

TRANSFORMATION OF WATERFRONT SPACE IN ASIAN CITIES: MACAU, HONG KONG, SHANGHAI

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ABSTRACT: Through examining the spatial transformation of the Avenue Praia Grande of Macau, the Connaught Road of Hong Kong, and the Shanghai Bund, this paper presents the changing character of these waterfronts and points out the problems they are encountering in the rapid urban development. Waterfront spaces in Asia have been central to the economic, social and cultural life of their cities. However, most of them have experienced aggressive reclamations and problematic renovations, largely due to the economy-oriented strategies of urban development and functional approaches to urban problems. Only after the governments gain their confidence in global competition and generate long-term vision for their cities, could a positive future of historical urban waterfronts in Asia be promised.

KEYWORDS: Asia, Macau, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Waterfront Space, Vision, Urbanization

1 INTRODUCTION:

While approaching Macau, Hong Kong, and Shanghai from the sea in the early 20th century, passengers would not have missed the charming Avenue Praia Grande facing the Outer Harbor, the bustling Connaught Road along the Victoria Harbor, and the imposing Shanghai Bund alongside the Huangpu River. These waterfronts have been central to the social, economic, and cultural life of these cities since they were given birth by the colonial governances. Avenue Praia Grande always reminded people of the Portuguese confrontation with the Chinese government since their arrival at Macau in 1557. Ceded to the British after the Nanjing Treaty of 1842, Hong Kong held the strategic position in the Sino-foreign trade ever since. This crown colony had devoted its loyalty to the British government over one century. On the south bank of the Victoria Harbor, the Praya was modernized and its central part was renamed the Connaught Road after Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, when he visited Hong Kong in 1890. The Nanjing Treaty also opened Shanghai to being one of the first of five treaty ports in China. Within the quasi-independent foreign settlements, a towing path along the west bank of Huangpu River was developed into the well-known Shanghai Bund lined with fantastic new-classical architecture.

However, the impressing landscapes of these waterfronts have been spoiled in past few decades. Although the Avenue Praia Grande had occupied the prestige position in Macau, its eastern end was reclaimed in the late 1920s. A controversial plan of reclaiming the whole of Praia Grande was initiated in the 1990s when the Portuguese began the preparation for Macau's return back to China. The Praia Grande was enclosed and subdivided into two artificial basins that will probably be flanked with high-rise buildings in future. In Hong Kong, the Connaught Road became a landlocked expressway after the Praya Reclamation project of the 1950s. Ironically, the isolation of China from the West after 1949 kept the waterfront character of the Shanghai Bund intact for quite a long time. However, in the 1990s, the road on which the Bund is centered was altered into a 10-lane roadway to alleviate the heavy traffic at the urban center of Shanghai.

For a long time, ships and boats were the most important means of transporting people and products to and from Asian port cities like Macau, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. It is not surprising to note that these three waterfronts are right at the old city centers. Although the piers and docks along these waterfronts have been demolished or reduced to minimum, they are expected to accommodate the changing needs of people and to face the challenges raised by the contemporary society. Redeveloping urban waterfronts seems inevitable for most of Asian port cities. However, how to reutilize and redevelop the waterfronts while retaining their historical character is no doubt a challenge to the local authorities and urbanists. Through examining the

spatial transformation of the Avenue Praia Grande, the Connaught Road, and the Shanghai Bund, this paper aims to present problems and challenges that urban waterfronts are facing in the rapid urbanization of Asian cities. It will further point out how governments' vision could affect the transformation of waterfront spaces.

