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Advocacy, Agency, and Social Change in Leisure: The Shenbao guan and Shanghai 1860–1900

Abstract This study focuses on the tension between on the one side the openness of leisure pursuits for transcultural imports and on the other the urge to secure an ultimate cultural authenticity even in the very international environment of East Asian treaty ports. It studies the strategy implied in the publishing practice of the British-owned Shenbao guan Chinese-language publisher in the Shanghai International Settlement. Principally a provider of Chinese leisure products from a settlement that was staging itself not just as a commercial center but also as a paradise of leisure, this publishing house still had to establish its cultural credibility by insisting that it was only guided by commercial motives. By stressing its commercial nature as opposed to offering free handouts, it dispelled any connection to religious or political propaganda. By developing a community of contributors and readers largely from Chinese elite circles and republishing many inaccessible or rare Chinese books it showed its Chinese authenticity. And by stressing the ultimate agency of the Chinese buyers and readers in deciding the fate of its products, it countered claims of outside imposition. In the forms chosen, however, the transcultural element dominated. Using highly adapted new printing technologies such as lithography and introducing transnational formats such as the newspaper and the illustrated periodical while promoting transcultural genres such as the novel made its products extremely attractive and competitive to the point of prompting other foreign as well as Chinese publishers to follow suit. This effort effective made Shanghai the media center of China.

Keywords Shanghai International Settlements, cultural broker, *Shenbao*, Ernest Major, Late Qing publishing history

Introduction

As discussed in the "Theoretical Essay" concluding this volume, providers of leisure mostly do this for a living. Those enjoying their offerings live in a time/space following the rules of a gift economy. If they invite others to join them, paying the providers is done out of view, but it warrants some kind of reciprocity from the invitees on a different occasion. There is a point of friction between the provider and the beneficiary as they operate in two different economies and mindsets. As this is the livelihood of the provider, but an unnecessary activity for the beneficiary, the provider has to accept the beneficiary's desire to keep the money aspect out of sight so as to maintain the fiction of a leisure space without constraints that is the condition for its full enjoyment. The pleasure of leisure hinges on the fiction that provider and beneficiary both operate in a gift economy.

This straightforward relationship is more complex in a transcultural interaction operating under an asymmetry of power. For Shanghai as an entertainment center and Chinese tourist site (besides being a trade and eventually industrial hub) that developed into a port as a result of a war with Great Britain, and for the Shenbao guan as a Chinese language and image publishing company with a wide range of leisure products that was owned and run by British citizens in Shanghai, the provider/beneficiary relationship in the domain of leisure developed against the background of such an asymmetrical relationship between the "West" and "China." Both Shanghai the entertainment center and Shenbao guan the publishing company were clearly and very publicly committed to making money out of leisure, and worse, both could be suspected of a secret agenda to serve extraneous religious, commercial, or political interests. The provider's commitment to profit and his possible hidden agenda were both anathema to the enjoyment of the leisure provided, but since both Shanghai as an entertainment center and the Shenbao guan as a provider of print entertainment were exceptionally successful, we will explore the question of how they managed to solve this double quandary.

The denial of the dominant role of foreigners that would have done away with the toxic extraneous agenda issue was not an option in view of the structure of the Shanghai International Settlement, with its manifestly foreign City Council, and the very evident role of Ernest Major (1842–1908) as the manager and visible owner of the Shenbao guan (the three other partners were silent shareholders). A public claim that there was no such agenda would not carry much weight. The second option, insistence on purely commercial interest devoid of any agenda linked to a foreign power or missionary enterprise, kept the money aspect very much in sight, but needed more proof than simple assertion. This study will explore how the city and the company made their case for the truth of the second option.

The attractiveness of Shanghai and the Shenbao guan rested on more than offering to fill the time/space of leisure. They came with the lure of what was then called "new" (*xin* 新), or "extraordinary" (*qi* 奇), namely

modernity in the broadest sense from material products and processes to aesthetics and mindset. Only success in solving the agenda quandary would create the mental leeway for those accessing the leisure offerings of the city and the company to explore this modernity as part of leisure enjoyment.

The Shenbao guan, a commercial enterprise

Since the 1920s Chinese-language scholarship has denounced the Shenbao guan as a "for profit only" enterprise, with very few, and mostly recent, exceptions.[1] It is described as the cultural imperialism part of the imperialist exploitation otherwise associated with "unequal treaties," Treaty Ports, and the strong role played by foreign, especially British, companies on Chinese territory during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The evidence is that the manager and main shareholder, Ernest Major, sold his share in 1890 for twenty times the amount he had originally invested.[2]

Unwittingly, however, this master narrative might have a point. By emphasizing the commercial orientation, it also said that the publishing house was not a subsidized advocacy institution set up to "guide" public opinion through some self-appointed authority, but rather a commercial enterprise aiming to fill the leisure hours of Chinese customers with interesting and entertaining print products.

The Shenbao guan was set up in 1872 as a joint stock company by two men from Scotland and two from London, with Ernest Major as the main promoter and eventual manager. He was a tea trader who had been looking for a good investment opportunity and had been advised by his Chinese comprador that Chinese-language papers were doing well in Hong Kong. It was agreed among the shareholders that he would be entitled to the lion's share of the profits, but was also to personally cover any losses that would put the value of the company below the original investment.

The Shenbao guan started with a newspaper, the *Shenbao* 申報, in 1872, and directly added a literary journal and book publishing.[3] It tried to develop a feel for the Chinese market with a variety of forays that were further pursued if they worked, and abandoned if they did not. In 1878, it acquired lithography reproduction machinery and set up the Dianshizhai subsidiary to publish art and book reproductions as well as an illustrated journal, the *Dianshizhai Illustrated* (*Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報), launched in 1884.[4]

1 Ge Gongzhen 戈公振, *Zhongguo baoxue shi* 中國報學史 [History of Chinese journalism] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927), 78–79.
2 Fang Hanqi 方漢奇, *Zhongguo jindai baokan shi* 中國近代報刊史 [History of the modern Chinese press] (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), 41–42.
3 The journal was the *Yinghuan suoji* 瀛寰瑣紀 [Universal miscellany]; the first (quite sensational) book was the *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [The Scholars], which had been unavailable.
4 On this journal see Rudolf G. Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai huabao*," in *Joining the Global Public. Word,*

At the same time, it opened various branch stores in and around Shanghai and developed a national distribution network for its entire range of products. By 1885, one could order a globe, the reproduction of a Yuan ink painting, an edition of a novel, or a scholarly reference work from this company from anywhere in the Chinese-writing world.

The *Shenbao* was perfectly clear in stressing its commercial orientation. An early *Shenbao* editorial about the "Origins of our Company" starts bluntly: "As a general rule, the purpose of setting up a newspaper company is to sell newspapers with the general aim of generating commercial profit."[5] The editorial directly went on to say, however, that the paper would put its commitment to the best interests of China first even if this was in conflict with its business interests. War, it said referring to the time when this editorial was published, would drive up newspapers sales, but if China was likely to lose as in the present case, the paper would come out against it.

In a separate daily column on the first page, "announcement from our company," Major would offer readers information about the entire range of available products, call for suggestions of works to publish, and ask for help in locating rare texts that should be reprinted. All of these communications contained a commercial element: a high price would be offered for a good copy; someone who had written something the company might want to publish would receive a few copies as gifts for friends rather than having to pay for the printing, which was usual; the new map of East Asia was expensive because copper engravers had to be hired in England to secure high quality; the price of a book was set just to "recoup the cost of typesetting and printing." New books were always announced here with a fixed price, which was another innovation.

A product line geared towards leisure

The Shenbao guan product line was largely geared towards cultured leisure, including scholarly and literary pursuits, having entered the market at a particular time in the development of the Chinese time/space of leisure. The Taiping civil war had ended in 1864 and had left behind a scarred cultural landscape in the lower Yang-tze valley. Many of the famous book and art collections of this region had been destroyed. The same was true of printing blocks of publishing houses. This was a wasteland, where the cultural heritage of the country was threatened, along with the viability of the all-important Imperial Examination system, for which even the simplest books for preparation were now seen as lacking. Since the late 1860s,

Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 105–173.

5 Meicha 美查 (E. Major), "Lun benguan zuobao benyi 論本館作報本意 [On the basic purpose of our company's coming out with a newspaper]," *Shenbao* 1011, October 11, 1875, 1. It starts with the passage translated above: 夫新報之開館賣報也. 大抵以行業營生爲計.

high Qing officials of Han Chinese stock, who had been instrumental in wearing the Taipings down, had started to set up official publishing houses to address the perceived shortage of books after the cultural devastation during this civil war, but they were not interested in publishing works for leisurely pursuits.

Major had spotted this market and had even called upon his Chinese publishing confreres to join in filling this lacuna, which threatened the survival of the Chinese cultural heritage, suggesting that they should go for modern publishing tools such as movable fonts and machine printing. The Company was not simply refurbishing a wasteland with plants that had been there before. As it was entering a market not determined by need but by desire, Major adopted a highly flexible approach to explore and develop the Chinese customer's desires, calling off unsuccessful or premature forays while relentlessly driving for quality.

