

Changes of Wearing, Eating, Housing, and Going Out: Discussion From *Dian-shi Zhai Pictorial* (1884-1898)*

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Dian-shi zhai Pictorial, originated in 1884, is the first pictorial of news and current affairs in China's modern history. Its elegant and prevailing expression forms greatly broadened the audience range of the publication and became an important graphic material for studying the transformation of social life in the late Qing Dynasty of China. This paper mainly introduces the changes of social life in Shanghai in the late Qing Dynasty and provides a spacious research perspective for the above studies.

Keywords: *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, Late Qing Dynasty, Shanghai society

Preface

New knowledge often promotes people in an era to update their understanding of time and space and self-cognition, and silently changes the habits of clothing, food, living, and transportation in social life in a subtle way. The content included in the *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* presents the new values and moral values introduced by Shanghai's new commercial environment, which is a great challenge to the traditional formation of the certain order. The traditional class concept, represented by clothing, food, private and public places, gradually decreased its applicability to Shanghai in the late Qing Dynasty, and was replaced by money as a measurement standard, which became the main standard for dividing people's social class and quality of life. With the changes of clothing, food, housing, and transportation, people will gradually pay attention to the family background and academic achievements to the accumulation of wealth.

Wearing

The embodiment of Shanghai's modernization in the late Qing Dynasty can be well proved by improving

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the tolerance of women's clothes. In the late Qing Dynasty, women in Shanghai could go to restaurants in male clothes. Dressed as men was not a jaw-dropping act in Shanghai, but could be understood and accepted. Women are no longer bound by traditional dress and behavior patterns, began to take on the prototype of life, have the right to decide what appearance they appear in public, and strive to move towards the road of modern new women.

The emergence of the Shanghai trend is an indispensable part in the process of modernization, while prostitutes were the leader of the Shanghai trend in the late Qing Dynasty. High-class ladies, deeply influenced by the Westernization of social habits, began to wear gorgeous dresses, and prostitutes began to wear red dresses that only legitimate housewives had the right to wear. Although these rights and behaviors are very common in the world, they would not appear in other parts of the society at that time, but could be seen normally in Shanghai at that time.

In addition, the continuous development of commerce in Shanghai in the late Qing Dynasty also changed the social status of women under the traditional vision. Many women began to have jobs with autonomy to choose to work in the concession factory, and regular income allowed them no longer to live on their husbands' income. In addition, the *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* mentions an organization called "Heavenly Association". Hundreds of years after women were forced to bind their feet, no one has fought to change the bad custom. But western women in Shanghai who are born to pursue freedom and equality have decided to establish the association to support and strongly urge Chinese women to get rid of the foot-binding.

Eating

The *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* not only expressed the admiration and praise of the western things at that time in many direct or indirect places, but also shows that the western material culture was deeply attractive to the residents of Shanghai at that time. Shanghai residents quickly adapted to the various hobbies of westerners in daily life, and cultivated a series of leisure interests of the upper society, such as horse racing, eating western food, and watching operas.

In 1893, the *Shenbao* advertisement promoted the development of teahouses, and in 1894, the *Dian-shi zhai pictorial* also contained reports on the opening of Western-style restaurants. There are more obvious names and price of recommended dishes for western restaurants. The whole thing seems to have the basic elements of modern advertising. And it also has propaganda nature to attract customers come to Western-style restaurants.

Housing

Shanghai, given the name of "China's first modern international metropolis" has a complex urban structure that shapes famous architectural achievements such as Bund and Nanjing Road. The boundaries of the old district, the new district, and the concession overlap, and the Chinese and Western architectural styles blend, forming a "mixed space" of tradition and modernity.

In the late Qing Dynasty, the local residents in Shanghai changed their attitudes towards the concept of space. By opening the *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, the image not only has urban streets that integrate individual and public elements, but also depicts the commodity and control of space.

Some pictures in *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* intuitively show the connection between private space and public space, and indirectly illustrate the collapse of traditional closed space and the breakthrough and necessity of

facing public space directly. “Treat others as fathers”¹ depicts people gathering in teahouses to listen respectfully to an old man’s speech. However, apart from the interpretation of narrative content from another aspect, the formation of three-tier Western tea houses is largely due to the commodity nature of space.



Figure 1. Treat others as fathers.

After the signing of the Nanjing Treaty in 1842, Shanghai was immediately opened as a commercial port for British merchants to trade in China. In such “mixed space”, many buildings are filled with strong western style. The image of “People stand in a bird cage”² shows the spectacular French architecture in the French concession near the Chinese Li-style complex building group. In addition to following the French garden design, there are also plants grown in Asia. The subtle contradiction between Chinese and Western elements is vividly demonstrated. “In the middle of the West Road”³, the architectural design of the condensed western style shows the style transformation of Shanghai after becoming a concession in the late 19th century, and the Chinese compound building group is a typical representative of the western architectural style. The concept of “Li” originated in Chang’an of the Han Dynasty, originally referring to “people in closed walls”. In Shanghai at the end of the 19th century, “Li” complex buildings became a reflection of the new well environment. Under the objective reasons and conditions that cannot be violated, the traditional closed space is broken, streets and shops are combined, and commercial and private residences are integrated. A joint row of shops in a complex of Chinese-style buildings with sidewalks is the back wall of the residential area. Stores are mostly designed into two layers; the first layer is open to the street, quite the prototype of contemporary social tourist attractions commercial street.