2 AVENUE PRAIA GRANDE: THE PORTUGUESE AMBITION AND NOSTALGIA

The Portuguese was allowed to settle down on Macau in 1557 after many trials of entering the mainland China failed. Macau became the only place within the territory of the Middle Kingdom, where foreigners could reside and trade before the treaty ports were opened after the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842. For almost three centuries, an intricate control over this tiny peninsular had been imposed by the Chinese government until the mandarins were expelled out of Macau by the Portuguese in 1847. Historically, the Portuguese community congregated on the southwestern part of the peninsular, separated from the Chinese settlement by the wall. Before the Macau International Airport was completed in 1995, the only two ways of entering Macau were through the harbors (Outer Harbor and Inner Harbor) and the Barrier Gate at the narrow isthmus. Facing the sea, the Outer Harbor was mainly serving for passenger ships, having the earliest passenger terminal along the Praia Grande. Located at the estuary of the Xijiang (West River), the Inner Harbor provides safe anchoring places for cargo boats. (Fig. 1)

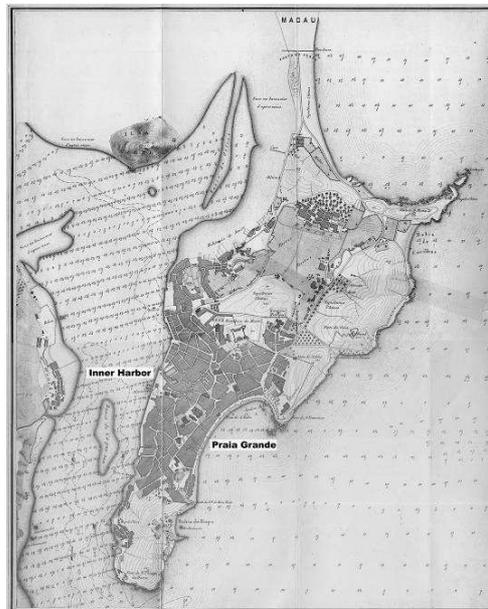


Figure 1 Map of The Peninsula of Macao, 1865-6. Source: drawing by author, based on a Chart by Mr. W. A. Read, from Frederick Charles Danvers, *The Portuguese in India: Being a History of the Rise and Decline of their Eastern Empire*, Vol. II, London: W. H. Allen & Co. Limited, 1894, between pp. 460 and 461.

Facing the Outer Harbor, the Avenue Praia Grande was a less-than-one-mile promenade with one end at the São Francisco Garden and Barracks, and the other end at the Bom Parto Fort. In the early 20th century, many important establishments congregated on this avenue, including Governor's Residence, Supreme Court and Treasury, Post Office, Telegraph Office, Military Club and a public garden, Consulates of Netherlands, Italy, France and Siam, and two of the best hotels at Macau – Boa Vista Hotel and the Hing Kee's Family Hotel (later the Macau Hotel), etc. (Fig. 2) However, the significance of the Avenue Praia Grande in the history of Macau is not only due to these establishments, but also to a fact that it was “the locus where the contest of a multitude of forces took place and reflected the struggle for survival of the little Portuguese enclave in China during the last four centuries.”¹ Despite its inexplicable origin, the Avenue Praia Grande

¹ Chen Yu, Heng Chye Kiang, “Avenue Praia Grande: A Record of Portuguese Ambition and Nostalgia,” *2nd Great Asian Streets Symposium: Public Space 2002 (GASS)*, July 25–26, 2002, Singapore.

distinguished itself from other places in Macau for the rich layers of its landscape, which exhibit the transformation of a vulnerable trading post to an exclusive port city benefiting from the Qing's foreign policies, and further to a Portuguese colony mixing with their ambition and nostalgia.