The titles published indicate the company's assessment of the leisure market: A fair number of the Jiangnan literati elite had survived—often by moving to Shanghai—and had enough money at hand to rebuild at least some of their libraries, if only the books had been available. The leisure pursuits of this more traditional literati elite, many of whom would qualify as a "leisure class" or as retainers of members of the leisure class, included scholarly reading, reading literary works of high stature (poetry, brush notes) as well as (although surreptitiously) middling or low stature (novels), art appreciation and collecting, and poetry and essay writing. At the same time, a quickly growing number of them also saw a need for some dramatic change in the Chinese polity. This made them open to new things. To satisfy and stimulate this interest, the *Shenbao* published reference works about the politics, geography, and history of the world, as well as editorials that provided a platform for the discussion of social and political issues ranging from the need to set up a diplomatic service to women's education to developing a railway network to tearing down the wall separating the court from society.[6]

Shanghai merchants were a second group to which the company catered. The foreign settlements had boomed as the commercial hub in the cross formed by the Chinese south/north trade and that between the rich and productive Lower Yang-tze area and the international market. Chinese merchants who had moved to this settlement had done well, as it effectively protected them from many exactions from the Qing officialdom. They started to adapt to Shanghai's Western-style work week by fixing their leisure times on evenings and weekends;[7] had their own leisure spaces in courtesan houses, restaurants, theaters, and parks; and formed their own leisure interests, which interacted with their aspirations to social

6 See Rudolf G. Wagner, "The Free Flow of Communication between High and Low: The *Shenbao* as Platform for Yangwu Discussions on Political Reform 1872–1895," *T'oung Pao* 104, no. 1–3 (2018): 116–188.

7 Catherine V. Yeh, "Shanghai Leisure, Print Entertainment, and the Tabloids, *xiaobao* 小報," in Rudolf Wagner, ed. *Joining the Global Public*, 201–234.

and cultural recognition. While covering the ground where the interests of both groups—including, very importantly, those of the women[8]—overlapped, the company also provided materials of special interest to each.

After having thus laid the ground for our analysis, we will now probe the surprising relationship between the commodification of this package of Shenbao guan leisure goods and its success.

Dealing with the counter-text: Religious and political agenda

The Shenbao guan was not entering virgin land, but a specific and densely inscribed landscape. It was keenly aware of this environment and reacted to it by consciously marking its distance from three other print endeavors, namely missionary, official, and pulp fiction presses.

Some of the subsidized missionary publications were using entertainment genres such as the novel for advocacy purposes. By dissociating the availability of print products from the willingness and interest of Chinese readers to buy them, the agency of the readers was curtailed and they were even under pressure to reciprocate for the gift (we have no evidence that the missionary novels were sold). The missionary agencies signaled this logic by quantifying the relation between the number of print products distributed and converts gained. By stressing its commercial nature and the ensuing agency of the Chinese audience to buy or reject its products, the Shenbao guan marked itself as a Chinese company that was advocating neither a foreign creed nor foreign interests. Anchoring their products in the (passive) agency of the Chinese consumer to buy or not became the key to the commercial success of this foreign company.

Marking the difference from the government publishing houses was easier. These publications were subsidized, remained within a narrow range of imperial advocacy, and came without any claim to entertainment value. The Shenbao guan offered a mix that not only contained a much more substantial body of reference and model works of use for the Imperial Examinations, but also writings and images for leisure hours, some of them including up-to-date information about China and the world. In a rejection of the official textual hierarchy, all of them came in the same format and with the same editorial care.

Publishers of pulp fiction and other low status works only made their comeback during the 1870s and 1880s. The genre of the novel was particularly associated with low morals as well as shoddy editing, printing, and paper. The company here marked its stance by selecting works that would "make one slap the table with excitement," but would keep within

8 See Rudolf G. Wagner, "Women in Shenbao guan Publications, 1872–90," in *Different World of Discourse. Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, eds. Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 236–256.

the bounds of propriety. To ensure quality, it tracked down original manuscripts or editions of such works (some of them in Japan), hiring renowned scholars as editors, printing them with metal fonts in the same *de luxe* format on fine paper as works in the upper reaches of the textual hierarchy, and offering guides to their appreciation in advertisements, book catalogues, and commentaries.[9] Many of these editions have become the basis for modern scholarly editions.

The formal and prestige markers of the Shenbao guan books announced them as part of a new canon that now included books of learning, easy banter, useful contemporary matters, and elegant poetry by both men and women. The general customers ("elegant and rustic alike," "women and young people") were alerted that some of the more popular fictional works would have them just "split their sides and clap the table with laughter" and be "new and exhilarating," let them sit at home while peeking into the fashionable courtesan houses they could never afford to visit, or browse through a racy *tanci* ballad that still stayed within the confines of decency. Others books offered games based on the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which had been made popular by courtesan houses.

The physical format and appearance of the Company's publications combined markers of high status with suitability for leisurely perusal. The metal fonts allowed for imprints that were much smaller than woodblock prints, but even easier to read. This in turn accounted for the possibility to offer light, small-format books. As travelling for sights and business had become possible and popular again after the end of the civil war, the Company's books filled the slot which the "railway library" was filling in England, and the advertisements were quick to praise the ease with which these books could be taken along.

The Shenbao guan used their Chinese customers (the "market") as judges to decide whether the company represented some foreign interest. The judgement was delivered in two forms; in the sales of Shenbao guan products, and as participation in what might be called a "Shenbao guan community" of well over a thousand men of letters, mostly from the Lower Yang-tze region. From the outset, the Company also succeeded in getting its customers beyond the passive agency of buying and reading its products to an active agency of suggesting books for publishing, helping to track rare copies, contributing poetry and prose, and taking on professional roles of editor, calligrapher, commentator, or writer of editorials in the form of letters.

When the company announced a plan in 1882 to publish a selection of the poetry genre used for the imperial examinations and asked *Shenbao* readers to contribute, the offices were flooded within a week by well over twenty thousand submissions, a clear sign of the acceptance of the company as a force in Chinese culture. The *Shenbao* had to implore readers

9 Catherine V. Yeh, "Recasting the Chinese Novel: Ernest Major's Shenbao Publishing House (1872–1890)," *Transcultural Studies* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 171–289.

to please stop sending more. The extensive selection from these poems that was eventually published did not hide but emphasized the foreign connection. It was entitled *Poems Selected by the Master of the Cherish the News Studio* (*Zunwenge shixuan* 遵聞閣詩選). Zunwenge was Ernest Major's personal studio name.[10]

The explicit commodification of Chinese cultural goods by the Shenbao guan secured the ultimate agency of its Chinese customers, and the unified editorial care given to all publications laid the groundwork for their acceptance as cultured leisure by men of letters and those aspiring to their cultural status. The company had gained enough trust that some thousand Chinese customers were willing within a month to advance a very substantial sum—150 silver liang, the annual salary of a journalist at the time—per head to a joint stock company *pro tempore* that was publishing the first accessible print of the huge illustrated Chinese encyclopaedia *Gujin tushu jicheng*. The investment was returned in the form of a set of this new edition.

The company made great efforts to keep a low profile for the commercial purpose of the enterprise so as to prevent its interference with the enjoyment of the leisure products it offered. At the same time, it developed a whole set of cultural strategies to enhance acceptance and appreciation among Chinese readers, including emphasizing its commitment to preserve China's cultural heritage by republishing works that had become unavailable and encouraging other publishers to join in this endeavor. It added to the cultural capital associated with its products through the great editorial care given to all of them, and by setting them into the tradition of the high point of Chinese printing in technology, quality, and selection, the eighteenth-century Juzhenban editions from the court, but democratizing access to them through the market at very modest prices rather than through high official standing. Its selection of technologies was adapted to Chinese conditions, such as movable letter prints with metal fonts to reduce size and volume and allow for travel reading, and black-and-white lithography that was particularly suited for the reproduction of Chinese ink paintings and stone rubbings, but it continued and modernized the popular tradition of newspainting. In an early exercise of import-substitution, it used bamboo-pulp based Chinese paper rather than the imported Swedish paper used by other Chinese publishers at the time. It highlighted its commitment to accepted Chinese moral values rather than going for the cheap lure of sensational works. It also moved as much of the interactions with the Shenbao guan community as possible into the realm of gift exchanges; and publicly described its (generally very low) prices as a way of simply recouping the cost for typesetting, drawing, etching, printing, paper, etc., rather than boasting about profitability. The company's flagship publication, the *Shenbao* newspaper, with its mix of essays about the great questions of the time on the first page, its international and domestic news,

10 *Shenbao* announcement, September 21, 1882.

its leisure tidbits of poetry, anecdotes, and the occasional translation of a foreign literary piece, and its daily reprint of the court's *Peking Gazette* (*Jingbao* 京報), defined its own role within the context of the idealized Three Dynasties of China's deep past, when sages had ruled, as a modern form to establish "the communication between high and low."

In both domains, establishing the credibility of the Shenbao guan as a company committed to the betterment of China, and establishing its products as goods of refined leisure, the company was successful, aided by astute management. It had steeply rising sales numbers of newspaper copies, books, journals, and image reproductions through its pioneering sales network, its newspaper provided the first and most important platform for public policy discussions for decades, its novel publications established the modern novel as legitimate reading matter, and its use of the Shanghai International Settlement to shield itself from the heavy hand of the Qing court as well as the nervousness of the British Foreign Office while making full use of treaty stipulations that allowed for the national marketing of Shanghai goods laid the ground for the Settlement's status as the media capital of China until WWII and even until the Communist revolution. Looking at the actual steps taken and the communications made, the Shenbao guan's policies for at least the first twenty years of its existence seem guided by a clear and consistent strategy. Interestingly, there is no single document from the hands of Major or one of his major Chinese collaborators that outlined or reflected on this strategy. Major's life was lived through practice, and the underlying strategy has to be extracted from it.

