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### Becoming a Shanghailander: A Foreign City on Chinese Soil

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**Becoming a Shanghailander: A Foreign City on Chinese Soil****Bingjie Xie****Becoming a Shanghailander: A Foreign City on Chinese Soil**

Shanghai, the largest city by population in the world currently, enjoys the advantages of the favorable location near the Yangzi River Delta that made it a natural pivot for trade between China and Southeast Asia. Even though the first Opium War in 1840 marked the beginning of China's humiliation by the Western powers, it transformed Shanghai into a special "treaty port" open to foreign trade and settlement on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1843. The Treaty of Nanjing constituted a major turning point in the local history, which brought dramatic changes to Shanghai. The city's physical size quickly doubled, and its population reached one million by the early 1900s, increasing by ten-fold during the hundred years following the arrival of the first Western settlers.<sup>i</sup>

**Historical Background**

The English Settlement of Shanghai was established in 1845, followed by the French Concession in 1849 and an American Settlement in 1854. In order to compete with the French Concession, the English Settlement and the Americans' small settlement in Hongkou combined together as the International Settlement in 1863. The extraterritorial city of Shanghai was born, and two-thirds of it were controlled and administered by an international body dominated by the British and Americans and one-third was controlled by the French. Additionally, the three districts of Zhabei, Nanshi and Hongkou were controlled by the Chinese government for the next hundred years.<sup>ii</sup> The specific word "Shanghailanders" was created in this period, which referred to the Anglophone residents of the British and American settlement. According to Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Shanghailanders came from and maintained ties with Britain, and they thought of the name "Shanghai" as standing primarily or exclusively for the city's foreign-run districts. Shanghailanders viewed their "eastern home" as a place to which loyalty was due, since it was not just a city they were passing through. They did not feel awkward about taking advantage of local structures of foreign privilege, since they thought of the Shanghai that mattered to them as something that they grew themselves due to the extraterritoriality.<sup>iii</sup> These were the small treaty port people, whose fortunes were tied up with the existences of the British Concessions and extraterritorial privileges in China. Shanghailanders worked in treaty port service occupations, which included administrative and service sectors. Additionally, some of them worked for or ran utility firms and real estate companies.<sup>iv</sup> The settlement in Shanghai was no city colony like Hong Kong, but a rising city with the foreign self-administered enclaves at its center.

**The Trade Advantages**

The biggest advantage which Shanghailanders achieved was trade development. After British Consul George Balfour's proclamation of 1843, direct foreign trade at the port of Shanghai was opened immediately. During this period, imports equaled \$433,729 and exports were valued at \$146,072.<sup>v</sup> Under the Treaty of Nanjing, tariff duties at Shanghai were the opposite of the prewar "Canton system," in which foreign tariffs were considered tribute and belonged to the imperial household. The Haiguan branch of the Hubei administered the tariffs at Shanghai with standard Haiguan procedures, removing authority from "Hoppon" and Cohong. In the 1840s, the

trade increased with more foreign ships coming to Shanghai. In 1844, the first full year the port was open, 1,500,000 pounds of tea and over 4,000 bales of silk were shipped out.<sup>vi</sup> Imports included 472,902 pieces of British-manufactured cotton goods and a smaller quantity of woollens. At the same time, revenues came to £487, 527.<sup>vii</sup> Shanghai became China's most industrialized and modernized city, which served as the headquarters for most British interests in China. In 1931, Shanghai accounted for some 75% of total British direct investment in China; five years later some 60% of British trade was going through the city.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Banking**

In the 1900s, a new elite emerged in Shanghai. Among those Shanghailanders, most of them were educated overseas and were recipients of advanced degrees. They presided as bankers, industrialists, entrepreneurs, lawyers and so forth. They formed companies, established schools, ran businesses, and engaged in an expanding range of social, political and charitable activities.<sup>ix</sup> Shanghailanders were united economically in their common dependence upon the existence of a foreign-controlled society in the Chinese treaty ports. According to the *Shanghai Handbook for Travelers and Residents*, twelve foreign banks were opened in 1904. These banks included: The Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China, which was a bank incorporated in London in 1853 by Scotsman James Wilson under a Royal Charter from Queen Victoria<sup>x</sup>, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, which was established in Hong Kong in 1865, and The Imperial Bank of China, which was the first Chinese-owned bank modelled on Western banks. These banks were located on the Bund, which is a waterfront area in central Shanghai. The area centers on a section of Zhongshan Road within the International Settlement, which runs along the western bank of the Huangpu River, facing the high, modern skyscrapers of Pudong, in the eastern part of the Huangpu District.<sup>xi</sup> Shanghailander society was in origin a British society, and was created to further British economic interest. Elite Shanghailanders had more connections with the elite expatriates than with their fellow settlers, and this was also evident in patterns of sociability.<sup>xii</sup> Even from their social life, we can trace their interests in banking and finance.