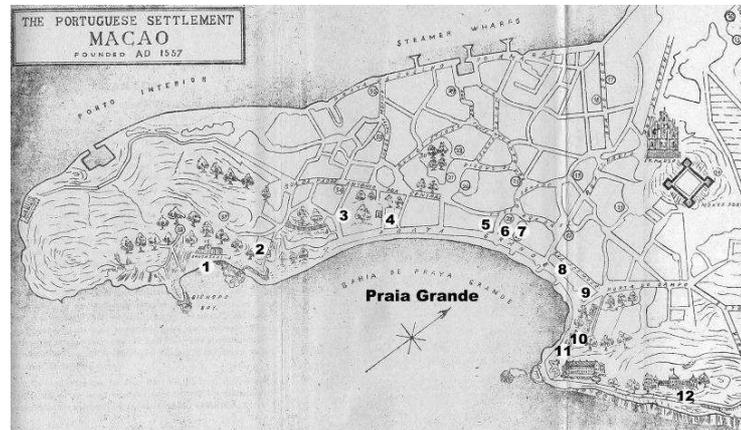


Figure 2 Map of The Portuguese Settlement Macao, Detail, 1898. 1. Santa Sancha; 2. Boa Vista Hotel; 3. Consul for Netherlands; 4. Government House-Governor's Residence; 5. Supreme Court and Treasury; 6. Post Office; 7. Hing Kee's Family Hotel; 8. Consul for Italy and Siam; 9. French Consulate; 10. Public Gardens; 11. Military Club; 12. Military Hospital. Source: drawing by author, based on a map from R. C. Hurley, *The Tourists Guide to Canton, the West River and Macao, Hong Kong*, published by R. C. Hurley, Hongkong, 1898, reprinted by Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Pub., 1973, before p.1.

In the early days, the Praia Grande was suffering from threats from the sea because of its geographical location. Many forts were constructed along the bay and on the top of nearby hills, including Guia Fort, São Francisco Fort, São Pedro Fort, Macau Fort, Penha Fort (from east to west). The birth of the promenade was probably postponed by the vulnerability of Praia Grande till the Qing government slightly loosed the foreign and customs policies after 1684. Four customs substations with different functions were established at strategic positions in 1688. At the middle of the Praia Grande, the Nanwan Station was set up in 1732 to check passengers landing on Macau and observe the arrival and departure of foreign fleets. It became an important passenger terminal to receive visitors from the sea. From 1757 onwards, Emperor Qianlong decreed a series of foreign policies that required foreign fleets to engage pilots and compradors in Macau before entering Canton for trade. However, foreigners had to leave Canton at the end of each trading season. More important, their female family members were forbidden to go to Canton. Under these conditions, Macau became the only permissible residence for foreigners outside the annual trading periods.

After the First Opium War, the Qing government lost the control over Macau. The treaty between China and Portugal was almost signed in 1887. "Lined with symbols of power, weight of state machineries, promise of salvation and eternity as well as the trapping of luxury, the Avenue Praia Grande became a showcase of Macau's ambition and nostalgia, and it was the favourite place for the Governors to demonstrate their achievements."² The beautification of the Avenue Praia Grande started in the 1860s - the seashore was reinforced with granite and the banyan trees were planted along it. It is not surprising to see a large amount of paintings, photographs, and literature depicted the Avenue Praia Grande as one of the most charming landscapes on Macau in the 19th century. (Fig. 3) As Henry Norman described in 1894,

"Its bay [Praia Grande] is perfect crescent. Around this runs a broad boulevard, called the Praya Grande, shadowed with fine old arching banyan trees. At each horn the Portuguese flag waves over a little fort. Behind the town, green wooded hills rise like an amphitheatre, and among the houses a picturesque old buildings sticks (*sic*) up here and there – the Cathedral, the barracks, the military hospital, the older Fort Monte. The whitewashed houses with their green blinds and wide shady porticoes and verandas, from which

² Ibid.

dark eyes look idly down upon you as you pass, recall many a little Italian and Spanish town.”³

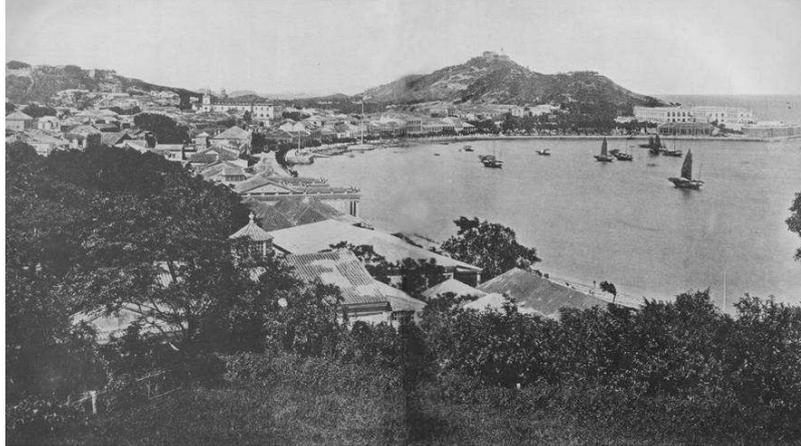


Figure 3 Macau, 1868-1872. Source: John Warner (ed.), *China: The Land and Its People*, Hong Kong: John Warner Publications, 1977, p.34-55.

