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JAPANESE MODERNITY IN SHANGHAI

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Written for The Japanese Empire

HIST 408

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Shanghai held a special position to many Japanese. It was the only treaty-port city in the twentieth century where all major imperial powers were present in full force.¹ The Treaty of Shimonoseki enabled the Japanese to set up their own concession in Shanghai, but they chose to join the International Settlement, a de facto independent territory where all foreign citizens enjoyed extraterritoriality and consular jurisdiction. Yet, unlike other cosmopolitan cities such as Paris, London, or New York at the time, in Shanghai, cross-cultural interaction and integration did not happen since each community was self-enclosed. The British remained British, the French remained French, and the Japanese people tried everything possible to isolate themselves from Chinese residents and create a uniquely Japanese residential district. For instance, Japanese stores, tea houses, and fashion were seen everywhere within the district. Out of this Japanese settlement in Shanghai, a Japanese notion of modernity manifested and developed over time. As Yokomitsu Riichi put it in the 1920s,

The question of International Settlement remains the most obscure among the world's problems and yet also contains all the questions of the future. Simply put, there is no other place in the world where the character of modernity is so clearly revealed.²

1. Joshua A. Fogel, "Shanghai-Japan: The Japanese Residents' Association of Shanghai," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 4 (2000): 927-50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2659217>.

2. Ritsuo Taguchi, "Shanghai, Japan, and Identity Politics: On Yokomitsu Riichi's Shanghai," *Asiatische Studien* 53, no. 2 (1999): 203.

The Japanese had been searching for modernity since the onset of the Meiji restoration, the substitution of a unified Japanese national identity for loyalty to the Shogunate. Therefore, in this paper, I define modernity as a nation's framework for its unified political identity. Essentially, the question of what it means to be modern is the same as what it means to be Japanese. As Young argues, "the relationship between modernity and empire was dialectical: just as modernization conditioned the growth of empire, the process of imperialism shaped the conditions of modern life."³ The significance of the Japanese experience in Shanghai is that it instituted a unique notion of modernity, which began from a total acceptance of Western modernity before moving to an invention of a lifestyle that is neither Western nor Chinese: a special symbol of "overcoming modernity" for the Japanese Empire. In this paper, I choose mass media to investigate the formation of identities of Japanese residents in Shanghai as it became increasingly popular during the time period.

I. Japanese Media in Shanghai

A. A Brief Overview

The newspaper industry in China started in the early nineteenth century. The earliest newspapers were all founded by expatriates mainly to serve the citizens of nations which the newspaper publishers belonged to. The British were the most active. Content-wise, early newspapers only focused on missionary work and commerce. In later stages, they gradually involved issues such as current affairs, politics, diplomacy, culture, and academics. The Japanese first started running newspapers in Shanghai, the core of Japan's publishing industry. A study showed that there were at least 34 Japanese-run newspapers in Shanghai from the late Qing to the Republican era.⁴ After the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Japanese newspapers and periodicals in Shanghai began to expand rapidly, and most of them supported China's national reform; but after 1903, partially due to the influence of Japan's national policy toward China, Japanese newspapers and periodicals criticized China's revolutionary ideology and gradually deviated from it.⁵

B. The 1890s: Shanghai Shinpō 上海新报

The Shanghai Shinpo, founded in 1890, was one of the earliest Japanese newspapers in Shanghai. The only Japanese-run publication founded earlier was the

3. Louise Young, "Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism," Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998: 12.

4. Shumei Jia, Shanghai Xin Wen Zhi 上海新闻志 (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2000): 142-48, 325.

5. Jiarong Zhou, "Japanese-Run Newspapers in Shanghai (1882-1945)," CNKI, 2008.

Shanghai Business Journal (Shanghai shangye zabao, 上海商业杂报), which was founded in 1882 and stopped publishing a year later in 1883.⁶ The Shanghai Shinpo was a private agency funded by Mitsui & Co. (三井洋行); it was published once a week and priced at ten qian each. Therefore, in addition to general news and reviews, the content of this magazine also included business reports of Mitsui & Co.⁷ It also published news about the development of economic and cultural undertakings by Japanese residents in Shanghai, such as the opening of photo studios and hotels and the establishment of the Shanghai Japanese Club and the Japanese Youth Association, as well as novels and poems, etc.⁸ The newspaper lasted until 1900.

1. Looking Forward to Tsuruhara, The New Consul

This year more and more men and women come here from our country, but few of them bring enough capital to engage in business activities. Most of them are untouchables who cannot live in domestic society and come here to make a living. Although they should not be interfered too much as long as they do not engage in illegal activities, they often disregard their decency as Japanese and engage in prostitution that disrupts customs, so they are managed and enforced, and those who go too far have to be taken sanctions. The further dishonor of these untouchables includes indulging in gambling or wandering the streets of the city in clothes even more inferior than those of the Chinese. Although inconspicuous at present, such disgraceful acts are gradually increasing throughout the settlements, which will inevitably cause foreigners to treat us with contempt, and cause damage to the credit of us ordinary Japanese.⁹

The first editorial presented above was a request sent to the incoming Japanese consul to China, Tsuruhara. It advocated the use of consular power to take extreme measures to manage the negative impact of those inferior Japanese immigrants. The use of the decency of Japanese people in the argument and the awareness of foreign contempt signify the author's awareness of Japanese nation-state identity. Different from the militaristic expansionist arguments used in Northeastern China, Japanese residents in Shanghai mobilized such desires for dignity purely for their business interests. Their primary objective was to urge the new consul to protect and subsidize the trade route between Shanghai and Japan. The editorial also listed interviews with Japanese merchants in

6. Jiarong Zhou, "Japanese-Run Newspapers in Shanghai (1882-1945)," CNKI, 2008.

7. Weidong Guo and Yigao Liu, *Chin Tai Wai Kuo Tsai Hua Wen Hua Chi Kou Tsung Lu* 近代外国在华文化机构综录 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1993), 20.