As the company shared the ambivalent position of the Shanghai International Settlement and was part of this paradise of leisure, the Settlement had a natural place in its publications. The *Shenbao* newspaper from early on published "Bamboo twig ballads" (Zhuzhi ci 竹枝詞), about the Settlement from residents and visitors,[11] the *Dianshizhai Illustrated Paper* illustrated sensational happenings in town, and in 1884, the Company presented the city's glories in an album, *Images of the Famous Sights of Shanghai* (*Shenjiang shengjing tu* 申江勝景圖).[12]

Shanghai as a space of leisure and entertainment

The Shanghai International Settlement faced the same problem as the Shenbao guan. The commercial potential of the place had been discovered by foreign merchants and it was managed by foreigners, but to unfold this potential to the full, the city had to find Chinese acceptance beyond reluctant government toleration.

11 "Hu you zhuzhi wushi shou 滬游竹枝五十首 [Riding through the foreign settlements, fifty bamboo twig ballads]," *Shenbao,* June 11, 1876.

12 *Shenjiang shengjing tu* 申江勝景圖 [*Images of the Famous Sights of Shanghai*], ed. Shenbao guan (Shanghai: Shenbao guan 1884), 2 vols.

The Shanghai walled town had served as a shipping transfer point for north-south coastal trade and for the Lower Yang-tze tax grain shipments north. Once permission had been given to foreign merchants to settle and trade on a small barren strip of land outside the walled town, they started to develop the place into the main overseas trade linkage between the rich Lower Yang-tze region and international trading centers. The raging Taiping civil war proved a boon to the Settlement. As both sides were wary of complications with the foreigners, the Settlement became a safe haven to which large numbers of well-to-do and educated Chinese from the Yang-tze valley fled.

Once the Taiping civil war had ended in 1864, the advantages of this trading port, with its relative freedom from Court interference attracted Chinese merchants from all over the country, including Canton, which had previously enjoyed a monopoly role in overseas trade. The massive influx of Chinese into this settlement, which originally had been carved out by the Court for foreigners only, led to the unique social situation of a "mixed settlement" of Westerners and Chinese under a foreign administration. This cohabitation turned into an experiment in urban management of what was often referred to at the time with pride as the Shanghai "Model Settlement."

The influx of sojourners of diverse ethnic backgrounds from Europe and America, from inland China as well as from the British colonies, created a vast entertainment market, especially as most of these sojourners were single men or men without their families. Entertainers from courtesans to chefs and hoteliers, but also including the new urban literati (journalists, publishers, painters, educators, writers), moved in to make the best of these new opportunities; travelling entertainers ranging from the American Chiarini Circus to European music performers and Peking opera troupes put the Settlement on their maps. The resulting fame of the city as a center of entertainment greatly contributed to the attractiveness of the place for businessmen, which in turn boosted both business and leisure ventures.

Since the mid-1860s, the Settlement also began to attract tourists from inland China in a further boost to its Chinese theatres, courtesan houses, restaurants, and hotels, and with it to the city's coffers. Already in 1867, the *North China Herald* spotted the manifold advantages brought by this new development:

> Attracted partly by the means of amusement and dissipation available, and partly by a desire to see with their own eyes the steamers and other foreign inventions whose fame is becoming noised through the empire, wealthy Chinese are beginning to resort to Shanghai for a month's trip, much as, in Europe, people visit Paris or London." [...] "The theatres which stink so in the nostrils of the puritan advisors of the Taotai [...] have attained a wide reputation, and offer a powerful attraction to visitors, who, in however small a

> degree, lead to disseminate among their countrymen an acquaintance with foreigners and foreign customs. Reliance on the patronage of those customers, again, induces the establishment of places of amusement, whose proprietors pay in the shape of rental at least some interest on the large sums that have been given for the land they occupy.[13]

The article is right in noticing that for these inland tourists the journey was not a business affair, but a sightseeing trip "abroad" into the "world" to have fun and experience something sensational and new without having to leave a Chinese-speaking environment. At the same time, the tourists' spending allowed the Shanghai City Council to finance the city's infrastructure as well as further entertainment enterprises such as the race course, all of which enhanced the Settlement's attractiveness. In short, the city's explosive growth and steeply rising prosperity was due to a combination of trade and leisure industries, and both of these were instrumental in securing acceptance of the place among the Chinese gentry and common folk. Trade and leisure are the two mainstays of the modern urban contact zones.

The "Bamboo twig ballads" from these sojourners and tourists wasted no time on sites of natural beauty, of which there were none worth mentioning, but they gushed excitedly about the tall buildings, the wide streets, the restaurants, the theaters, and the stunning courtesans parading through town with their patrons in horse-drawn carriages. As the *Shenbao* published these ballads, other Shanghai publishers came out with Chinese city guides, such as Ge Yuanxu, with his 1876 *Notes on trips through Shanghai*.[14] In their description of the Shanghai Settlements, these works sometimes drew on a Chinese tradition of describing urban entertainment quarters such as Li Dou's *Record of the Painted Boats in Yangzhou* ("painted boats" were used by courtesan entertainers for romantic lake outings with their patrons), a book that was republished by the Shenbao guan.[15] As Catherine V. Yeh has shown, however, Ge Yuanxu's *Notes* focused exclusively on the International Settlement and left out the walled town of Shanghai. It used the language of Penglai/paradise to describe the Settlement as a big theme park with unending attractions, among which the "foreigners and the courtesans stand out."[16] The spirit of this book is well captured by a Bamboo Twig Ballad it quotes:

> On the flats north [of the walled town], all wild weeds are cleared;
> Millions of gold coins the ocean waves bring.

13 "Chinese Theatres," *North China Herald*, January 5, 1867, 1.
14 Ge Yuanxu 葛元煦, *Hu you zaji* 滬游雜記 (Shanghai: Geshi xiaoyuan, 1876).
15 Li Dou 李斗, *Yangzhou huafang lu* 揚州畫舫錄 (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1875).
16 See the chapter "Guides to Paradise" in Catherine V. Yeh, *Shanghai Love. Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 306–309.

The barren hills all made into sumptuous dwellings;
Clearly a mirage city, with fantasy towers.[17]

The engine driving and financing the miraculous transformation of the Settlement from "barren hills" with "wild weeds" to a sumptuous urban center are the "waves of gold" brought in through the opening of international trade. (The historical background for the Qing decision to open these Treaty Ports—the Opium War—is left unmentioned).

With sojourners and tourists there was enough of a market for images capturing this strange place. Besides a flurry of single-sheet prints,[18] we see in 1884 alone two new publications on Shanghai leisure, Zou Tao's (1850–1931) *Shanghai city lights*[19] and *Famous Sites of Shanghai, Illustrated and Explained* with forty-two woodblock (not lithography) illustrations, for which the publisher ran elaborate daily advertisements in the *Shenbao* itself.[20] The latter is the first such guide with illustrations accompanied by detailed explanations. While also including some sights of the walled district town, it followed the model of the *Huyou zaji*, presenting the Settlements' sights itemized and without any visible hierarchy or structure as they might appear to a visitor or *flâneur*. The images range from the electric street lamp to the bell for the fire alarm; from Chinese bowling to Westerners horse racing; from Japanese geishas arranging flowers to Chinese courtesans playing the Chinese lute (*pipa*), riding in a carriage with their beau, or having their photograph taken (Fig. 1). It is an order that needs maintaining: Rickshaw coolies have a row, drunken Westerners start a fistfight, two robbers plunder a Chinese, but there is the Mixed Court, and Chinese prisoners are shown pulling a roller to prepare the ground for a pavement.

The counter-text is easily defined. This is a place of urban order and comfort for sojourner and tourist alike, from wherever they may come, not a foreign bastion nervously guarded against Chinese. The preface drives the point home, describing in an often repeated trope that "gentlemen and ladies, martial men and diplomats, farmers, workers and coolies" "from China's eighteen provinces and the five overseas continents" have all congregated in "this little speck of land" and get along although "they cannot understand each other's language, don't share the same writing system, and have different feelings as well as a diversity in customs."

This is so out of the ordinary that it must be called a "dreamland" (*mengjing* 夢境).[21] One has to see it to believe that it is real. This "dreamland"

17 Ge Yanxu, *Hu you zaji*, 52.
18 For these, see the study by Lai Yu-chih in this volume.
19 Xiaoxiangguan zhuren 瀟湘館主人 (Zou Tao 鄒弢), *Haishang dengshi lu* 海上燈飾錄 (Shanghai: Privately published, 1884).
20 Xiangguotoutuo 香國頭陀, *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* 申江名勝圖說 (Shanghai: Guankeshouzhai, 1884).
21 *Shenjiang minsheng tushuo*, Preface 1b. In this meaning, *mengjing* seems to be a new late Qing term. It was used frequently in stories and essays published in the *Shenbao*, sometimes warning of getting lost in this dreamland of Shanghai entertainment, see Chengchazi 乘槎子, "Meng yu shuo 夢喻說 [On the dream

Figure 1: Shanghai courtesans having their photograph taken. Note the modest artistic and technical quality of the woodblock illustration.

term translates the "model settlement" notion for which there is no other Chinese equivalent with similar utopian echoes. The Shanghai International Settlement is a place of urban leisure and sensational modernity that offers itself as a gift to the tourist's gaze. While keeping the commercial character of the Settlement in the background so as not to deflect from the pleasures to be had, the manifest effort to please the Chinese customers also served as a reassurance that they were the ones who decided what they wanted to see and enjoy and that nothing was imposed on them, least of all a foreign creed or political agenda.