Located at the estuary of the West River, the harbors of Macau have to face the silting problems and to be dredged frequently. As early as the 1880s, the government already proposed a port development, although it was never carried out. When the new progressive regime came to power in Lisbon in 1910, the Portuguese government attempted to create a new image of their little colony in the Orient. At the same time, the shallow harbors became an obstacle to Macau’s economy due to the difficulty of accommodating modern steamers. To modernize port facilities, the redevelopment of the Outer Harbor began in 1923 and its first phase was completed in 1930 by the Harbor Works Department of Macau. Almost the full stretch of the eastern shore was reclaimed, including the eastern end of the Praia Grande. However, the reclamation was terminated right in front of the Governor’s Residence, probably because of “a purely cultural and totally invisible border.”⁴

The first reclamation of the Praia Grande indicated the government’s uncertain vision for this little Portuguese enclave that had been known as the “City of the Name of God” with the relaxing and introspective ambience. In fact, the Praia Grande after the reclamation produced a collage of political hesitation and cultural embarrassment. The collage was further distorted when the Hotel Lisboa was built on the reclaimed land in the late 1960s. Its striking image of a bright yellow birdcage boosted Macau’s new fame of the “Monte Carlo of the Orient.” Since then, Macau’s economy has heavily relied on the gambling industry. In fact, two-thirds of its revenue came from the Sociedade de jogos de Macau – Stanley Ho’s gambling empire. Reclaiming the Praia Grande in the name of progress implicitly blemished the cultural images that the Macanese had contemplated for generations.

Despite the distorted image of the Praia Grande, the remained half of the crescent bay continued to entertain the Macaunese with the pleasant experience of strolling along the sea under the arching banyan tree. However, this serene landscape was destroyed when the large scale reclamation was carried out in the 1990s. In 1991, the Macau government initiated the plan of reclaiming the Praia Grande, which was strongly supported by Stanley Ho who eventually owns most of the reclaimed land. The reclamation work started in 1995 and was completed with two hemispheric basins – Nanwan Lake and Xiwan Lake. An expressway named after Stanley Ho was constructed to abut the Avenue Praia Grande. The reclaimed land around the two

³ Henry Norman, *The People and Politics of the Far East: Travels and Studies in the British, French, Spanish and Portuguese Colonies, Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and Malaya*, 6th Impression, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901, c1895, p. 184.

⁴ Philippe Forêt, “Globalizing Macau: the Emotional Costs of Modernity,” in *Globalization and the Chinese City*, edited by Fulong Wu, Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2006.

lakes was divided into five parcels for mixed-use developments.

Although efforts have been made to create new recreational spaces along the two artificial lakes, even the Tourism Bureau finds it hard to promote the Avenue Praia Grande, because the original landscape had been changed so much. People could not retrieve the experience of approaching Macau from the sea and enjoying the charming landscape with rich layers. Even worse, the future construction of high-rise buildings on the reclaimed land will completely block the sea views of the UNESCO heritage sites facing the Outer Harbor, including the Chapel of Penha Hill, etc. In recent years, the disputes over the height control of buildings on the reclaimed land revealed the public concerns about their cultural history and collective memory. A plan of building a surface metro line crossing through the Avenue Praia Grande was strongly against by the public and eventually abandoned.

3 CONNAUGHT ROAD: THE ECONOMIC PULSE OF THE CROWN COLONY

Most of waterfront spaces in Asia were initiated for business purposes, although the Avenue Praia Grande is an exception. The dramatic spatial transformation of waterfronts in Hong Kong exemplifies the tension between economic development and cultural conservation in the process of globalization. The Hong Kong Island was ceded to the British government according to the Treaty of Nanjing, largely due to its natural harbor situated between the Island and the Kowloon Peninsula. The harbor with the deep, sheltered waters and strategic location on the South China Sea was instrumental in Hong Kong's development into a global trading centre in Asia. Originally called "Hong Kong Harbor," it was renamed as "Victoria Harbor" after the Queen Victoria. Throughout its history, the Harbor has experienced numerous reclamation projects to fulfill the growing demand for land in the crowded City of Victoria and to accommodate thousands of vessels every year.

