, calls for a second and more cautious reading of these textual records. While the paintings by themselves would be a questionable source, their systematic study through time and confrontation with early photographic records actually provides a solid basis for a “visual reconstruction” of the early Bund and an alternative tool through which to reassess the textual record.

The first image of the Bund Wang Tao recalls actually does not seem to have made a lasting impression on him. At least, it failed to attract him for a visit or casual stroll. In the diary he kept at various times between 1858 and 1860, Wang Tao usually mentions the various places he went to with his friends or by himself. The Bund is mentioned only once, after he had taken a trip to Hongkou, across Soochow Creek.\textsuperscript{94} In other words, apart from this initial mention in his recollections, the Bund never became a point of reference in his mental geography of the city. Actually, his whereabouts were centered more clearly on the walled city. A contemporary of Wang Tao, Ge Yuanxu, was equally insensitive to the Bund. In the first Chinese city guide he produced, he makes no mention of the Bund, or of any part of the riverfront, although it introduces the reader to shipping and shipping routes from Shanghai. Quite evidently, it failed to strike a chord in the mind of the author.\textsuperscript{95} In fact, one has to observe that in Chinese textual sources, the “Bund” failed to become the icon that figures so prominently in Western writing about the city.

\textsuperscript{90} In the early period of settlement, trade companies often also served in a consular capacity for a given country. Jardine, Matheson & Co. displayed the Danish flag; Dent & Co. carried the Portuguese flag; A. Heard & Co. represented Russia. In 1867, Great Britain, France, Spain, Prussia and the United States were the only powers represented by official consuls. Dennys, N. B. (ed.), \textit{The Treaty ports of China and Japan}, London, Trubner and Co., 1867, p. 380

\textsuperscript{91} Zhang Zhongming, “Qing qianqi shanghai gang fazhan yanbian xintan”, 1987, p. 91

\textsuperscript{92} Yuan Xieming, “Gongbuju yu shanghai luzheng”, 1989, p. 170


\textsuperscript{94} Wang, Tao 王韜, \textit{Wang Tao riji 王韜日記}, p. 117

\textsuperscript{95} Ge, Yuanxu 葛元煦, \textit{Hu you za ji 滬游雜記} [1876], Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1989.
A close examination of a Chinese city guides published through the Republican period confirms the lack of interest for the Bund. This may be due to their pragmatic approach to the city that the guides usually describe very systematically under every aspect. These guides are less conceived to assist for a tour of the city, like the Darwent or All about Shanghai guides with their “tours” of the various sections of the city, than to introduce the reader to the various resources Shanghai offered. The city is defined geographically, but it has no center to start from. It is divided into various themes (government, industry, leisure, etc.) rather than districts or areas. Even the photographic record in these guides fails to offer a glimpse of the Bund. It appears almost furtively in one guide through a picture of the Public Garden or of the W.W. I Memorial. There is no way to say whether this was a conscious choice or simply the result of their editorial structure, but obviously the Bund was not an element of pride in Chinese guides.  

As we shall see below, this may explain why the post-1949 guides also remained silent about the main promenade of the city. The only full presentation of the Bund for tourists we have found is a special issue of the Lüyou zazhi 旅行雜誌 (China Traveler) in January 1930. In the article devoted to the Bund, the author introduced the reader to the magnificence of the Bund, but in a poetic language. No superlative here. No mention of Westerners either. This was China modern. Then the paper took the reader along the Bund.

Although the waitan (Bund) was absent from city guides, it eventually came to be associated to Shanghai as a synonym for the city’s name. The waitan epitomized Shanghai, not necessarily physically, but rather for its lifestyle, attractions and dangers. A 1942 guide, Da shanghai, devotes two short sections to “tan”. One section “Huangpu tan” presents the Bund as the “point of origin” of the International Settlement, but immediately proceeds to describe it as the “Wall Street” of the city, with a high concentration of banks from all over the world. No other aspect of the Bund is mentioned, safe for the impressive architecture of these financial establishments. The other sections of the riverfront are glossed over. In another section the author explains to the traveler the meaning of “Shanghai tan” as the metaphor for the city as a whole, a place of pleasure for the rich, a fine example of a modern city of the 20th century, but also of traps and dangers.

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96 This discussion is based on the examination of the following guides: Shanghai zhinan 上海指南 (Guide to Shanghai: A Chinese Directory of the Port), Shanghai, Shangwu yinshuguan, 1909 (1st ed.); 1919; 1920; 1923; 1925; 1926; 1930; Shanghai youlan zhinan 上海遊覽指南 (A Comprehensive Guide of Shanghai), Shanghai, Zhonghua tushu jicheng gongsi, 1923; Lin Zhen 林震, Shanghai zhinan 上海指南 (Guide of Shanghai), Shanghai, Shangwu yinshuguan, 1930; Shanghai shenmi zhinan 上海神秘指南 (Secret Guide secret of Shanghai), Shanghai, Datong tushushe jianyin, s.d.; Xu Wancheng 許晚成, Huang Jingwan 黃警頑, Shanghai zhinan 上海指南 (Guide of Shanghai), Shanghai, Guoguang shudian, s.d.; Shen Bojing 沈伯鍾, Shanghai shi zhinan 上海市指南 (Guide of the Shanghai Municipality), Shanghai, Zhonghua shuju, 1933; Liu Peiqian 柳培潛 (ed.), Da shanghai zhinan 大上海指南 (Guide of Greater Shanghai), Shanghai, Zhonghua shuju, 1936; Leng, Xingwu 冷省吾, Zuixin shanghai zhinan 最新上海指南 (New Guide of Shanghai), Shanghai, Shanghai wenhua yanju, 1946; Wang Changnian (ed.) 王昌年, Da shanghai zhinan 大上海指南 (Guide of Greater Shanghai), Shanghai, Dongnan wenhua fuwushe, 1947.