Very much like the *Illustrated and Explained Famous Sites*, the Bamboo Twig Ballads in the *Shenbao* had long highlighted a Chinese perspective and agency of defining what this place was and could offer, which also came with the heightened credibility of an authentic voice. These newspaper recordings of the impression the town had made on Chinese visitors made the place attractive to others. They conveyed the message that

metaphor]," *Shenbao*, December 30, 1872, 3, or the long editorial on dreamland Shanghai, "Xi meng shuo 戲夢說 [On play as dream]," *Shenbao*, September 9, 1887, 1.

this was a place Chinese travelers found hugely attractive although—and because—it was utterly different from any other place in China. The foreign presence in these poems is not coyly hidden, but highlighted as a key to the attractiveness and interest of the place. The foreigners themselves had become attractive exhibits.

When the *Illustrated and Explained Famous Sites*, with its low quality woodblock prints, came out, however, Major saw that he could do much better. He would come up with his own selection of the sites to define the city. In this Shanghai the Shenbao guan itself, the Dianshizhai lithography print office, the building where the Shenbao guan reproduced the gigantic eighteenth-century encyclopaedia *Gujin tushu jicheng*, and even Major's home would become sites to see. He would use the new technology of lithography for better quality, and his newspaper advertising and distribution network would make sure that the book reached the inland Chinese market and with it potential further tourists coming to the town.

The images of the famous sights of Shanghai

Black-and-white lithography was uniquely suited to reproduce Chinese ink paintings and rubbings as well as the new brand of newspaintings in the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*. Major found Chinese illustrators already familiar with lithography and capable of delivering drawings within the strict ten-day rhythm of the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*. The most skillful and prolific among them was Wu Youru 吳友如, who could do both the quick newspainting sketches and the more refined—and much better paid—illustrations for the free supplements to the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*.[22] This was all that was needed to meet the challenge from the *Illustrated and Explained Famous Sites*. Within a few months, the Dianshizhai printed the *Images of the Famous Sights of Shanghai* (*Shenjiang shengjing tu* 申江勝景圖) for the Shenbao guan. With its sixty-two illustrations by Wu Youru, the volume set out to offer a new perspective on the city, presented with the new standard for high quality image reproduction, lithography.

To overcome the prejudice about illustrated volumes as being "common" or even vulgar (*su* 俗), the book came with a very refined combination of a signed sealscript title by the renowned calligrapher Shen Jinyuan 沈錦垣 (Fig 2),[23] Wu Youru's illustrations (Fig. 3a and 3b), and poems or prose texts by "famous scholars" accompanying each illustration that were again done in a variety of fine calligraphic styles (Figs. 4a and 4b).

In the *Shenbao* advertisement for this album, Major introduced the city and the volume:

22 The Dianshizhai illustrators were paid by the piece, and for these two types of illustration the payment was different. For details, see Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 131.

23 Shen calligraphed many titles for the Shenbao guan, but also for the Shanghai Arsenal and other Shanghai publishers.

Figure 2: *Shenjiang shengjing tu* cover page with signed seal script title by Shen Jinyuan.

> This little corner of Shanghai is the epitome of all the [treaty] ports. It tops whatever human ingenuity can achieve and is capable of outdoing even the finest work of nature. With grand things that are stunning and hidden places that are alluring it is altogether bewitching the heart and getting the eyes all dizzy with its full splendor that still is fully at ease—even if one has gone through this place time and again one cannot get enough of talking about this travel experience. Finally, I as the Master of the Cherish the New Studio [E. Major] said: It will not do that this is not made known![24]

While it was the most successful Treaty Port in terms of business, Major claimed, its real attraction was in the manifest and hidden man-made wonders. These would easily beat all that nature might have offered at traditional tourist sites on mountains or lakes.

Here we have a new city that owed its explosive growth to a technical innovation in shipping (the Clipper), a fortuitous geographic location, a peculiar international constellation, a unique political constellation in the midst of a civil war, a fiercely independent City Council composed of merchants determined to make this a livable place according to the most modern standards, the combined commercial energies of merchants from many backgrounds, and the attractions it provided for Western and Chinese tourists as a modern Western style urban environment on Chinese

24 Advertisement for the *Shenjiang shengjing tu* in the *Shenbao*, December 28, 1884, 1.

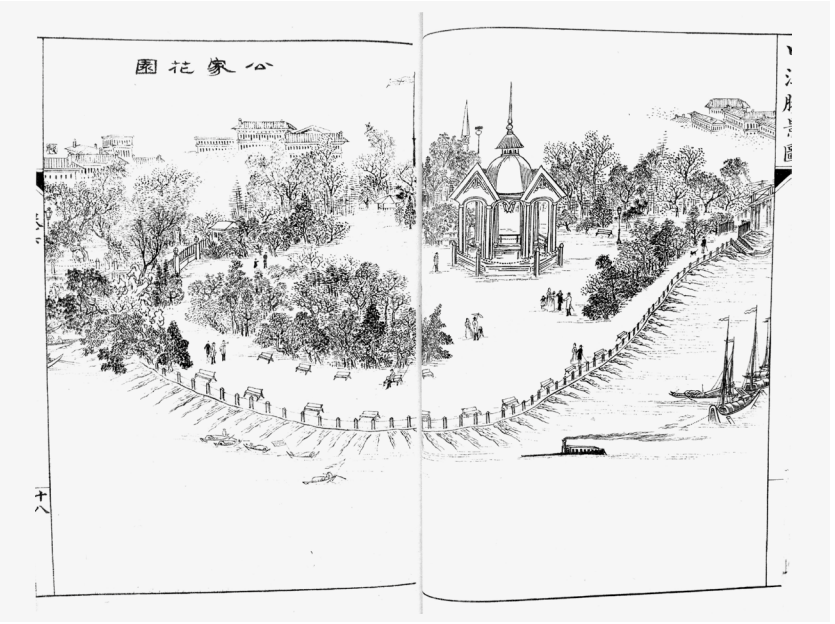

Figure 3a: Wu Youru, *The Public Garden* (*Gongjia huayuan* 公家花園).

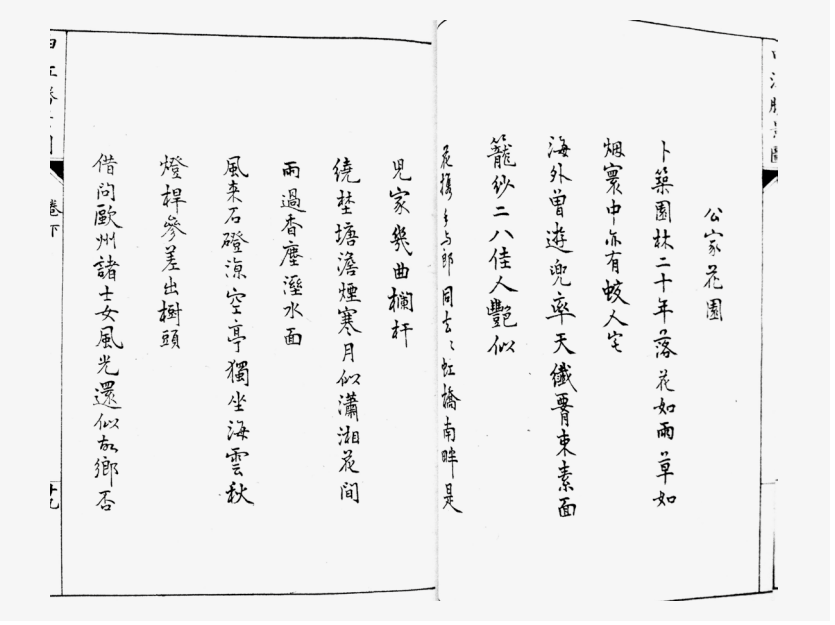

Figure 3b: *The Public Garden,* calligraphed sample of text from *Shenjiang shengjing tu*.