After the First Opium War, Hong Kong quickly replaced the neighboring Macau to being the most suitable foreign settlement close to the mainland China. The development of the crown colony started on the northern shore of the Hong Kong Island. The waterfront was called "Praya," probably after the Praia Grande of Macau. That reminded western merchants of their earlier gay life in the Portuguese colony and their splendid summer resorts along the Praia Grande. While the Praia Grande was modernized by the Macau government, the earliest reclamation of the Praya was conducted by private forces with little planning. The Praya Reclamation Scheme, the first large scale land reclamation project in Hong Kong, was carried out by the Hong Kong Land Company under Sir Catchick Paul Chater and James Johnstone Keswick. Although being proposed in 1855, the project commenced 13 years later in 1868. This five year project produced a large plot of land to the west of the Praya Central, where the "Bowring Praya" was constructed and later renamed Des Voeux Road.

The second Praya Reclamation Scheme was proposed in 1875, but was delayed by the lack of funding and disputes over land rights along the Praya Central. The plan was retrieved in July 1887 by the Tai-pan of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company. Just before the Prince Arthur's visit to Hong Kong in 1890, Francis Fleming, then acting governor, announced a new road extension from the Des Voeux Road eastwards, which was to be named Connaught Road after the Prince. The project lasted for 13 years and was completed in 1903. A statue of the Duke was once set up at the junction of the Connaught Road and the Pedder Street. The Connaught Road became a remarkable promenade with strong colonial influence along the north shore of the Hong Kong Island, merged with the Des Voeux Road on the west and terminated at the Navy Yard on the east. The reclamation of the Praya continued in the name of progress. In 1897, the government intended to reclaim the Praya East starting from the junction of Hennessy Road and Johnson Road and ending at the Percival Street. But the scheme was held up for more than 20 years until November 1921, and it took another 10 years to complete.

Although the government usually claimed that the reclamation projects were to relieve the population density of the City of Victoria, most of the reclaimed land in the Central was used for commercial purposes. The Connaught Road was flanked with official and commercial buildings, including the Hong Kong Club, Queen's buildings, Post Office, etc. At the same time, the Connaught Road was also the transportation hub

for the City of Victoria, lined with many piers. Among them, the Queen's Pier constructed in 1925 was the most distinguished. Although serving as a public pier, it was purposely built as a ceremonial pier to receive the governors of Hong Kong and dignitaries.⁵ At its peak time, the Connaught Road symbolized the prosperity of the City of Victoria and its loyalty to the Britain. (Fig. 4, 5)

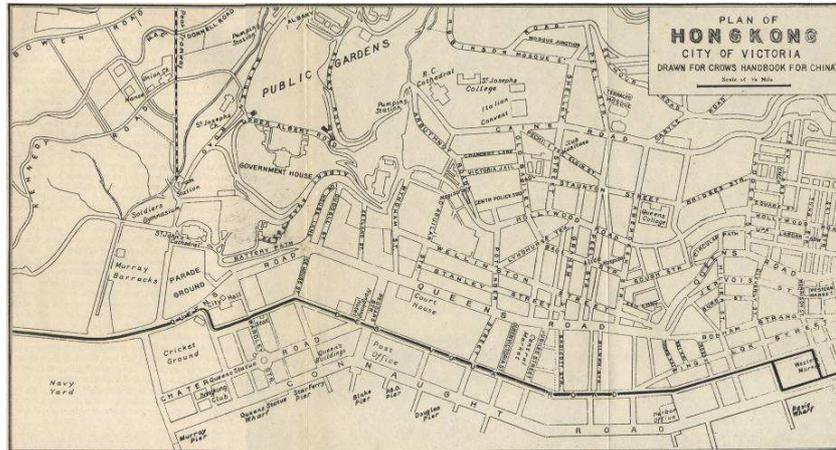


Figure 4 Plan of Hong Kong, City of Victoria, 1933, source: Carl Crow, *Handbook for China (including Hong Kong)*, 5th ed., Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1933, reprinted by Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Com., 1973, between pp. 358 and 359.