97 Sun Enlin, 孫恩霖 “Pubin cansang” 浦濱滄桑錄, Lüyou zazhi 旅行雜誌 (China Traveler). Vol. 4, no. 1, January 1930, pp. 67-73
disillusions. In fact, this vision is certainly the one that prevailed, at least through other media. In movies, in particular, the Bund often appears in the ‘opening credits’, along with views of modern buildings and department stores. Quite clearly, the visual record left a very different imprint about the Bund on people’s mind than written sources. There is a striking difference, however, between the Western and Chinese visions in the twentieth century. While the former wrote about it as an ode to their accomplishments in Shanghai, the latter used it to convey a sense of urban modernity.

**Architectural Development and Change of Function (1849-1949)**

The status of Shanghai, as one of the principal entrepots between Europe and China, was mirrored by the architectural development of its waterfront. From its initial period as a meager outpost of mercantile enterprise the Bund quickly became the main stage for showcasing the city’s growing stature as a nexus of trade and finance. By tracing the growth of its physical form we gain some insight as to how Shanghai saw itself and wanted to be seen by the outside world.

The Bund in the International Settlement went through three successive waves of renewal. Of course, the erection of new buildings did not take place at the same time during these periods of transformation. Yet on most locations buildings were torn down and resurrected two to three times. In this section we shall examine the architectural renewal that took place on the bund over a century. This study includes three visual narratives that attempt to take the reader along the Bund at three different periods.

From the 1850s to the early 1870s, the Bund was lined with one- or two-story buildings [See VN “A stroll along the Bund in the nineteenth century”]. While they may have looked impressive to the newcomer, as Wang Tao recalled it, the buildings distinguished themselves more by the architecture than by the actual height. Chinese temples or guild halls in the walled city were far more imposing. The first generation of buildings was made up of constructions that often combined both offices and living quarters. Some companies were able to acquire a large track of the riverfront where, like and Dent & Co. or Russel & Co., they established a large compound made up of several constructions. Later, these compounds wereparcelled out and gave way to new individual structures.

The second wave of construction was spread over a few decades starting from the 1880s to around W.W.I [See VN “The Shanghai Bund at the Turn of the Century”]. There was a double transformation. On the one hand many original lots were subdivided and opened up space for entirely new buildings. On the other hand, many existing edifices underwent their first transformation from their original neo-classic style to an equally pompous though more massive appearance. The third and last wave of construction – the one that

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98 Ji Longsheng, 鸡笼生 Da shanghai 大上海 (Greater Shanghai), Taibei, Nanfang zazhishe, 1942, pp. 11-12 and 22-23. The guide presents only a few other major streets in the International Settlement (Nanking, Peking, Foochow, and Fukien roads).

99 See for instance Shen nü 神女 (Goddess), 1934; Malu tianshi 马路天使 (Street angel), 1937 or Sanmao liu lang ji 三毛流浪记 (San mao), 1949.
gave the Shanghai Bund its present allure – took place over a single decade between 1920 and 1929, even if a few more additions were made in the 1930s [See VN “The Billion Dollar Skyline: Shanghai's Bund in 1937”]. The following table lists all the buildings that sprang from ground during these two fateful decades. This spate of construction is a direct reflection of the formidable growth and urge for modernization that engulfed the city before the Sino-Japanese war.

The Third Wave of Construction on the Bund (1920-1937) 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Date of construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yangtze Insurance Company</td>
<td>1916-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Line Building</td>
<td>1920-1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jardine, Matheson &amp; Co. Building</td>
<td>1920-1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisshin Kisen Kaisha Steamship Company</td>
<td>1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong &amp; Shanghai Banking Corporation</td>
<td>1921-1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Insurance Co.</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China</td>
<td>1922-1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North China Daily News</td>
<td>1922-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yokohama Specie Bank</td>
<td>1923-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of Taiwan</td>
<td>1924-1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs House</td>
<td>1925-1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassoon House</td>
<td>1926-1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of China</td>
<td>1936-1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadway Mansions (across Soochow Creek)</td>
<td>1930-1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messageries Maritimes (French Bund)</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This change is significant because it transpired in a unique semi-colonial setting. The architecture of Shanghai’s colonial period has a complex relation to the overall theme of empire. Architectural forms are not by their nature coercive or exploitative but European styles of construction created the spaces in which the apparatus of both formal and informal imperialism were enacted. Whether by formal administrative bodies or in the subtler expression of power embodied by powerful trading firms, the Bund’s architectural growth in many ways mirrored the relationship between European colonial powers and Chinese treaty ports. Such built environments, especially one as prominent as the Shanghai Bund, are thus the results of imperial processes that, through a visual medium, produce a sense of empire. 101

A Trading Port: The City’s Early Days

The site for the first European settlement at Shanghai lay on marshy agricultural land crossed by numerous canals. The defensibility of these canals, complimented by British gunboats on the Huangpu, were important considerations for Sir Henry Pottinger, the chief British delegate at the Treaty of Nanjing, in selecting a site for the new settlement. The area’s suitability as a trading site, capitalizing on Shanghai’s role as a center of commerce, was also taken into consideration in the delineation of a rectangular parcel of

100 Based on Wu Jiang, Shanghai bai nian jianzhu shi, 1840-1949, 1997, p. 113
101 Crinson, Mark, Modern Architecture and the End of Empire, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003, p. 4
land stretching from Soochow Creek south to the Yangjingbang, a distance of roughly two-thirds of a mile along the banks of the Huangpu.\footnote{Murphey, Rhoads \textit{Shanghai: Key to Modern China}, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 34}