### **The Government in the International Settlement**

In order to maintain order and construct roads and jetties, the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) was formed by British Land Renters and met for the first time on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1854. Also in 1854, these Land Renters established a Shanghai Municipal Police Force (SMP) and a Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC) in response to the rebellions in Shanghai. Shanghailanders governed themselves with these administrative departments.<sup>xiii</sup> The SMC was annually elected on a property-based franchise which excluded most Britons from voting. Shanghailanders' rights for election depended on the number of properties they represented.<sup>xiv</sup> The SMC was elected annually by the roughly twenty-seven hundred ratepayers who could meet the following qualifications for the franchise: foreigners who owned land worth at least 500 taels, paying an annual assessment of at least 10 taels, or homeowners paying an assessed rental of at least 500 taels annually.<sup>xv</sup> The ratepayers for 1925 belonged to 22 nationalities.<sup>xvi</sup> Of a total of 2,742 ratepayers in 1925, 42% were listed as British, 20% as Japanese, and 12% as American.<sup>xvii</sup> From this data, it seems obvious that the authorities in the settlement were free to welcome every foreigner who came to Shanghai to be their fellow citizen, except the Chinese. There were some 30-40 Land Renters out of a foreign population of about 250 when the SMC was formed.<sup>xviii</sup> Only in the late 1930s did more than one-sixth of the British community get the vote.<sup>xix</sup> However, outside the French Concession, the SMC was constitutionally responsible only to its electorate, and not to any direct consular or diplomatic authority. Furthermore, the SMC expanded the boundaries of their settlement deep into Chinese

administered territory in the 1860s and in 1899. Even though the plans for extending the settlement were abandoned and rejected after 1925, some 45.5 miles of roads were built by the SMC outside the settlement and triggered a jurisdictional dispute with the Chinese government.<sup>xx</sup> The SMC achieved more and more autonomy over the years through the development of power in the settlement. It had the right to arrest Chinese people in the settlement without the permission of Chinese authority. In addition, the SMC could tax and prohibit external Chinese tax collectors. Furthermore, the Municipal Council's Annual Reports provided a good deal of information about the settlement's machinery and its finances but mentioned little about the activities of the Council itself. On the other hand, the Municipal Council in the French Concession published far fuller accounts of the meetings and revealed much less about the operations of their government.<sup>xxi</sup> From all this data from various resources, it is obvious that the International Settlement was governed in the interests of a small minority of the population (the foreigners), which triggered the issues of racial boundaries and conflicts.

### **The Police Force**

According to the *Shanghai Handbook for Travelers and Residents*, Shanghai was admirably policed and in remarkable order with the huge native population and the mixture of nationalities. The Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC) was a multinational, mostly volunteer force controlled by the Shanghai Municipal Council, which governed the Shanghai International Settlement. Western authorities declared a state of emergency and called upon the SVC, which was composed of foreign men from various nations under the command of British officers, to guard the settlements. Concerned that the forces of the Qing were drawing rebel fire into the settlements, the foreign consuls and military commanders authorized an attack on the Qing forces to dislodge them. The operation was successful, and the battle was thereafter commemorated as an important event in the history of the SVC.<sup>xxii</sup>

### **National identity**

The Shanghailanders' identity was not exactly geographically related to the International Settlement and SMC. The settlement attracted more and more Western residents to live or do business in Shanghai, which contributed to the diversity of the community. In 1854, the population of the settlement stood at 276 foreign residents, including 33 families, numerous bachelors, and several spinsters.<sup>xxiii</sup> The growth of the community was incredible since at least 10,000 Britons lived in the various parts of the city by 1935, sharing the International Settlement along with some 20,000 Japanese, 3,000 White Russians, 2,000 Americans, 1,000 Germans and 1,100,000 Chinese.<sup>xxiv</sup> However, according to the title deeds of 1848, no Chinese subject could legally enter into possession of land, tenements, or houses within the settlement, and Westerners were forbidden to rent or let to the Chinese. Shanghai's business district grew to be located along the Bund in the International Settlement, and the French Concession became a popular residential district for Shanghailanders.