Figure 5 The Arrival of Sir Henry May (Governor 1912-1919) at Blake Pier in 1912. Source: *Old Photographs of Chinese Cities Hong Kong, Macau, Canton, Amoy, Shanghai and Peking (1865-1912)*, An Exhibition held at the Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong in January 1995, presented by Horstmann & Godfrey Ltd., Hong Kong, 1995, p.15.

However, the glorious past of the Connaught Road was smashed up by the endless demand for land in the Central, another large-scale reclamation of the Victoria Harbor started in 1953 and completed in 1968. The Connaught Road, once a promenade with amazing sea views, became a landlocked thoroughfare for vehicles. Most of the piers along the Connaught Road were relocated or demolished, including the Queen's Pier and Star Ferry Pier. The new Queen's Pier was completed in June 1954 on the north of its old site on the

⁵ For the information on the Praya Reclamation and the history of the Queen's Pier, see "A Historical and Architectural Appraisal of Queen's Pier, Central (Annex B3)", Antiquities and Monuments Office, Government of Hong Kong SAR, accessed on 15 December 2007.

Connaught Road. Not far from it, the new Star Ferry Pier was opened in October 1957. At the same time, many old buildings along the Connaught Road were demolished to make way for high-rise buildings, including the City Hall built in 1867. Constructed on the reclaimed land, the new City Hall and Edinburgh Place were completed in 1962. Since then, each arriving new Governor would land at the Queen's Pier and hold an inspection of the Guard of honor on Edinburgh Place before swearing in the City Hall. The new Queen's Pier became a popular social gathering place for Hongkongers till it was demolished in 2008.

The government's plans of reclaiming the Victoria Harbor never stopped. In 1989, the feasibility study of the Central and Wan Chai Reclamation was completed, and a concept of gradually reclaiming three districts (Central, Tamar and Exhibition) was endorsed by the Land Development Policy Committee. To facilitate the new round of land reclamation, the Star Ferry Pier was closed on 11 November 2006 and demolished in early 2007. The Queen's Pier was closed on 26 April 2007. Although protested by conservationists on 1 August 2007 and involved in a judicial review one week later, the demolition of the Queen's Pier was completed in early 2008. Activists denounced that the government's actions will damage Hong Kong's natural environment and Hongkongers' collective memory. In order to appease the public, the government attempts to reassemble the piers at the new waterfront in future. However, what the Hongkongers lost is much more than two landmarks in modern architectural style. The waterfront space of the Central is to be completely changed, just like what the Connaught Road had experienced half of a century ago. However, in the government's words, the continuous reclamation projects are to maintain the competitiveness of this "Pearl of Orient" for the interests of Hongkongers.

4 THE SHANGHAI BUND: THE GRAND FAÇADE OF AN INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT

Shanghai became part of Songjiang county in the Suzhou prefecture in 1264 when commercial activities flourished in Jiangnan (South of the Yangtze River) during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). To protect this region from the pirates, a walled city was built in 1553 and became the nucleus of the City of Shanghai. The changing foreign policies of the Qing led to the establishment of Shanghai as the major trade port in the Yangtze Delta, despite its low administrative level in the political hierarchy. After the opening of Shanghai as a treaty port in 1842, the British, American and French set up their concessions in 1843, 1848 and 1849 respectively, along the west bank of Huangpu River (Whampoa River) and outside the walled city. These concessions were separated by two waters – Yang Jing Bing (Yang-king-pang) and Suzhou River (Soochow Creek). The British and American concessions were united to become the Shanghai International Settlement in 1863, while the French consul refused to give up the independence of his national concession. (Fig. 6)

The Shanghai Land Regulations signed between the local authorities and the foreign governments defined the boundaries of these foreign settlements, and also guided the land development within their administrative limits. According to the Regulations of 1845, "a large road along the bank of the river, from the Yang-king-pang Northwards, which was a towing-path for the grain junks, must be repaired and replaced by the renters."⁶ This clause required a public road with a minimum width of 8 meters for common access. The strict control of the setback protected the public road from being invaded by the lot holders along it. The weight of the Regulations and the contest among different forces eventually turned the towing path into an orderly linear waterfront space along the River - the Shanghai Bund.