Under the initial Land Regulations of 1845, the river frontage of the International Settlement - the Bund proper - was preserved as a towpath for imperial Chinese grain barges.\footnote{Huebner, Jon W. “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, \textit{Papers on Far Eastern History}, Vol. 39, March, 1989, p. 211} When these rights lapsed in the 1850s, maintenance of the Bund was taken up by the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) who preserved the waterfront as open space while building jetties to meet the demands of steam navigation. In 1862 the SMC began the first extension of the roadway and in the process extended the land area beyond the high-water mark to double the original thirty feet.\footnote{Murphey, \textit{Shanghai}, p. 34}

Formally opened in July of 1849 on the Bund’s most desirable building site - at the confluence of the Soochow and the Huangpu - the British consulate was only completed three years later.\footnote{Murphey, \textit{Shanghai}, p. 69} Due to the low-lying topography, high water table, and unstable soils, the area that was to become the Bund posed numerous difficulties when it came to laying out basic infrastructure that would haunt Shanghai for decades to come. Roads suffered from slips and the sinking away of banks. Before construction could begin on any building the lot’s ground level had to be raised considerably to assist drainage.\footnote{Denison, Edward, \textit{Building Shanghai: the Story of China’s Gateway}, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Academy, 2006, p. 55} Despite these difficulties buildings began to sprout up and, in the early years, were almost exclusively \textit{commercial} in nature.\footnote{Denison, \textit{Building Shanghai}, p. 47} Numerous European trading firms from Britain, Norway, and Portugal, among other nations, established commercial compounds, called \textit{hong}, that varied in size proportionate to the scope of a particular firm’s operations. Generally, these companies comprised six departments - tea, silk, Manchester (cotton goods), shipping and insurance, a land agency, and a catch-all category of “muck and truck.”\footnote{Murphey, \textit{Shanghai}, p. 69}

In the nineteenth century, the \textit{hong} served both a residential and commercial purpose. The building’s back rooms or upper floors were reserved for accommodation, while the ground floor or a covered veranda provided office space. The number of people in each \textit{hong} could range from two to three partners, five to ten European clerks, and up to fifty Chinese staff.\footnote{Dyce, Charles M., \textit{Personal Reminiscences of Thirty Years’ Residence in the Model Settlement of Shanghai}, London: Chapman & Hall, 1906, p. 36} The merchandise warehouses, or \textit{godowns}, were also in the back lot of each compound, around which employees resided in accommodation arranged hierarchically according to seniority and nationality. Kitchens and stables also stood within the compound. Such \textit{hong} often covered acres and often included a garden. In the early years of the Bund’s growth, when land was affordable, these gardens attracted wild
pheasants and contained flowerbeds full of English flowers and subtropical specimens such as flowering aloes, yuccas, palms and wisteria.\textsuperscript{109}

From a structural perspective commercial compounds, as well as most other buildings along the Bund in the late nineteenth century, adopted what was known as a “compradoric” style of architecture. By no means based on sanctified principles of design, this description drew its name from the world of trade and the intermediary figure of the comprador. A comprador was a local resident, or someone fluent in the regional language, hired to facilitate trade and translate between European factors and local merchants. Shanghai’s first European-style buildings were built with local labor from European designs and directed by a Chinese foreman, thus giving rise to the name. Assembled by local Chinese builders according to plans or specifications either imported or drawn up on the scene by the Western firms, the buildings utilized local materials and building techniques. These structures often had verandahs, tile roofs and were generally one or two stories in height.\textsuperscript{110} In order to regulate temperature, the earthen or brick walls were at least three feet thick and plastered or stuccoed.\textsuperscript{111} While a more technical assessment of the buildings’ architecture might be British Colonial, the term compradoric does recognize the vital role played by local labor in actualizing the Bund’s first buildings.

Within the overall label of British Colonial, these early structures adopted a variety of decorative idioms among which Greek Revival and Italianate elements held pride of place. As trade developed, various remodeling efforts “strengthened [the buildings] into massive proportions and modified … by the addition of the indispensable veranda.”\textsuperscript{112} In time, original balconies or porches were enclosed and converted into interior space with the lateral addition of a new verandah further out. Some unique features of these buildings included the prominent tower on the Oriental Bank (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.475.No.0&Op=O) or the viewing platform on the main building of Augustine Heard & Co (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.17540.No.0&Op=O). The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 improved trade, but the overall tendency during the latter nineteenth century was one of steady growth that created larger and more elaborate buildings by remodeling the original construction rather than rapid demolition and construction.\textsuperscript{113}

While Charles Dyce, a thirty-year resident of Shanghai, lamented in his memoirs that “the community was almost entirely commercial … [all] were there to supply in one form or another the wants of trade” not every building on the Bund was given over to the financing of, or trading in, tea, silk, and opium.\textsuperscript{114} In addition to the government buildings of British Consulate and the Customs House, by 1870, when Dyce began his residency in Shanghai, the Bund’s banks, shops, and hongs stood alongside a Masonic

\textsuperscript{110} Huebner, “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, p. 212
\textsuperscript{111} Murphey, \textit{Shanghai}, p. 68
\textsuperscript{112} Dennys, \textit{The Treaty ports of China and Japan}, 1867, p. 378
\textsuperscript{113} Denison, \textit{Building Shanghai}, p. 66
\textsuperscript{114} Dyce, \textit{Personal Reminiscences of Thirty Years}, p. 32.
hall, opened in 1867, and the Shanghai Club, a primarily British social institution established in 1862 (http://virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Map&ID=Map.ID.352.No.0&Op=O) 115. The Shanghai Club’s first building (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.17892.No.0&Op=O), located on the southern end of the Bund on land purchased from the Shanghai Recreation Fund, is a good example of Shanghai’s early architecture. The building’s symmetry, pediment, and columns all provide a link with Classical styles while the arcade, porches and decorative simplicity are indicative of its colonial situation. This did not mean, however, that it was sparsely furnished. In his 1904 guide to the city, Charles Darwent wrote the Shanghai Club had “all the appointments of a first-class club – two large dining rooms and private ones, two billiard rooms, card-rooms, library of 16,364 books, an oyster bar, reading-room, kitchen on the top storey … There are twelve residential rooms.” 116 Thus, despite their location half-way around the world from the London social scene, the Shanghai Club provided its members with a taste of life back in the United Kingdom.