¹ [Figure 1] “Treat others as fathers”, *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, edited by Xu Hualong, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, October 1998, first edition.

² [Figure 2] “People stand in a bird cage”, *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, edited by Xu Hualong and others, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, October 1998, first edition.

³ [Figure 3] “In the middle of the West Road”, *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, edited by Xu Hualong, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, October 1998, first edition.

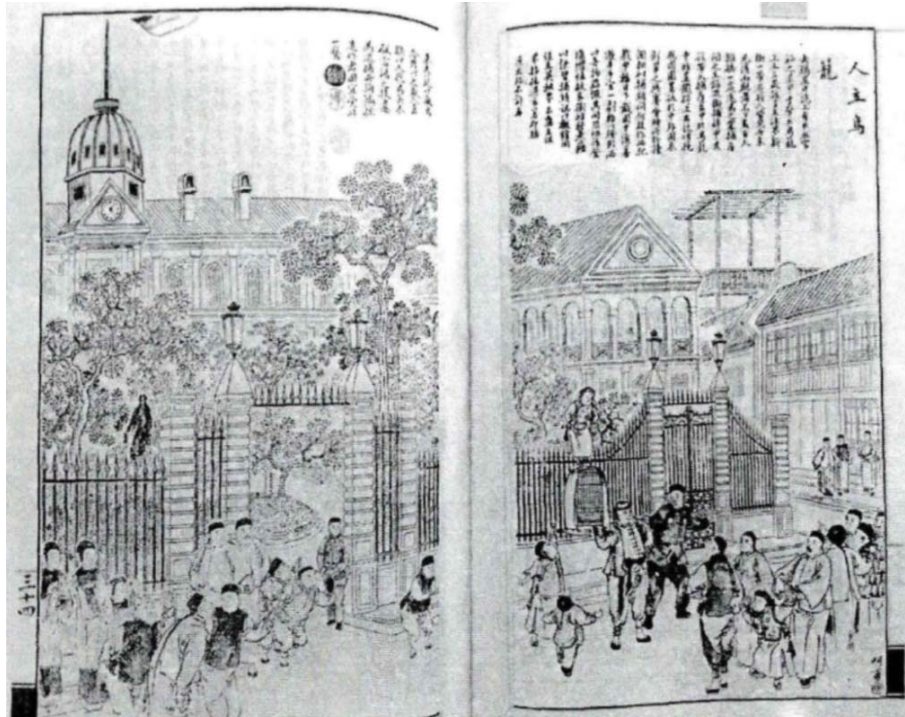


Figure 2. People stand in a bird cage.

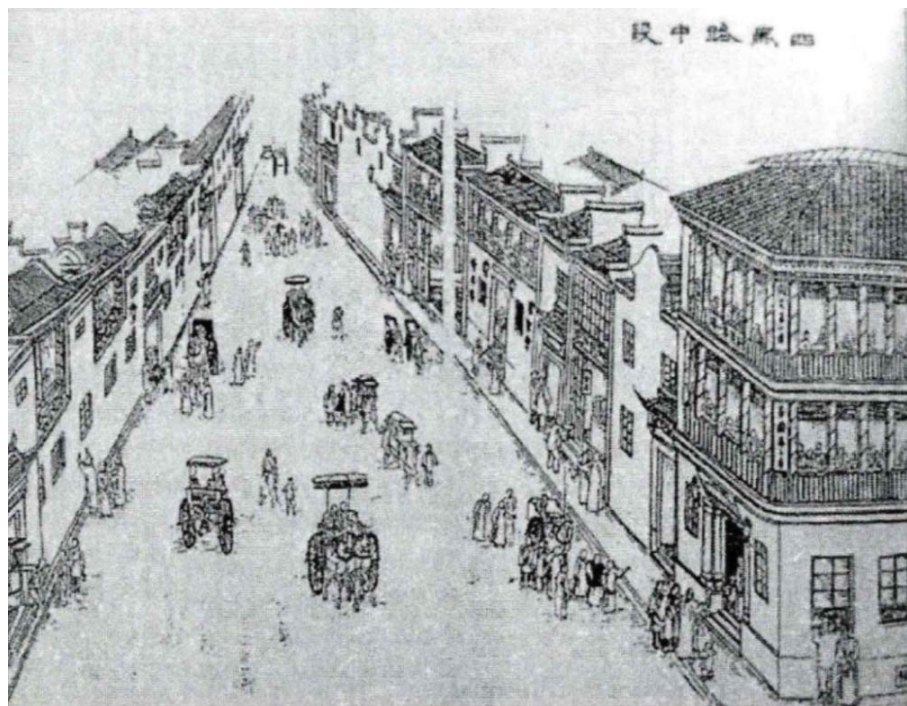


Figure 3. In the middle of the West Road.