By the 1860s, the Shanghai Bund already formed its distinguished spatial character. Starting at the Edward VII Avenue (today's Yan'an Road) on the south and terminating at the Garden Bridge (today's Waibaidu Bridge) over the Suzhou Creek on the north, the Bund stretched around one mile long, flanked with new-classical architecture on its west side and lined with busy wharves on the waterside. The boulevard was paved and beautified with plantings of various vegetations. Some monuments were erected on the waterside and a park was constructed on its northern end. The Bund turned into an "exceptionally scenic, open, and well-planted stretch of public space."⁷ In the early 20th century, the Shanghai Bund already housed

⁶ Land Regulations dated 29 Nov., 1845. *The Shanghai Land Regulations, Original and Present Codes, and Sundry Documents Relating Thereto*, p.1–11.

⁷ Seng Kuan, "Image of the Metropolis: Three Historical Views of Shanghai," in *Shanghai: Architecture &*

many of the major financial institutions in the world, the Shanghai Club, the Masonic Club, some consulates and hotels, etc. It was also the transportation hub of Shanghai and received thousands of visitors from the sea every day. It is not surprising to see that Shanghai became the financial center in East Asia and the Bund symbolized the prosperity of the “Paris of the Orient.” (Fig. 7)

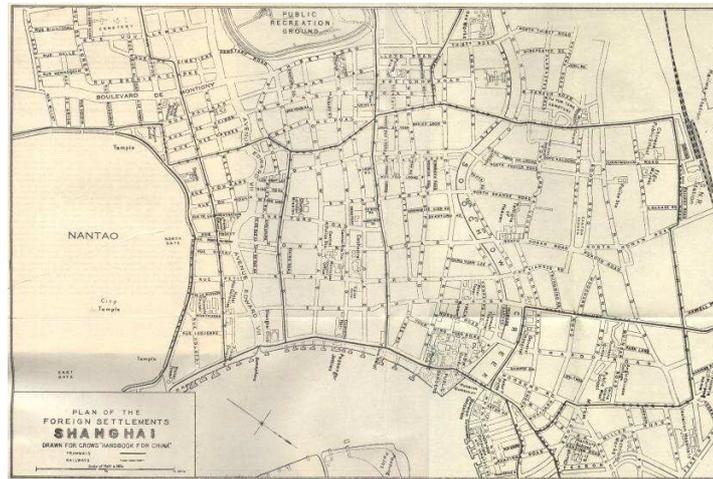


Figure 6 Plan of the Foreign Settlements, Shanghai, 1933. Source: Carl Crow, *Handbook for China (including Hong Kong)*, 5th ed., Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1933, reprinted by Taipei: Ch’eng Wen Publishing Com., 1973, between pp. 135 and 137.



Figure 7 A Bird’s-eye View of the Bund in the 1930s. Source: *Shanghai Municipal Archives, The Bund: Old Shanghai in Postcards*, undated.

After 1949, the social life on the Bund was definitely changed. Foreigners left Shanghai and their properties were taken over by the government, which were converted to other uses. The monuments with colonial memory were demolished. The boulevard on which the Bund is centered was renamed Zhongshan Road after Sun Yat-sen. Due to the slow development of Shanghai, the waterfront character of the Bund was largely retained in this period. After the Open-door Policy of 1978, China’s economy booms and Shanghai regains its position of the key financial center in the world. While the buildings on the Bund were gradually resumed their previous roles, many renovation projects were carried out in the 1990s, which showed the

Urbanism for Modern China, edited by Seng Kuan and Peter G. Rowe, Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel Verlag, 2004.

government's attempt of utilizing "colonial relics" to boost the Socialist ideology in a new era. However, these actions largely changed the spatial character of the Bund.