By the end of the nineteenth century the spacious hongs and other legacies of Shanghai’s early years began to give way to more modern constructions. A growing population, burgeoning economy, and skyrocketing price of necessitated a more efficient use of space. The early buildings, built of wood and mud-brick, were especially vulnerable in the humid climate and watery soil of Shanghai. While many of the early compradoric style structures had been demolished by the turn of the twentieth century, some still remained. Among the remaining buildings stood the Siemssen & Co. building (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.16414.No.0&Op=O) part of the Dent & Co. hong, and the twin Sassoon buildings (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.17558.No.0&Op=O). Others would endure for a little while longer.

Consolidation and Growth: Shanghai’s Second Wave:

As the pressure on available space increased, the open hongs of the Bund’s early days began to give way to higher-density constructions. A volatile real-estate market and demand for housing within the International Settlement provided the background for the second wave of architectural development on the Bund. 117 Complementing this growth were Shanghai’s own nascent industrial facilities that could now supply some of the materials that earlier had to be imported. Even some of the firms that had their beginnings in mercantile activities began to take advantage of the property boom by speculating in land and property, sometimes with great financial success.

The transformations of the Shanghai skyline caused by these developments are readily visible in the photographic record. Maybon’s 1873 photograph of the Bund (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.17618.No.0&

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115 Denison, Building Shanghai, p. 68
116 Darwent, Shanghai, 1904, 10
117 Denison, Building Shanghai, p. 76
Op=O) reveals a well-developed settlement with almost a dozen ships anchored in the river but it still has the appearance of a quiet harbor with few major structures on the riverfront. The French Bund, located south of the International Settlement, presents a few large buildings, while even further distant the low white hong of the Chinese merchants are visible along the city wall. In the 1908 panorama (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.17623.No.0&Op=O) the scene is completely different. Steam has replaced sail, the buildings are taller, and factories crowd along Soochow Creek and the stretches of the Huangpu north of the Garden Bridge. Likewise, a change in architecture is apparent as a larger variety of buildings jostle for space on the Bund. Limited to six-stories in height, the Bund’s large buildings stood on wooden pilings driven into the silt and there was always the risk of unequal settling during construction. This development set the stage for the vertical growth of the Bund, but before W.W.I the skyline did not reach above six floors.

While the Bund’s buildings did not immediately transform into skyscrapers, a significant development during this period was a great diversification of the Bund’s commercial tenants (http://virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Map&ID=Map.ID.354.No.0&Op=O). Although there had been a banking presence from its earliest days in the form of the Oriental Bank and, from 1865, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), after turn of the twentieth century financial institutions became the largest single type of venture on the Bund. This growth coincided with the construction of many new bank buildings, the HSBC for example moved into larger premises and the first Chinese-run bank - the Imperial Bank of China – built an impressive structure on the south Bund and opened its doors in 1897. As the Bund became more financial, the loading and unloading of ships moved away from the Bund both upstream and downstream. Apart from a few penthouse flats the majority of European businessmen moved out to suburban villas and the city’s firms relocated their warehouses north of the Soochow. The growing distinction between residential, leisure, commercial, and industrial spaces in Shanghai during this period mirrored contemporary urban developments in Europe.

This generation of buildings populating the turn-of-the-century Bund fell into several categories: remainders of the compradoric/British Colonial style, Renaissance Revival, and a variety of other Revival styles. The remaining Colonial buildings were the legacy of the nineteenth century’s successive renovation and remodeling of earlier structures. A good example of this is the old Pustau & Co. building that by 1907 was occupied by the Yokohama Specie Bank, a transformation indicative of the overall move from trade to finance. The structure, built in 1865, is clearly two-storey in a 1876 panorama of the northern bund (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.18679.No.0&Op=O). It is difficult to tell if the louvered shutters of the second floor fronted a porch or a series of rooms, but by 1907 the growing pressure on real estate necessitated the occupation of every available inch. In order to solve this dilemma, the earlier two-storey

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118 Murphey, *Shanghai*, p. 31
119 Kuan, Seng and Rowe, Peter, *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China*, p. 39
structure, with its arched ground floor, simply received a third floor continuing the fenestration and design of the second floor. The Colonial style with its verandahs and gardens was no longer appropriate for Shanghai’s larger and larger companies who increasingly turned to new technologies and styles to build their “public face” on the Bund.

Renaissance revival was one of the most popular styles for turn-of-the-century construction along the Bund. Some examples along include the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank, the Banque Belge, and the Great Northern Telegraph Company. Neo-Renaissance architecture drew from a wide variety of influences, but its origins in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian and later French buildings provide a clear palette of basic forms. These motifs included rusticated masonry, especially on the ground floor, quoins anchoring the building’s corners, symmetrical facades, arched windows, and pilasters. These elements all contributed to the recreation of earlier European structural forms. Some buildings also minimized the windows of the uppermost floor in order to recall the mezzanine floor of original Renaissance buildings. More formal in their appearance, Renaissance revival was widely used by banks. Given the prevalence of banks and other financial institutions on the Bund by the first decade of the twentieth century, it is not surprising to see the adoption of neo-Renaissance design in the second generation of Shanghai’s buildings.