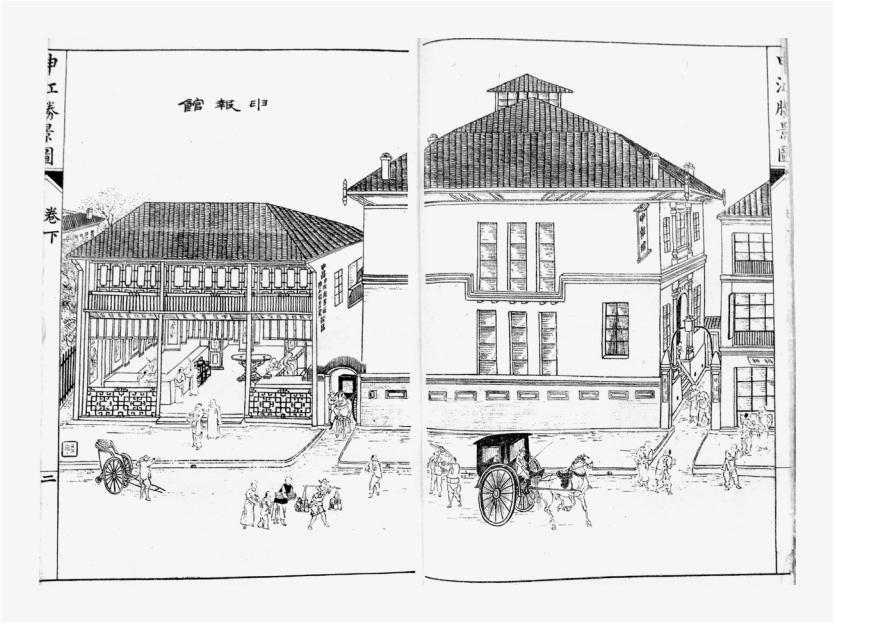

Figure 4a: *The Shenbao guan*.

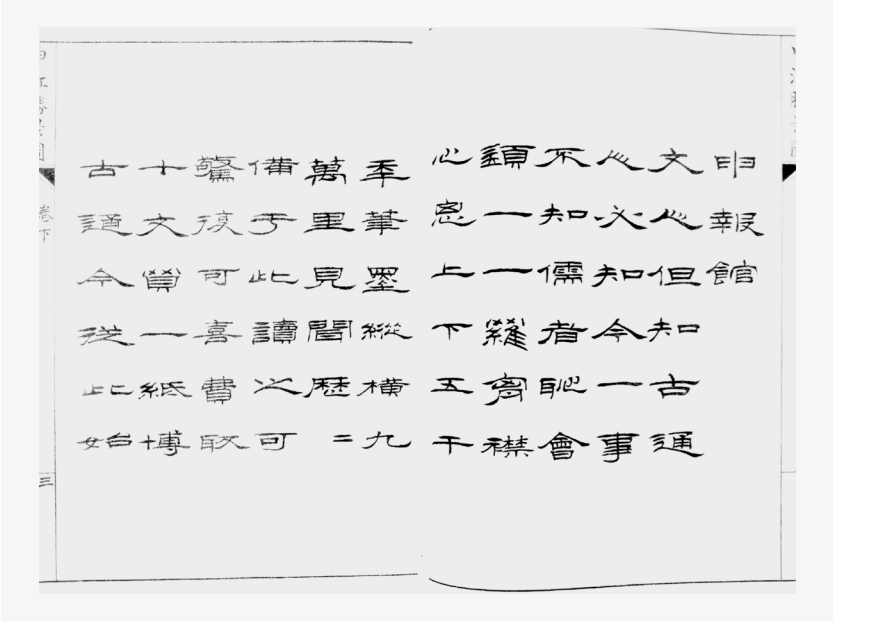

Figure 4b: Text for the image of the Shenbao guan office.

soil with a remarkable quality of life that included a truly international entertainment sector. But how could such a place qualify in Chinese eyes as having "great sights" that would make it worthwhile for people to travel there for pleasure? And what is a great sight (*shengjing*), anyway?

While the terms *mingjing* 名景 or *mingsheng* 名勝 were widely used for famous Chinese sites panegyrized in poems and described in travel books, the term *shengjing* 勝景 used in the title of the Shenbao guan book was a bit of an exception. Lai Yu-chih has documented its use since the late Ming, but for contemporary Shanghai she only found examples that were probably published after the Shenbao guan volume had come out.[25] I would suggest that its new popularity came from the fact that it had been used in Japanese publications of photograph albums, with the first documentation known to me being the title of an 1879 volume with photographs of "great Japanese sites" that had been published by the Japanese Finance Ministry.[26] This would in turn indicate that the older term *shengjing* was recast in Japan as a translation of a Western concept such as "scenes of interest," "great sights," or "great sites," which was becoming popular with the development of photography for tourists and the beginnings of ocean-crossing tourism.[27] These photographs transferred routines to the East that had been developed for images of urban centers such as Paris, Rome, London, or Chicago. The new volume thus links up with the rise of urban tourism in China, and in particular tourism to Shanghai as a site to experience modernity, the West, and high-class Chinese entertainments in a leisurely and non-threatening environment.

Major's comparison of Shanghai with nature's wonders in the advertisement alludes to Huang Fengjia's preface to the Shenbao guan album.

> Ever since famous sites have been heard of in the world, one part of them was attributed to nature 天, the other to man. Unchanging sublime beauty, foaming waters stretching into the distance—this is something coming from nature. Adding a pavilion and encircling it with a railing—this is the share done by man. Once the interaction between nature and man is achieved, the tourist spot is perfect. If there is only a human part but it is not accompanied by [gifts from] nature, the vulgar might go for such sites, but the refined will avoid them.

The Shanghai International Settlement offered the exception to this rule.

25 See Lai Yu-chih's article in this volume, note 5, and Fig. 2.

26 *Nihon shōkei shashin chō* 日本勝景寫真貼 [Photographs of great sites of Japan] (Tokyo: Ōkurashō Insatsukyoku, 1879). The copy in the national Diet Library in Tokyo has been digitized on the NDL website, accessed April 28, 2017, http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/762379.

27 For a study of early Western and Japanese photographers dealing with Yokohama sites, see Mio Wakita, "Sites of 'Disconnectedness': The Port City of Yokohama, Souvenir Photography, and its Audience," *Transcultural Studies* 2013, no. 2 (2013): 77–129.

> However, as to [man-made] things which are utterly different and stunning with features completely out of the ordinary and the expected such as never existed in Chinese lands since oldest times, namely things of utmost human ingenuity and heaven-like craftsmanship—even the most refined scholars will consider it a pleasure to be the first to set their eyes on them and will not press the requirement of an endowment by nature. The sights of Shenjiang (=Shanghai) are of this kind.

Huang now offers a glimpse of the history and gushes about the present state of the place.

> Shenjiang is in a corner of the Songjiang commandery. When at the transition from the Daoguang to the Xianfeng emperor [around 1850] the commerce between China and the external word was opened and the [merchants from] various Western countries were crowding in, our [honorary space] Court carved out a tiny speck of land next to the [Songjiang] river to let them have a place for trade, but within the shortest possible time it became a great metropolitan center in the Chinese lands. The splendor of its halls of learning and its ancestral temples, the majesty of its port, and the strength of its geographical position are without match in the world. As to the high masts and strong paddles crowding along the river—these are the ships from the different nations! As to the lofty buildings and outstanding works of architecture mingling in their splendor—these are the offices of the Westerners! As to the routined gallop on the left and the easy trot on the right [of the street] in rain and shine—these are the pleasure carriages! As to curved eyebrows and full cheeks, sweet sounds and pleasant music bewitching the soul and getting the heart all dizzy—these are the gatherings of the fashionable and sophisticated! And there is more, electricity is supplied for lamps [in houses], [gas] pipes have been laid underground to deliver fire [to lanterns] so that high and low illuminate each other and in the depth of night it is bright like day—all of which assists in spreading out the magic and gathering the elegant youth.
>
> These fine accoutrements and exceptional devices create a scenery of unusual beauty where the wealthy merchants with their decked-out retainers enjoy themselves to their heart's content wherever their fancy takes them without any regrets—this all one might truly call splendid![28]

Here we have the Settlements becoming in the nick of time a "great metropolitan center in Chinese lands" with advantages "without match in the

28 Huang Fengjia 黃逢甲, "Xu 序 [Preface]," in *Shenjiang shengjing tu*, n.p.

world." The economic mechanisms of this spectacular rise are mentioned as a matter of fact, but the focus is on the visible urban amenities and innovations which this city has brought to the Chinese lands. After mentioning that Major personally engaged the artist, the poets, and the calligraphers, the preface returns to the original argument.

> Alas! As a general truth, what was the situation of this speck of earth in the past? White bones exposed to the sky, yellow grass all over, a place where hawks were crying and will-o'-the-wisps were flying about, truly desolate and abandoned. And, lo and behold, in just a few decades it became all crisscrossed with streets crowded with people, wide avenues have been opened up that are filled with precious goods in a glory and splendor that ranks first in the world—how could anybody say this was all made by nature with man only adding some embellishments?! It is rather human agency that has brought things to this perfection.[29]

This place, which a short while ago was uncultivated wasteland with a few tombs, was now a great place to visit. In one programmatic illustration, we see a Chinese paddlewheel steamer—sailing under a Qing flag and obviously owned by a Chinese company—packed with Chinese tourists approaching the Shanghai port (Fig. 5).
This image provides first-hand evidence of the Chinese "market" success of the International Settlement. People did not see this as hostile occupation, but as a settlement that brought interesting wonders to China.

But how else but through images, Huang continues, can one remember all these sights:

> However, as things have changed with breathtaking speed and are transient like fleeting clouds, how could one be able to fix the appearance of things [in one's memory]? And how should someone stuck with normal phenomena ever have been able to anticipate all this? Thus it is only with the help of the brush that a selection of the most beautiful and exquisite can be preserved so as to make the heart rejoice and give pleasure to the eye.