Firstly, the extension of the Zhongshan Road reduced the size of the old park at the northern end of the Bund. This road was further widened to being a ten-lane expressway to relieve half of the traffic flow through the Suzhou River. That turned the Bund into a place to pass through, rather than a place for gathering. Secondly, in 1993, the Gutzlaff Signal Tower established in 1907 was moved toward the Huangpu River for 22.4 meters in order to leave more space for transportation. Thirdly, the wharves along the Bund were removed. And a tall levee was constructed to wall off the floods. Although the safety of the Bund was secured, the huge embankment is almost 10 meters higher than the steel level. The construction dramatically changed the spatial character of the Bund. Fourthly, the increasing property value in the surrounding districts stimulates more high-rise buildings to be constructed behind the Bund. That largely changed the skyline of the Bund.

In the post-reform era, the Shanghai government started rethinking their city vision and generated new planning strategies for the Shanghai Bund. A series of renovation projects was initiated in 2007 and will be completed in 2010 to retrieve a pedestrian-friendly waterfront space and celebrate the opening of the Shanghai Expo 2010. The traffic flow through the Bund was carefully re-configured. The lanes of the Zhongshan Road will be reduced from 10 to 4. And a double-levelled underground roadway with 4 lanes on each level is under construction. More surface parking will be provided to facilitate public transportation on the Bund. To reopen the space at the junction of Yan'an Road and the Bund, a section of the elevated expressway (joked by the locals as "the No. 1 turn of Asia") was demolished. To recover its transportation function, the century-old Waibaidu Bridge over the Suzhou Creek was removed for restoration on 1 March 2008. These projects will allow the government to demolish the concrete bridge that was built in 1991 to replace the Waibaodu Bridge.

5 CONCLUSION

The waterfront spaces in Asia have been central to the economic, social and cultural life of their cities. Their spatial transformation is closely linked to the changing political and economic climate. In past few decades, the governments were pushed to reconstruct urban environment in order to compete with their visible and invisible rivals in the world. On one hand, the cities are sprawling outwards at an unpredictable pace. On the other hand, ambitious redevelopment of the old city centers is carried out to pursue instant economic returns. Reclaiming urban waterfront became one of the most 'efficient' ways of producing high-value land in the crowded cities like Macau and Hong Kong, which have been constrained by the limited administrative territory. The historical urban waterfronts are at risk in the economy-oriented strategies of urban development.

The spatial transformation of the waterfronts in Macau, Hong Kong and Shanghai also reveals a fact that the waterfront areas are often altered to relieve traffic congestion in the city centers. The promenades with linear open space could be easily widened to receive more vehicles as a traffic corridor. The newly-constructed Avenue Stanley Ho cut the Avenue Praia Grande off from the water. The Connaught Road became a landlocked thoroughfare half of a century ago, and the demolition of the Queen's Pier and Star Ferry Pier will distort the images of waterfront space in the Central. Although the Shanghai government is taking action to reduce the traffic flow on the Bund, the giant embankment has become a permanent barrier to the water. Innovative urban design is expected to soften its edge.

The brief review of the transformation of waterfront space in Macau, Hong Kong and Shanghai also points out that the urban waterfronts with geographical advantages and historical values have the potential to provide a powerful impetus to the economic and social development of these cities. Although people may not be able to enjoy the splendid views of the Shanghai Bund from the water, it remains one of the most popular destinations for the locals and tourists. In their early renovation projects of the Bund, the government focused on showing off the heritage buildings and stimulating land development in the surrounding districts. In the early 21st century, a paradigm shift could be identified in the government's latest renovation projects of

the Bund - the values of the Bund are used to display their vision of the city and to strengthen the city identity. Historical urban waterfronts could contribute to the quality of urban life in many aspects – economic, social, and cultural, even if how to reach a balance between economic development and cultural conservation can always be an open-ended question. Only after the governments gain their confidence in global competition and generate long-term vision for their cities, could a positive future of historical urban waterfronts in Asia be promised.

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