Finally, the Bund was also home to a few buildings that stood out as individual examples of less-popular Revival architecture or as unique unto themselves. From 1892, the new Customs House lorded over the Bund with its 110-foot bell tower. The Tudor Revival influence on Shanghai’s second Customs House is visible in its fenestration and layout. Built out of red brick with white Ningbo stone facings with a red French tile roof, the guidebook, “All About Shanghai” referred to the Customs House as “one of the finest structures in Shanghai, its lofty clock tower a striking feature of the Bund skyline.” As the central government office responsible for the port’s trade inspectors would examine arriving goods in a shed located across the street from the main building. Launches from the Custom Shed’s pier also shuttled passengers the twelve miles to ocean liners on the Yangtze.

Another revival style that added diversity to the Bund’s overall character was the Gothic Revival. Used extensively in the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century, the style was not common in Shanghai but one structure, the Imperial Bank of China building

120 All About Shanghai, p. 45
121 Darwent, Shanghai, A handbook, 1904, 9
122 Gamewell, The Gateway to China, p. 44
An obvious example. The 1897 building featured pointed lancet windows, clustered chimneys, and gables on the top storey. Another anomalous style and among the most remarkable structures built on the Bund is the Concordia Club. Built between 1904-1907 the club served as the Shanghai hub of the German expatriate community until its confiscation by the Chinese government during World War One. A rather fanciful construction, the utilization of central European architectural idioms is clearly shown by the tower on the south-east corner of the building and lavishly decorated interior. Built on the old Gibb, Livingston & Co. lot by H. Becker, one of the only non-British architects working in Shanghai, the cornerstone was laid by Prince Albert of Prussia on October 22nd 1904. While being careful to reserve pride of place for his own countrymen, Darwent commented in his 1904 guide to the city that “this club must be accorded the next place to the Shanghai Club in importance, as the headquarters of the influential German community in Shanghai.” Although the organization was founded in 1865, its new home represented a large jump in social prestige as it joined only two other social clubs – the Shanghai and the Masonic – with their own buildings on the Bund.

Another distinctive structure on in the early 20th century was the Russo-Chinese Bank. Although it draws heavily from the Renaissance revival tradition (a heavy ground floor and pedimented windows) there also appear to be local Chinese influences on the structures top two stories. The roof-decoration, for instance, recalls elements on Chinese buildings and the windows in the building’s central bay – latticed in a Chinese fashion – whether intentionally or not, appear to adopt a Chinese aesthetic.

The transition from a style of architecture – the British Colonial – adapted differently in the various territories of the empire to a slate of forms that, while different in respect to themselves, looked entirely back to Europe for architectural references. Furthermore, the use of revival architectural styles in creating the Bund shows the flexibility of imperial architecture in recalling the past. While individual structures could be built in a wide array of styles, the use of Classical European forms created an imposed historical link with Europe in order to solidify, through these architectural forms, the permanence and inheritance of empire. At this point in Shanghai’s history, there was no attempt to introduce a hybridized, if still deeply imperial, form of architecture, like the Indo-Saracenic style that later found expression in Lutyen’s designs for New Delhi. Of course, the International Settlement was not a unitary entity but rather a complex mix of dozens of nations with competing economic and national interests, but the lack of any “Shanghainese” architecture, at least at this period, is certainly notable.

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123 Denison, Building Shanghai, p. 103
124 Darwent, Shanghai. A handbook, 1904, p. 66
125 Crinson, Mark. Modern Architecture, p. 5
An eclectic mix of buildings and styles of architecture, uniformly looking to Europe for architectural inspiration, now vied for prominence along the western side of the Huangpu. Empty spaces were being quickly filled in and any lateral extension would have to mean the annexation of a neighboring lot or two. Darwent, in his guide to the city, found Shanghai’s Bund quite pleasing, he wrote “the plastered buildings are in the Classic style, many of them are architecturally very fine. They look much more suitable to a subtropical climate than the dull red-brick erections that are unfortunately becoming the rule.” The variety of buildings, whether red-brick or plaster, mirrored the city’s transition from a center for trade and re-export into a diverse hub of finance and industry.

Corollary to this economic diversity was the growing part of the city’s workforce engaged in the manufacturing and service industries, providing goods for the local populations as well as export. Shanghai was still a port city, but she had added significant financial and industrial power to her economic arsenal. The city’s factories, mostly located north of the Bund in the American Settlement, engaged in cotton spinning, silk filatures, feather cleaning, match making, meat packing, paper making, and flour milling. Despite foreign investments and the near dominance of international companies on the Bund, Shanghai remained a Chinese city, politically dominated by the expatriate population but increasingly home to Chinese industrial and commercial capital as well as management and labor resources.

The Billion Dollar Skyline: The Apex of the Bund

If we take the amount of building on the Bund as a barometer of economic success, as Shanghai entered the 1920s business was booming. By the middle of the 1930s Shanghai’s Bund had reached the apex of its development as part of the International Settlement. Called “The Billion Dollar Skyline” the Bund was a proud representative of a city growing into a major regional industrial, financial, and mercantile powerhouse. Beginning in the 1910s residents of Pudong, living across the river from Shanghai proper, would have witnessed the steady heightening of the Bund. While the second wave of growth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had filled out the Bund’s empty spaces to make a continuous built-up streetscape, the final period of architectural development that in turn replaced the Neo-Renaissance buildings was of an order of magnitude larger than its predecessor. Technology, like the safety elevator, steel frames, and reinforced concrete, combined with increasing demand for office space on Shanghai’s premier business street to create the grand new buildings that still grace the city’s riverfront.