Fixing the sights in reproducible illustrations and adding a commentary with the information necessary to identify them thus creates a virtual tourist universe that allows the buyer, as the advertisement said, to ride through the city with his eyes while reclining in his chair, apart from offering topics for conversation with friends—and all this for eight *jiao*, not even one Chinese dollar.[30]

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29 抑人力所為有以至斯極也.
30 This is actually a surprisingly high price, but it came with much better quality. The *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* only cost four *jiao*.

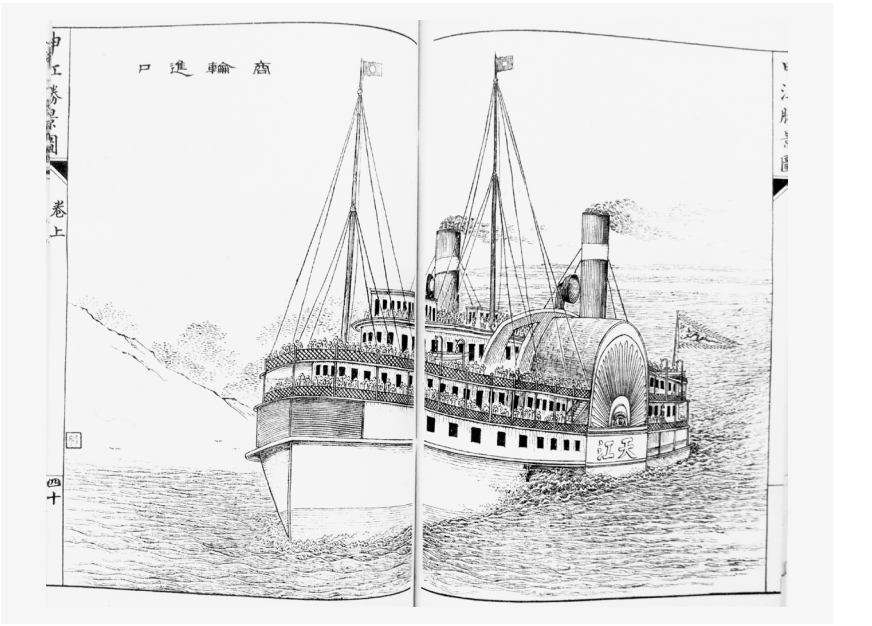

Figure 5: Wu Youru, *Commercial paddlewheel entering port* (*Shang lun jinkou* 商輪進口).Chinese travelers arriving in Shanghai on a paddlewheel steamer owned by a Chinese company and sailing under a Qing flag.

Taking its cue from the competition, but also developing its own stance, the volume presents a gorgeous and fun city without a hierarchy and a center in a loose sequence of images as they might be encountered by a tourist in one of the rickshaws or horse-drawn carriages shown in the illustrations.

This is model settlement Shanghai, however. In an enlightened rejection of the mutual denial of the Chinese walled city and the foreign settlements,[31] this volume shows "famous sights" in both. It highlights the city's (actually still unimpressive) educational institutions by starting off with the Shanghai xueguan 上海學館 in the walled city, but then includes the entire range of Shenbao guan subsidiaries such as the Shenbao guan office, the Dianshizhai lithography workshop where the book had been printed (Fig. 6), and even Major's own house on Bubbling Well Road. This was not just self-aggrandizing because the Shenbao guan had indeed become an attraction for travelers, as the diaries of many literati and officials show, and it was the model emulated by the new publishing houses set up by Chinese merchants from the early 1880s.

31 Catherine V. Yeh, "Representing the City: Shanghai and its Maps," in *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception*, ed. David Faure, 166–202 (Oxford: Palgrave in association with St. Antony's College, 2002).

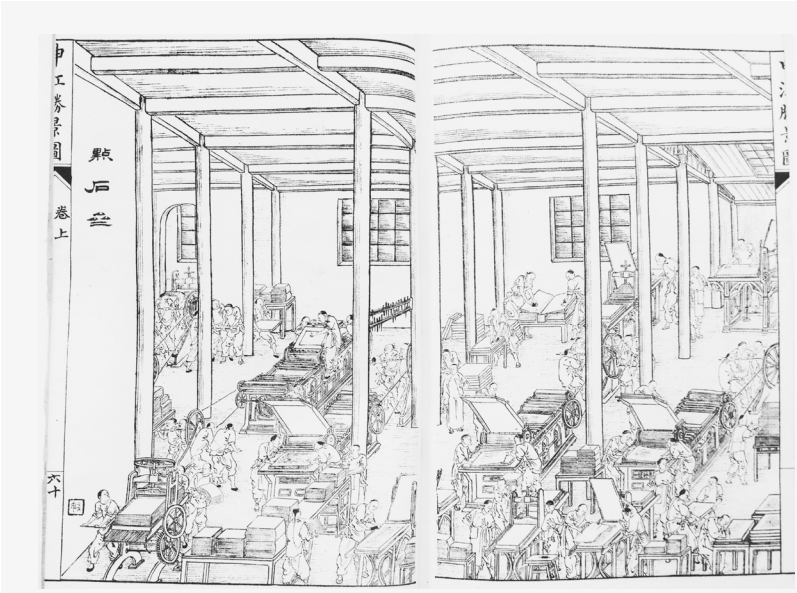

Figure 6: Wu Youru, *Dianshizhai print shop* (*Dianshizhai* 點石齋).

The volumes show Shanghai as a place where people of different nationalities and regions cohabitate in an orderly environment and where even Chinese women can go to the theater or circus and the race course is open to all.

The model settlement idea of peaceful coexistence of different sojourners within a regulated and prosperous urban environment informs the volume in both its depictions and in the items it leaves out. The *Shengjiang mingsheng tushuo* had quite a few scenes with rickshaw coolies in fistfights, robbers, and other scenes of conflict. None of this will be found here. What we find are peaceful street scenes with people of different ethnic backgrounds, sitting side by side enjoying the American Chiarini Circus or fretting at the race course over whether their preferred horse will win (Fig. 7). The Shanghai leisure pursuits here have taken on a distinctly transcultural character and make sure to include women (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9). And, needless to say, technical wonders such as the train to Woosung could be experienced here (Fig. 10).

Illustrated Famous Sights includes many items that might surprise as tourist attractions but are crucial for the functioning of Shanghai as an attractive modern city. Among them are the factory that produced the gas for the street lamps and eventually the apartments, the paved streets, the Arsenal, and the firefighters. At the same time, the album makes sure to include particular leisure preferences of Chinese and Westerners ranging from theaters, courtesan houses, restaurants, and elaborate opium dens

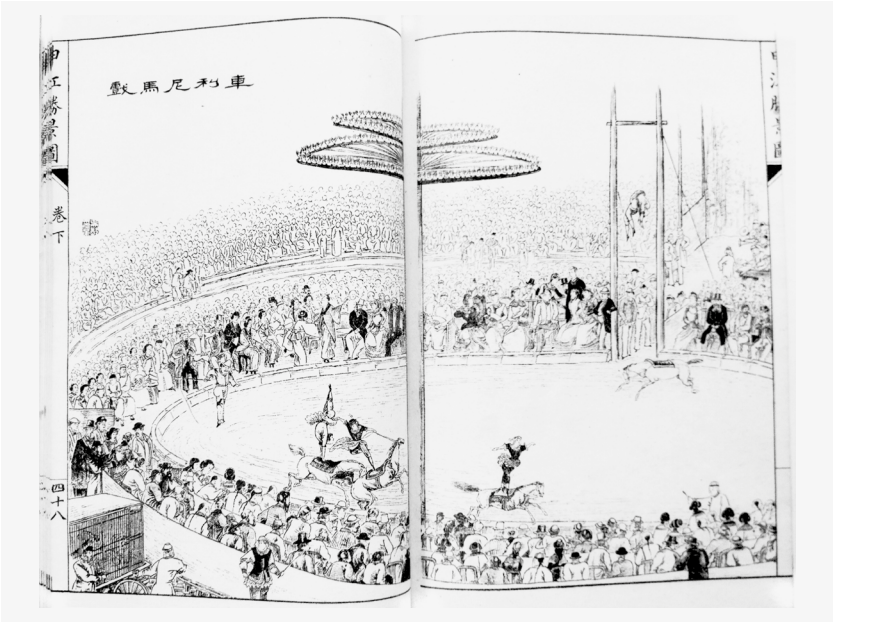

Figure 7: Wu Youru, *The Chiarini Circus* (*Chelini maxi* 車利尼馬戲). Note the audience with Chinese, Westerners, and Japanese freely mixing and a strong presence of women from all three groups in the detail below.

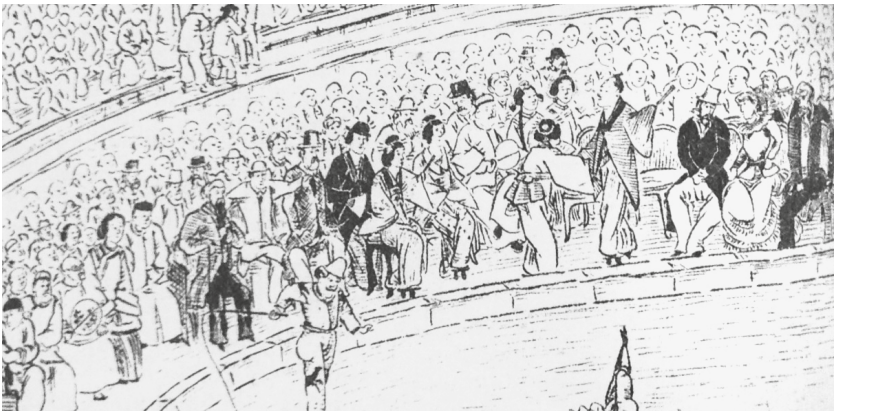

Figure 8: Detail of Fig. 7. Chiarini circus audience with Chinese, Japanese, and Western men and women mixed in the audience.