### **Racial and sexual boundaries**

According to the idea of Robert Bickers, socialization reinforced the racial boundaries of the Shanghailander identity. He states that: "Mixing races and nationalities offended and threatened the integrity of the Shanghailander notion of their identity."<sup>xxv</sup> Based on the taboo against marriage with the Chinese, the marriage registers of the Holy Trinity Cathedral contain no record of any mixed marriages between 1923 and 1941. Additionally, the taboo was highly gendered since that against British women marrying Chinese men was much stronger than that against British men marrying Chinese women. Parents in the settlement would send their children to schools in Britain or the schools in the International Settlement with exclusionist policies. In

this way, they could remove their children from the influence of Chinese servants and of the non-British environment.<sup>xxvi</sup> In the views of British authorities, interactions with Chinese and other proscribed groups would undermine the “priority” of Shanghailanders’ identities. Moreover, losing the identity would threaten the British military and diplomatic support, which decreased the value of Shanghailanders.<sup>xxvii</sup> Because of the racist attitudes in the society, it was impossible for British diplomats in China to support a community which had lost all the essences of its British identity. In order to preserve themselves, Shanghailanders had to keep the city, or at least the settlement, free of the poorest Britons who undermined the ‘prestige’ of the race.

Liliane Willens, a “stateless” refugee from Russia, used her experiences to describe class-conscious Shanghai. Refugees like Liliane Willens became stateless in 1921 when the Soviets denationalized all the Russians who fled the motherland during and immediately after the Revolution. Ironically, according to her memoir, it was the Chinese who were being treated as second-class citizens in their own country, while the stateless refugees would often treat the Chinese in the same discriminatory manner as the Treaty Powers’ nationals.<sup>xxviii</sup> Additionally, there were limitations for the Chinese use of the social infrastructure. The Public Garden was closed to the Chinese unless they worked there or were guests accompanied by foreign nationals or were “amahs”. Amahs who were in charge of children were not allowed to occupy the chairs during band performances. The Council aimed to keep out beggars who would spend the night in the park. However, there is a myth that a sign at the park's gate read *No dogs or Chinese allowed*, which the Kuomintang and later the People’s Republic of China used as propaganda tool to illustrate the racial insensitivity of Westerners during the colonial era. In any case, the banning of the Chinese from the Public Garden and other parks in China has remained in the Chinese public mind as one of the many examples of the country's humiliation by the Western powers in the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>xxix</sup>

### **Clubs and Social Interaction**

According to Darwent’s handbook of Shanghai, there were multiple clubs in the settlement. There were six different sorts of clubs in the International Settlement, which included national and local associations, social clubs, literary and educational associations, professional and business associations, philanthropic societies and sporting clubs. Shanghailanders could get the sense of belonging in the clubs and associations, which would provide them with the culture and value of their motherlands. Additionally, the clubs were great places for Shanghailanders to develop their networks and find more business opportunities. However, most of the clubs and associations were race and nationality oriented, which indicates that there were still a lot of conflicts and issues among groups.

Different clubs and associations had brought a lot of vigor to the Shanghailanders’ lives, which helped them to involve themselves in the their “eastern home”. However, there were only a few interactions between the Asians and the Westerners due to the racial boundaries. After the First World War, Shanghai’s foreign population increased steadily. By 1925, a census counted 38,000 foreigners residing in Shanghai’s foreign concessions, out of a total urban population of roughly 2.5 million.<sup>xxx</sup> Because of the discrimination by race, the Shanghai-based *North China Herald* and *North China Daily News* criticized the shaming of the white race perpetrated by the Chinese women.<sup>xxxi</sup> However, with the development of the cabaret culture in the 1920s, social and sexual interactions between white women and Asian men became more and more normalized in the cosmopolitan metropolis.