126 Darwent, *Shanghai. A handbook*, 1904, 5
127 Kuan and Rowe, *Shanghai*, p., 40
128 Darwent, *Shanghai. A handbook*, 1904, 214
130 Huebner, “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, 213
For Shanghai’s architects of the 1920s and 30s, working with larger budgets and grander possibilities, the preferred mode was Edwardian Baroque. This style was then quite popular for public buildings under construction in London. Instead of the complex stacked orders of the Neo-Renaissance, Gothic Revival, or Neo-Georgian, this new style was solid, stone-built, with heavy rustication that promoted a sense of stability and establishment for whatever offices resided within. The close connection between Edwardian Baroque and commercial ventures has also been termed “big business classicism” as its tenants were usually drawn from the great international companies of the day.

Two excellent examples of these new buildings are the second Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.15090.No.0&Op=O) building and the rebuilt Shanghai Club. These two representatives of the financial and cultural power of European, especially British, financial power adopted the Edwardian Baroque idiom then popular in the metropolis as a model. The enormous second HSBC building, designed by the firm of Palmer and Turner, took shape between 1920 and 1923 and, with the neighboring and equally grand Customs House (completely rebuilt in 1928), occupied the entire block between Foochow and Hankow Roads. The massive structure, with a frontage of three-hundred feet on the Bund, is an impressive testament to the power of British merchants in China during this time. Clad in Hong Kong granite, with a steel skeleton, the HSBC building’s huge dome, monumental scale, and classical inspiration, is perhaps Shanghai's best example of the Edwardian Baroque.

The interior of the HSBC building likewise reflected the elaborate decoration of the Bund. Entering from the Bund the visitor walked into an octagonal entrance hall with each side panel holding a mural symbolically depicting a great banking centers - London, Paris, Calcutta, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, and New York were all shown in the lobby. A huge main banking hall under the barrel-vaulted ceiling extended almost the entire length of the building. At the south-west corner of the building was the Chinese banking hall described as “a blaze of Chinese decoration” and “the boldest scheme of decoration ever tried in a modern building.” Probable hyperbole aside, that the use of significant decorative elements from the Chinese tradition was enough to draw the note of the Far Eastern Review indicates the extent to which European architectural norms prevailed.

A second, non-commercial, example is the second building built for the Shanghai Club. The Shanghai Club (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.15081.No.0&Op=O) perhaps the most exclusive club in the city, was also the oldest social establishment on the Bund and a hub of (principally British) activities. The last edifice to

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132 Crinson, Modern Architecture, p. 6
133 Huebner, “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, p. 140
house the Club, designed by BH Tarrand, opened in 1911. Like its other Edwardian Baroque counterparts on the Bund, the Shanghai Club adopted many neoclassical elements. Six ionic columns marking the façade, the building is split into three horizontal divisions by strong bands that visually recall a column, and numerous neo-classical decorations like pedimented windows and carved floral swags grace the exterior. The two turrets atop the building’s front corners, however, add a rather fanciful element and appear almost Indo-Saracenic in style. Inside the club furnishings matched the elaborate exterior. A Grand Hall measuring ninety by thirty-nine feet was on the ground floor accompanied by a bar, billiards rooms, a news room, and a grand dining hall. Forty guest bedrooms occupied the second and third stories. While the new club buildings increased the space available to the club, there were mixed reviews from members who felt the new building, while certainly grander, was not as comfortable.134

While the majority of new buildings adopted versions Edwardian Baroque, as also demonstrated by the new Jardine and Matheson building (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.1423.No.0&Op=O) and the Glen Line offices (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.15097.No.0&Op=O), there were certainly other architectural styles that emerged on the Bund during its heyday. A collection of banks opted for a more reserved Neo-Grec style. Presenting solid façades with minimal decoration that recalled the authority of Classical buildings, the austere frontages provided homes for the Yokohama Species Bank, the Standard Chartered Bank, and the Bank of Taiwan. Any discussion of Shanghai’s architectural development, however, would be remiss without mentioning Sassoon House (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.1583.No.0&Op=O). Ordered by the eponymous mercantile and real estate family and one of the most distinctive buildings on the Bund at 240 feet tall, the structure took three years (1926-1929) to complete. Standing on the triangular plot of land between Jinkee Road, Nanjing Road, and the Bund, the building’s front façade was twelve stories with the remainder being nine floors tall. With its unique pyramidal roof and Art Deco features, the centerpiece of the Sassoon real-estate empire contained office and retail space, restaurants, a ball room, a dining room, and the luxurious Cathay Hotel (http://www.virtualshanghai.net/GetFile.php?Table=Image&ID=Image.ID.298.No.0&Op=O).135

The Bank of China building, the last major construction project on the Bund before the Communist takeover, perhaps stands as the best representative of a fusion of styles and motifs between European and Chinese principles of design. While there were no complete structures on the Bund that adopted Chinese styles in their exterior, the Bank of China building perhaps comes the closest to using indigenous architectural features. The green-glazed tile roof and decorative motifs on the structure’s façade are certainly influenced by local traditions. Although built by a European company, Palmer and Turner, one of the leading architects on the project, Lu Qianshou, was Chinese. Chronologically the last building to go up on the Bund, the Bank of China is The Bank of China stands as

134 Huebner, “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, p. 143
135 Huebner, “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, p. 135
one of the only spaces on the Bund exhibiting an external combination of Chinese and European design in a modern building.