Going Out

With the development of modernization, the streets with enhanced functionality and increased agglomeration have become the venues for public punishment. It can not only punish people who do wrong, but

also play a warning role for the civilian population. The scene of “Policeman wearing flails”⁴ shows the scene that the wrong police are locked in the street parade. This situation is a confirmation of the real existence of “lead a criminal through the streets to warn the public” and highlights the absolute observance and enforcement of “equality before the law” in western law. In the picture, the diners in the restaurant stopped to watch, and the people in the second floor of private residence also looked out. The purpose of “lively” scenes is to warn people not to violate the law.



Figure 4. Policeman wearing flail.

The *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* shows in many illustrations the gap between public and private spaces that disappeared with the advancement of modernization in Shanghai in the late Qing Dynasty. Street has become an extension of private space, open increasingly.

⁴ [Figure 4] “Policeman wearing flail”, *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, edited by Xu Hualong, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, October 1998, first edition.

The essence of modernization is the confrontation of different cultures with dislocation of time and space, but this “confrontation” also promotes the disintegration of contradictions at the objective level, promotes the modernization process of Shanghai, and reflects people’s adaptation and yearning for modern life in the late Qing Dynasty.

Many of the rules and regulations behind Shanghai’s fall into concessions were different from those of the Qing government. The illustration of *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* referred to the story of “Catching houses and keeping pigs”⁵. Westerners were so focused on hygiene and cleanliness that they would pick up a piece of horse dung from the streets. Because of the hot weather and the accelerated spread of the smell of livestock manure, the municipal government issued a ban on livestock walking on the road. The villagers who did not understand the legal provisions drove their own pigs to the concession and immediately triggered the police arrest. In the process of establishing public health system in concession territory and implementing western laws, there are often provisions that are quite different from the original living habits of Chinese people.

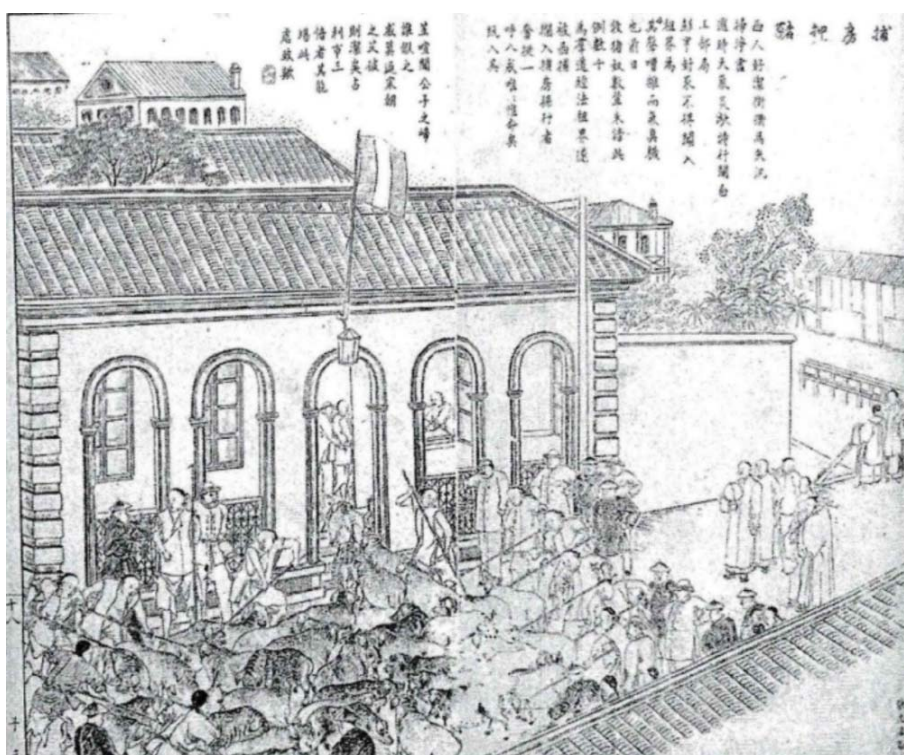


Figure 5. Catching houses and keeping pigs.

Summary

The visual and narrative expression of *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* paved a unique picture scroll of Shanghai in the late Qing Dynasty for us. In the late Qing Dynasty, *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* was an important publication to show the state of modern society in Shanghai. After failing to resist the semi-colonial rule of foreign aggressors, local residents in Shanghai yearn for a stable life in this fast-growing city, which must mean abandoning traditional lifestyles and adapting to western lifestyles and customs.

⁵ [Figure 5] “Catching houses and charging pigs”, *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial*, edited by Xu Hualong, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, October 1998, first edition.

Studying the modernization of Shanghai in *Dian-shi zhai Pictorial* provides a strong basis and demonstration for us to excavate the new understanding of time and space of Shanghai residents in the late Qing Dynasty. The changes in clothing, food, housing, and transportation of Shanghai residents in the late Qing Dynasty also marked the disintegration of traditional lifestyles. The combination of private and public, more mobile urban space is being shaped.

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