### **Conclusions**

Shanghailanders, the outsiders in the Chinese' eyes, have built a foreign city on Chinese soil. They were at the top of the economic and social ladder with advantages of wealth, class and prestige. However, the real "Chinese" Shanghai was completely different from the "foreign" Shanghai. During that period, the first impression for "Chinese" Shanghai would be dirty and noisy streets with beggars in rags. In this way, even the stateless refugees like Liliane Willens would state that: "My country was also Shanghai, but a Shanghai populated by foreign nationals and not Chinese."<sup>xxxiii</sup> Even though the first Opium War in 1840 marked the beginning of China's humiliation by the western powers, there is no doubt that the opening of the treaty port triggered the development of Shanghai into the global city it is today.

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<sup>i</sup> Zou Yiren, *Research on Changes in the population of Old Shanghai*, 1980

<sup>ii</sup> Willens, Liliane. *Stateless in Shanghai*. N.p.: Independent Group, 2010. Print P14

<sup>iii</sup> Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N. *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010: A History in Fragments*. London: Routledge, 2009. Print. P23

<sup>iv</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 161

<sup>v</sup> Johnson, Linda Cooke. *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. Print. P210

<sup>vi</sup> Johnson, Linda Cooke. *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. Print. P212

<sup>vii</sup> Johnson, Linda Cooke. *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. Print. P212

<sup>viii</sup> Johnstone, William C., F. C. Jones, and Ernest O. Hauser. "Shanghai and Tientsin; With Special Reference to Foreign Interest." *The American Political Science Review* 34.5 (1940): 1027. Web.

<sup>ix</sup> Yeh, Wen-Hsin. *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949*. Berkeley: U of California, 2007. Print.

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.sc.com/en/about-us/our-history.html>

<sup>xi</sup> <http://www.nbbj.com/work/shanghai-bund/>

<sup>xii</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 183

<sup>xiii</sup> *North China Herald*, 2 July 1854, 203

<sup>xiv</sup> *Report of the Hon. Mr Justice Freetham, CMG, to the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1931*

<sup>xv</sup> Clifford, Nicholas Rowland. *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s*. Middlebury, VT: Middlebury College, 1991. Print. P21

<sup>xvi</sup> Xia, Jinlin. *The Status of Shanghai: A Historical Review of the International Settlement. Its Future Development and Possibilities through Sino-foreign Co-operation*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1929. Print.

<sup>xvii</sup> Xia, Jinlin. *The Status of Shanghai: A Historical Review of the International Settlement. Its Future Development and Possibilities through Sino-foreign Co-operation*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1929. Print.

<sup>xviii</sup> Zou Yiren, *Research on Population Change in Old Shanghai*, 1980

<sup>xix</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 168

<sup>xx</sup> Wakeman, Frederic E. *Policing Shanghai: 1927-1937*. Berkeley, Calif.: U of California, 1995. Print.

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- <sup>xxi</sup> Clifford, Nicholas Rowland. *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s*. Middlebury, VT: Middlebury College, 1991. Print. P23
- <sup>xxii</sup> *The Battle of "Muddy Flat": Being an historical sketch of that famous occurrence written specially for the Jubilee Commemoration thereof at Shanghai, April 1904; with some added particulars relating to the Shanghai Volunteer Corps* (Shanghai, 1904)
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 176
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 177
- <sup>xxv</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 188
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 186
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Bickers, R. "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937." *Past & Present* 1998.159 (1998): 161-211. Web. P 192
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Willens, Liliane. *Stateless in Shanghai*. N.p.: Independent Group, 2010. Print P17
- <sup>xxix</sup> Robert A. Bickers and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom. "Shanghai's 'Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted' Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol." *China Quarterly*, no. 142 (1995): 444-66
- <sup>xxx</sup> Farrer, James, and Andrew David Field. *Shanghai Nightscapes: A Nocturnal Biography of a Global City*. Print. P180
- <sup>xxxi</sup> *North China Daily News*, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1921 and *North China Herald*, March 12<sup>th</sup> 1921
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Willens, Liliane. *Stateless in Shanghai*. N.p.: Independent Group, 2010. Print P61

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