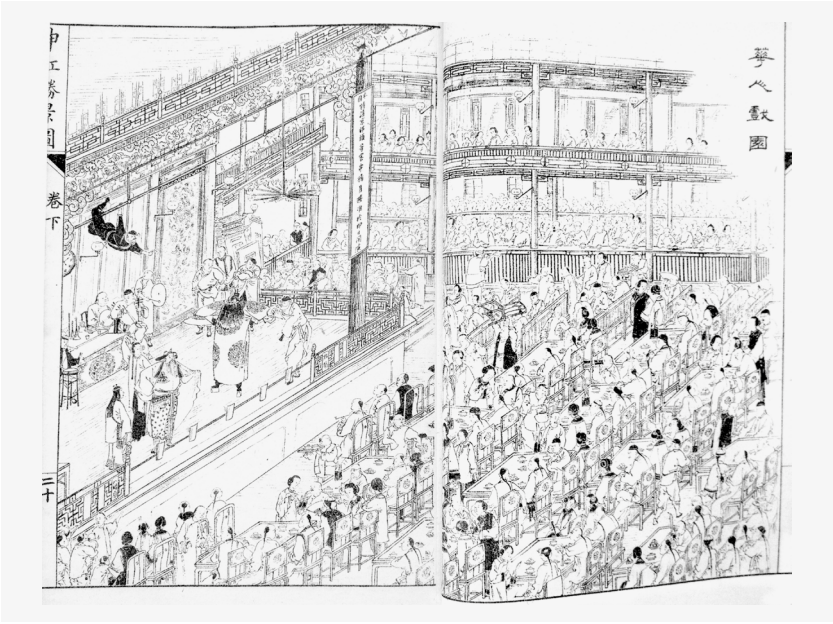

Figure 9: Wu Youru, *The Chinese Theater* (*Huaren xi tu* 華人戲圖). There are many women in the audience at all levels. Elsewhere in China access to theater was barred for women.

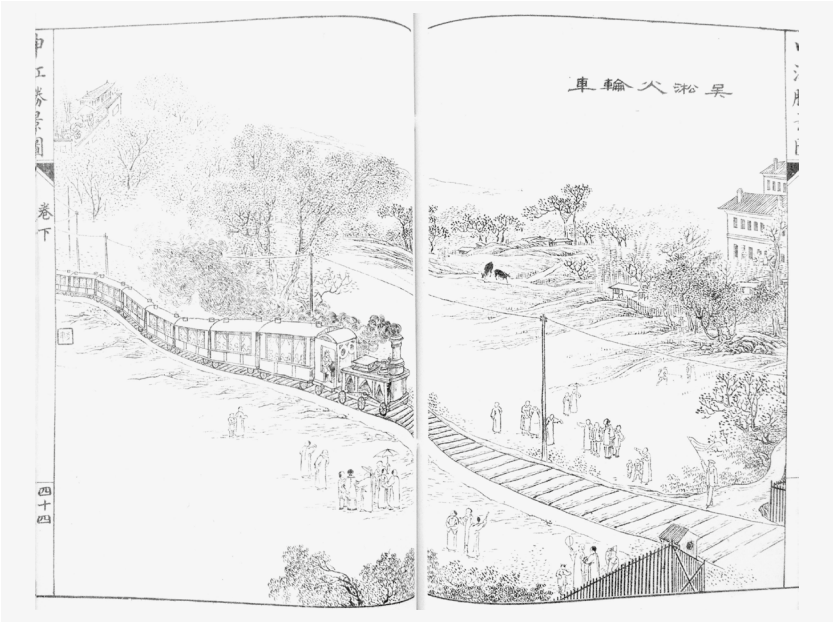

Figure 10: Wu Youru, *The Woosong train* (*Wusong huolunche* 吳淞火輪車).

frequented mostly by Chinese sojourners to seemingly quaint but often public strenuous sport exercises of foreigners of a kind not (yet) associated by Chinese with leisure (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12).

An 1867 article in the *North China Daily* newspaper from Shanghai describes this difference in attitude well:

> It seems to be an unfortunate rule that Foreign amusements are regarded, by the Chinese, as so many types of insanity. Whether paper-hunting, insect-hunting, rowing or fishing be the pursuit, it is regarded by the Chinese as rank folly. Active exercise of any description is work; and—though the Chinese are industrious when industry is necessary to livelihood—they cannot be accused of liking work for the mere sake of physical exercise.[32]

This did not prevent a lively spectator's interest in these exercises as seen in the Chinese observing Westerners engaged in a rowing race (Fig. 13).

The album has an agenda, but it is that of the city itself as a model settlement, not as the outpost of some foreign power. The illustrations react to a double counter-text, one that emphasized the warlike, bullying, and uncouth nature of these foreigners, the other that emphasized their total cultural incompatibility with China. By presenting them as the creators of much of the urban quality of life offered by the Settlements and appreciated by Chinese sojourners and tourists alike and showing people of different cultural backgrounds and both genders rather innocently going about their amusements and exercise, these counter-texts are both rejected.

At this time, the work/leisure time divide common among Westerners with their weekly and daily rhythm had only started to be adapted by Chinese working for or with them.[33] A new Chinese periodical coming out in 1897 under the title *Leisure* (*Xiaoxian bao* 消閒報), still found it necessary to introduce this "Western" divide to its Chinese readers.[34] Chinese tourism at this time was still a highly gendered and generational affair. Women, children, and probably the aged were not (yet) part of it. The advertisement for an 1884 *Famous Shanghai Sites Illustrated and Explained* discussed above suggested another attraction of such albums: the illustrations would allow such hitherto excluded groups a virtual tourist visit to the Settlements. "If womenfolk and children wish to see the great sights of Shanghai, they in all convenience can open these volumes and inform themselves, and browse through the illustrations, and it is as if they had

32 "Shanghai Amusements," *North China Daily News*, Oct. 9, 1867, 284.

33 A *Shenbao* editorial in 1874, "Disputing that the Shanghainese were discarding Buddhism and following Western religion" [Huren she fojiao er cong xijiao bian 滬人捨佛教而從西教辨], *Shenbao*, December 11, 1874, 1, reports the impression of a visitor to the town that the seven-day week had been adopted my many Shanghainese working with Westerners, from which this visitor concluded that they had all become Christians.

34 See C. Yeh, "Shanghai Leisure," 203–204.

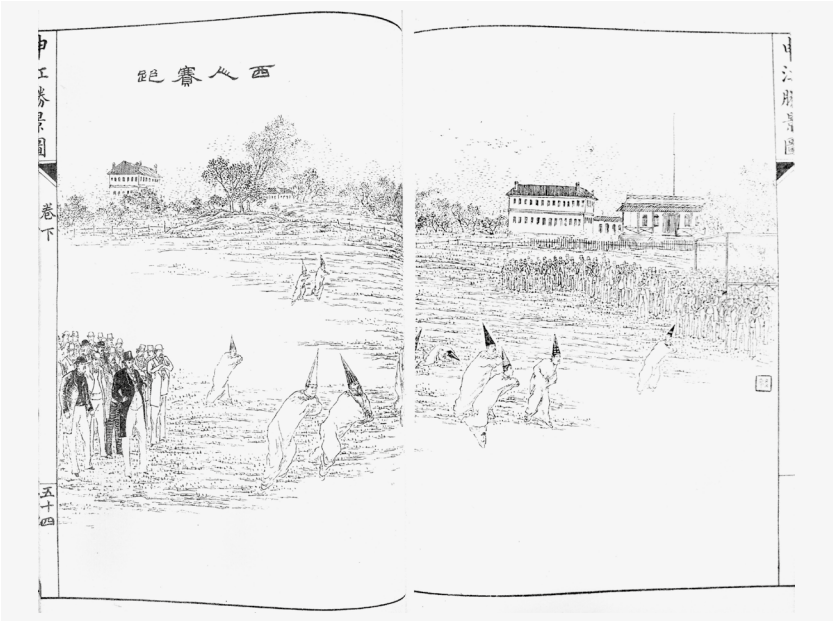

Figure 11: Wu Youru, *Sack race by Westerners* (*Xiren saipao* 西人賽跑). The spectators seem to be mostly foreigners.