Shanghai’s final wave of building, with few exceptions, remained tied to the architectural inheritance of Europe. The city’s development must be weighed against the architectural continuity Shanghai shared with London as a site of imperial development. While not so strong an expression of European imperialism as found almost contemporaneously in the form of Lutyen’s Delhi, the architectural projection of cultural, social, and economic power on the Shanghai Bund was nevertheless significant. Classicism, in the form of Edwardian Baroque and Renaissance Revival, was regarded as both authoritative as well as, through the fusion of classical form with modern conveniences, modern. These principles provided visual demonstrations of the connection between Shanghai’s urban space and corollary institutions in London.\footnote{Crinson, \textit{Modern Architecture}, p. 8.} Despite its visual legacy as an outpost of empire, the growth of a modern city on the shores of the Huangpu was also a unique combination of forces that is obscured by the label “colonial.” If Shanghai is to be understood as a colonial space what role is there for the cosmopolitan fusion of European and Chinese culture that is so uniquely “Shanghainese?”\footnote{Kuan and Rowe, \textit{Shanghai}, p. 36.}

**The Bund in the post-revolutionary period**

The glamorous Bund – a glamour that overshadowed a more complex reality as seen before – started to shatter after the takeover by the Communist armies in May 1949.

The Bund fell into oblivion in revolutionary Shanghai. Even if Chinese travelers coming to the city would certainly make the walk to the Bund and have their picture taken, such opportunities became rare with the enforcement of a rigid system of control on the movement of population. Apart from cadres and some technicians (which Shanghai had plenty and actually “exported” to other provinces), few people were allowed to travel. Trade no longer brought the flow of merchants that had made Shanghai famous. The workforce came to be recruited almost exclusively locally, with very few exceptions, after the mid-1950s. Foreign visitors were limited to technicians from the socialist bloc and only very occasional delegations from Western countries set foot in China. Tourism, both domestic and international just dried up.

The city was required to turn itself form a place where “consumption” dominated – and corrupted its people – to a “productive” socialist urban entity. The Bund ceased to be a marker of Chinese urban modernity. On the opposite, it came to be seen as a legacy of Western colonialism. The buildings were simply taken over by the new authorities. Quite symbolically, the new municipal government and the Party Committee elected their quarters in the building of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Their political condemnation of imperialism notwithstanding, there was no destruction by the new authorities as little capital was made available for infrastructures under the new regime. The little funding available went to the renovation of slum quarters and building of
workers’ villages. Many of the features that make a place a city disappeared from Shanghai. One can find a reflection of that in the virtual disappearance of city guides compared to the several yearly publications to be found before 1949. We were able to trace only two such guides, one for 1957 and the other for 1980 when Shanghai started to regain some clout on the national scene. Between the late 1950s and the early 1980s, for about three full decades, Shanghai was no longer a travel destination. The progressive reopening of the city to travelers, however, took a cautious path within the constraining shell of the officially defined “socialist city”. In fact, the 1957 guide amounts to no more than nine pages listing the bus lines and a few places of interest (theaters, cinemas, sport halls, etc.). There is no map of the city.

The 1980 guide provides a further illustration of this definition. In general, the guide seems to target the “serious” traveler, one that comes to Shanghai not to enjoy its cityscape or the pleasures a city usually offers, but the relevant places for doing proper business in a socialist nation. The guide is illustrated with advertisements which an individual would hardly find useful. It’s all about industrial hardware and technical gear. Of course, one would also find some medicine and cameras (a specialty of Shanghai), but hardly any consumer product. The geography of tourist attractions laid out in the guide offers only a very small sample historical landmarks of genuine Chinese origin (Yu Yuan Garden, Longhua Pagoda, etc.) and non controversial recreational areas (public parks, zoo). The Bund, even under its Chinese name, simply does not exist. Nowhere throughout the text is there any reference to the riverfront or to any buildings thereon (not even in their official capacity as the seat of local administration, including the municipal government). The term waitan (Bund) creeps in almost inadvertently in the very last pages of the guide where the schematic map of the major commercial arteries is provided: Nanjing donglu does start from waitan. A 1987 traffic guide equally fails to mention the Bund among its various entries. The term waitan appears only in relation with Zhongshan dongyi lu (East Zhongshan Road, Sec. 1) defined as “the road west of the Huangpu river and the waitan green area.”

Little was done to maintain or enhance the buildings along the Bund or even to the Bund itself until the early 1990s. After the takeover of the city, the municipal government mostly reorganized the wharves and jetties, removing some of them to the south, tearing down scattered constructions to make way for green space. By the mid-1980s, however, the Institute of urban Planning came up with a new design of the Bund, with the proposal to heighten the riverfront to prevent the possible damages from the millennium

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138 *Shanghai zhinan* 1957  上海指南 (Guide to Shanghai, 1957), [Shanghai: s.n.], 1957; *Shanghai zhinan*  上海指南 (Guide to Shanghai), Shanghai, Shanghai kexue jishu chubanshe, 1980.
139 *Shanghai zhinan*, 1980, pp. 167-184
140 *Shanghai zhinan*, 1980, p. 188
141 *Shanghai shi diming jiaotong zhinan* 上海市地名交通指南 (Guide of place names and communications in the Shanghai Municipality), Shanghai, Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1987, p. 45
142 Sun Ping (ed.) 孙平, *Shanghai chengshi guihua zhi* 上海城市规划志, Shanghai, Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe 上海社会科学院出版社, 1999, p. 468
The dam that runs along the Huangpu was elevated from 5.8 to 6.9 meters. For a while, the municipal government fiddled with the idea of transforming the riverfront quite radically. There was a project of building an elevated highway over the original Bund. It would have connected with the massive bridge built next to the Garden Bridge and at the feet of the former British consulate. Fortunately, the project was abandoned, even if the Bund was enlarged and turned into a ten-lane highway (all trees were cut down in the process). A parking accommodating 200-300 vehicles was installed inside the newly built dam. The planned renovation of the Bund was completed in September 1992. Other additions were rather cosmetic, like the erection of a statue to commemorate the heroes of the revolution in Shanghai in the middle of the Bund garden (which again lost a large part of its green tracks to concrete) and one in honor of the first mayor of Shanghai, Chen Yi, in front of Nanjing lu.