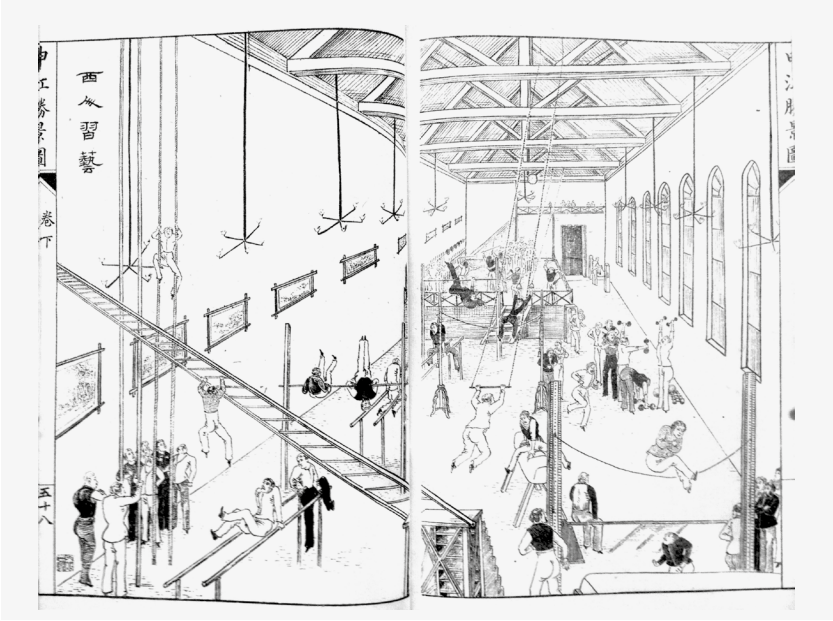

Figure 12: Wu Youru, *Westerners exercising* (*Xiren xi yi* 西人習藝).

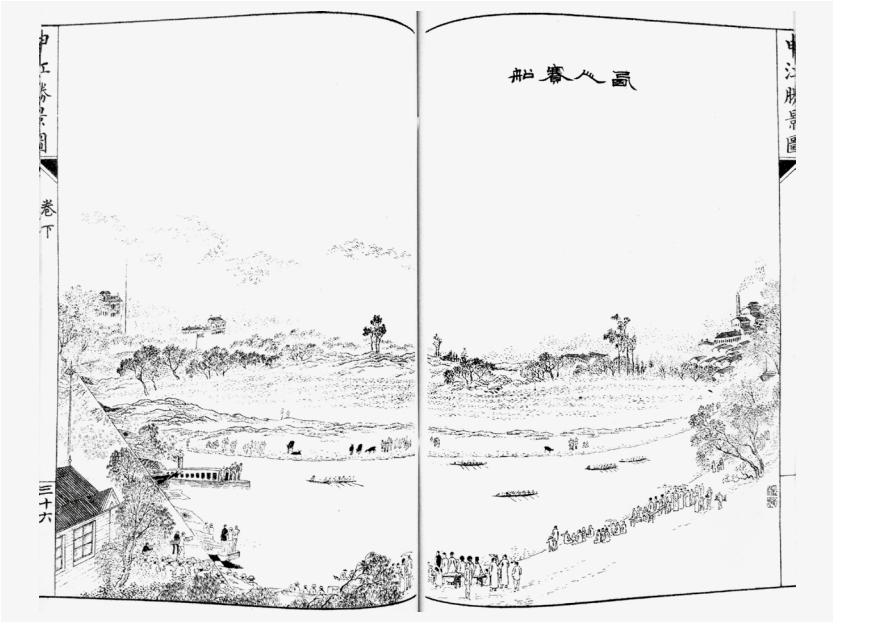

Figure 13: Wu Youru, *Westerners in rowing competition* (*Xiren sai chuan* 西人賽船). Note the presence of both Chinese and Western spectators.

gone in person to Shanghai."[35] In the illustrations to this work as much as in the Shenbao guan volume, women are very much present, be it in the theaters, restaurants, billiard rooms, or temples. These women, however, are courtesans, either alone or with their patrons, not the wives of visiting tourists; they are part of the sights, not visitors.

The city seems to have carried the main point, namely that Shanghai was not pushing some foreign agenda but was driven by an innocent "business only" attitude that was open to all regardless of their background. The evidence was the acceptance of the city, indicated by the large and growing number of Chinese sojourners and visitors, including some of the highest-ranking Chinese officials, who obviously did not consider this enemy territory. But we also have the pervasive and peaceful presence of Chinese sojourners in the illustrations, including venues such as theater or circus performances. This proves the point already made earlier for the Shenbao guan. The existence of the place is visible in its market success and in the active participation of Chinese in developing the place, which is similar to the cooperation between the Shenbao guan community and the company.

35 "Jingke xinhua *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo*" 精刻新畫申江名勝圖說 [On the finely cut and newly illustrated *Famous Shanghai Sites Illustrated and Explained*] *Shenbao*, May 18, 1884.

The illustrated volumes thus present Shanghai as a gift of leisure and entertainment. Their focus is on the sights that may be seen or visited, in tune with the visual focus of the newly developing tourist industry. The business and money side of the Settlements remains in background, only visible as providing the backdrop for the quality of life offered by the Settlements, but important because it clears the settlement of the suspicion of an ulterior agenda. The volumes frame the tourist visit as part of an economy where the city offers its sights as a gift, and the tourist might engage in a free exercise of his whims that is not restricted by the hard laws of commerce, but rather comes with the freedom associated with tourist visits to places where one has no business, or "shopping" in the luxurious environments for goods one does not need.

The images serve to retain the memory of places seen, to offer the lure of places one might want to see or to replace the arduous or socially awkward personal visit with armchair travel. They are not simply passive realistic reflections of things seen. They fix the "sights" and make them into a collective knowledge as well as topic of conversation well beyond the circle of people who had already visited the town. The images heighten the attractiveness of these "sights" as well as fixing the image of the place as indicated by these sights. The album's images are an even purer version of Shanghai as leisure and entertainment than a visit to the Settlements itself. They convey the city's gift of its sites, and binds them together into an album that in its own turn will become part of the domestic gift economy of entertainment, being there for guests and members of the household to enjoy and for all to chat about.

These images were produced in the midst of a global turn towards the image as a conveyor of information with the reproducible image increasingly becoming the key medium to experience far-away places or sudden events elsewhere. There was a fierce competition between different kinds of reproducible images, fueled by a race for the latest technical advances, which gave these inventions stellar international careers. In the Chinese case, the woodblock print offered the traditional variant. Lithography, spreading slowly since the 1850s and then in great style once Major opened the Dianshizhai and other competitors joined in, all but replaced the woodblock print for newspaintings and realistic illustrations after the 1880s. At the same time, Major spotted the potential of black-and-white lithography to offer high-quality reproductions of Chinese ink paintings and calligraphy and then inserted art reproductions into the company's distribution network. Photography, the next competitor, was already waiting in the wings, with many efforts being under way to allow for its mass reproduction.

The Shenbao guan is part of "dreamland" Shanghai. Its production of this glowing image of Shanghai, the model settlement of sojourners from many different places living in prosperous peace, is itself part of the leisure and excitement the city offered. While it could serve as an album of images for visitors to reminisce, it carried these images and their implied message

far beyond the city and its male visitors as a gift to the parents, wives, and children who were eager to get a glimpse of this exciting place. All of this would have been cheap and ineffectual propaganda had it not been backed up by the actual attraction of the city for many of the most active and innovative minds, whether in business, in education and journalism, in the arts, or in politics, as well as for those most apt to assess the attractions of the city, China's own leisure class.

Conclusions

The lifeline of culture is enrichment through transcultural interaction, and leisure is the soft spot where the new and exciting might be playfully tried out. This is true for social relations as much as for objects, activities, and thoughts. The Shenbao guan publishing strategies were not opportunistic. The Company did not assume that there was a settled desire out there that just needed to be discovered and satisfied. It learned from its interaction with Chinese men of letters and merchants, as well as the familiarity of its manager with developments elsewhere in the world that in these times of rapid and often tumultuous transition and change, people coming to places such as Shanghai were increasingly, if haltingly, open to and interested in the new. The Settlement itself pursued a similar if equally unarticulated policy. It assumed that the Chinese sojourners coming to the Settlement were open to change and offered a modern and exceedingly attractive urban environment while largely accommodating the values and traditions of the Chinese sojourners, as long as they were compatible with this environment. The Settlement thus offered a Chinese environment where modernity could be explored in a process of gradual accommodation and change for which leisurely pursuits provided a good testing ground.

The Shenbao guan company, as much as the city, had a clear and explicit commercial focus, and both were commercially successful. However, as the purveyor of "unneeded" goods and venues for leisure, the visibility of the commercial nature and interest had the effect of dissociating the company and the city from enterprises of foreign cultural advocacy and highlighting the exclusive agency of the Chinese readers, tourists, and sojourners in the success of the enterprise. The factual commercial nature of these offerings freed the customer from the burden of gift reciprocity and allowed him to do as he liked. In its depiction of Shanghai, the Shenbao guan was not shy about the commercial background of Shanghai's prosperity and the attractiveness of its sights, but the focus was not on commercial Shanghai, but on Shanghai as an interesting, entertaining, and ultimately modern visual feast gifted to the inland Chinese tourist.

In China, history is hard to predict. After many years of languishing in Mainland Chinese textbooks as the outpost of imperialist exploitation and domination, Shanghai has been officially redefined as the engine of China's modernization. Following this change in official policy, the Shanghai book

market is now full of nostalgic descriptions and images of the leisure glories of pre-1949 Shanghai, and many of the forms of leisure available in the city during these earlier years are being reintroduced in the context of a new affluence that is again fueled by another round of transcultural interaction.

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