The municipal Bureau of Urban Planning started to work on a scheme to preserve the buildings on the Bund by 1984. Basically, it defined the stretch to be protected, from the Suzhou River (Soochow Creek) to Yan’an donglu (ex. Edward VII Ave), and from the riverfront to Henan lu. Two years later, it regulated the conditions for new constructions, limiting their height, and on the protection of green areas along the Bund. Seventeen buildings were also listed as landmarks to be protected. It took another five years for a general scheme to be adopted for the same area, slightly extended to the northern bank of the Suzhou river. Altogether, a total of 40 buildings now came under the protective scheme of the Bureau of Urban Planning. Finally, in 1993-1995, the Institute of urban Planning designed a plan for the development of the Bund in three sections: the Bund Finance and Trade area (Waitan jinrong maoyi qu 外灘金融貿易區), the Southern Bund (Nan waitan qu 南外灘區) and the Northern Bund (Bei waitan qu 北外灘區). These sections corresponded to the “original” Bund and the French Bund respectively. The third section comprised the area known as “Consular row” before 1949.

The new scheme (http://virtualshanghai.net/Map_List.php?ID=350&CF=3) included a detailed classification of all the buildings in the area defined in 1984. All the buildings along the Bund were retained either as “to be protected” (baohu jianzhu 保護建築) or “to be safeguarded” (baoliu jianzhu 保留建築). In fact, these categories crossed historical lines as both historical (namely pre-1949) and more buildings could be found in both categories. They could be rehabilitated, but their original appearance had to be preserved. Behind the first fronting blocks, most buildings fell under the category of multi-story or high-story buildings (whatever that meant) and could either be torn down and rebuilt or remodeled to fit present-day requirements for business (http://virtualshanghai.net/Map_List.php?ID=349&CF=3). Further south, the municipal authorities seems to have adopted a rather strange policy. This section of the river front

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144 Sun Ping (ed.), *Shanghai chengshi guihua zhi*, 1999, pp. 405-407
145 Sun Ping (ed.), *Shanghai chengshi guihua zhi*, 1999, p. 469
146 Sun Ping (ed.), *Shanghai chengshi guihua zhi*, 1999, p. 470
was historically much less glamorous. It had been used mostly for the traffic of people and goods. The few significant buildings that lined it, like the former French consulate, were destroyed in the late 1970s-early 1980s. After surveying the area and taking international advice, the local authorities opted in 1994 for a plan of redevelopment of only the northern part as an area devoted to trade, finance, and tourism. The major passenger station was also maintained, but the wharves were renovated and some were moved away (http://virtualshanghai.net/Map_List.php?ID=347&CF=3). Yet, what the plan defined as the “northern part” of the Southern Bund was actually the southern section of the former French Bund. The plans of the municipality seem to have left out the stretch of riverfront between Yan’an donglu (ex. Edward VII Ave) and Xinkaihe lu (ex. Place du Chateau d’eau) that formed the French Bund (Quai de France). The apparent rationale behind these choices may be one of history. On the one hand, the “British Bund” formed a remarkable row of historical buildings that link Shanghai to its colonial past. On the other hand, the selected section of the French Bund is associated to Shiliupu (十六鋪), the historical riverfront of the former walled city. Both sections have a relationship with a past that had to be balanced.

Conclusion

In the 1990s and 2000s, as in the 1930s, the focus remained firmly centered on the “British Bund”. While its buildings are a legacy from Shanghai’s colonial past – something that was definitely erased during the first three decades of the regime – they are now being viewed in a different perspective by the city’s leaders. The city has invested in a sumptuous illumination scheme to highlight the buildings on the Bund and emphasize Shanghai’s glamour. The buildings have been voided of their historical content or substance. The colonial past has been pushed back into the fold of history and only the thin surface of its heritage, reinterpreted for both domestic and international consumption, is being promoted. The Bund has become a “heritage” in a quasi UNESCO definition, a set of historical monuments worth preserving for their own sake, but not for what they represent historically. Worth preserving for what they convey in the current search of Shanghai for a new identity, or a renewed identity as the city reconnects with the world. That process is not unique to Shanghai. China has been in the grip of a “nostalgia” for the “old” – actually a real industry. But beyond the commercial aspects, this phenomenon reflects the need of the population and its leaders to reevaluate and reinvent the past in the context of the post-Deng reforms.

In Shanghai, this reevaluation was nurtured by a reconstruction of the collective memory of the colonial past. The Bund buildings were, mutatis mutandis, the material blocks that gave a reality to a reinvented and sanitized past. Re-imagining the history of the city was a way to reassert local identity and pride, and to reconnect the past with a place yet to be conquered on the global scene. This imagined glorious past – actually a de-historicized past – fit both the ambitions of the local leaders and expectations of the local leaders.

147 Sun Ping (ed.), Shanghai chengshi guihua zhi, 1999, p. 473-475
population to put Shanghai at the forefront of Chinese modernity. Memory, more than history, has redefined how the Bund should be viewed and seen. Nowadays, the Bund has fully become part of the historical heritage of the city. It has its own article in Chinese Wikipedia where it is hailed as an “international architectural exhibition cluster”. ¹⁴⁹ Any search on the Internet generates hundreds of links and thousands of photographs. Many times, one encounters serious approximations about the history of the Bund (one guide even states the Bund has been in existence for hundreds of years), superficial references to its glamorous past (most often by Westerners), etc. Yet, it is clear that the Bund/外滩 has become fully part of Shanghai’s memory and claim for glamour on the worldwide stage.

¹⁴⁹ The thrust of the whole paper is fairly accurate, with an emphasis on the Public Garden and its contested opening to the Chinese in 1928. The English version is quite similar, although the emphasis is more on the history and architecture. See (Chinese) http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%A4%96%E6%BB%A9 and (English) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bund.