8. Zu'en Chen, *Xun Fang Dong Yang Ren* 寻访东洋人——近代上海的日本居留民 (1868-1945) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2007), 226-27.

9. "Editorial: Looking Forward to Tsuruhara, The New Japanese Consul to China, 社论: '寄望鹤原新领事(第12号)," Shanghai Shinpo, August 22, 1890.

Shanghai on their experience with the previous consul who, when asked about business-related affairs, always responded with “I don’t know,” compared to other foreign consuls who always provided business reports to their residents. The problem of the “inferior Japanese,” to these merchants, was that they were unable to “bring enough capital to engage in business activities.” In other words, the origin of Japanese identities in Shanghai was founded on the interest of protecting and developing a Japanese commercial presence in the city. The interest of the Japanese State here gave way to privately-run businesses, which defined the unique core of the Japanese identity in Shanghai.

2. Inquiring about Young Japanese Living Abroad

Dear young people, you are now living in the Qing Empire, in which area do you want to display your talents? Facing the white people living in these ports, you have no sense of survival and competition. They are much better than us in terms of intelligence, wealth, and experience. Do young people in our country have to fight against them through enduring hatred and anger? No. We must clearly know that it is currently impossible to compete with or defeat them. However, compared with our same race, the Chinese, can we compete with them? Patience and diligence are the strengths of the Chinese, and we are worse than them in this regard. I don’t know how much it is. Compared with past experience, our country’s merchants are not as good as Chinese merchants, and they have suffered repeated failures, often due to lack of patience and diligence...

There is no doubt that the Chinese are much better than us in both commerce and industry. However, we have many races to compete with besides them. For example, everyone knows that there are many Portuguese in various ports in China, and many of them are employed by Westerners as clerks in commercial houses or as petty officials in the customs office, with monthly wages as high as 50 - 100 Yen, or as low as around 30 yen. They are seen as very hard working, very diligent, and very obedient to the master’s orders, making Europeans and Americans feel that these Portuguese are very easy to give orders to. If we try to compare these races, we don’t have their strategies (手腕) and skills, nor do we have their language advantages. Can’t do anything about it. Even if we are courageous, we can’t actually do anything besides cheer ourselves up spiritually(在精神上豪放一下).¹⁰

The editorial shows how Japanese residents in the early 1890s viewed three types of foreign nationals as rivals for survival in Shanghai when considering their advantages:

10. “Inquiring about Young Japanese Living Abroad, 社论: ‘询问在外日本青年者’ (第45号),” *Shanghai Shinpō*, April 10, 1891.

the intellectual and financial advantages of Europeans and Americans, the perseverance of the Chinese, and the advantages in language and skill of the Portuguese. For the survival and prosperity of the Japanese in Shanghai, the editorial suggested that the Japanese must “lead the Chinese in perseverance and hard-working, crush the Jewish in saving money, exclude the Portuguese in clerk and petty officials.” This further suggests that Japanese residents, specifically the merchants, prioritized business-related challenges over anything else and viewed their business competition with foreign nationals as an existential threat. In conclusion, Japanese residents viewed themselves as weak and marginalized in the international metropolis. They had a strong sense of confrontation against Western forces while also recognizing the power of the Chinese who stood in a more advantageous position commercially. However, the call to action reveals a strong sense of national unification in response to the threats of these other nations; a Japanese identity with distinctive strength against others is being formed in this process.

C. The 1930s: The Criminal Science

The year 1931 was a turning point for Sino-Japanese relations when the Japanese invaded Manchuria through military force. An extensive mass media campaign was carried out to influence the Japanese perception of Shanghai. While the Japanese in the 1890s were starting to build their national dignity as a latecomer in Shanghai who viewed Chinese and Westerners as a threat to survival, in the 1931s they strived to turn themselves into the dominator of China. By the end of the 1890s, there were only around one thousand Japanese residents in Shanghai, two-thirds of whom were female prostitutes serving foreign customers in the concessions. The Japanese population started to grow after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and Japanese social life evolved as a self-governing body, the Japanese Resident Association (JRA) was established two years later. By the end of World War I in 1919, the Japanese community grew to become the most populated emigre community in Shanghai with more than 17,720 permanent residents. By 1928, the number grew up to 27,660 (including all “citizens” of the Japanese Empire such as Koreans and Taiwanese), the majority of whom were middle-class corporate employees at local banks, factories, etc.¹¹ The demographic shift and growth of the Japanese community shaped the popular perception of Shanghai as an international territory and subsequently played a significant role in shaping Japanese imperial identity.

On the Chinese side, in 1931, after the Manchurian Incident, the Chinese

11. Hirofumi Takatsuna and Zu'en Chen, *Social History of Japanese Overseas Chinese in Modern Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2014): 8-11.

nationalist movement had developed to become precisely an anti-Japanese campaign. The Kuomintang mobilized many volunteer militias in Shanghai, with as many as 17,000 soldiers by the end of the year. The Japanese residents responded in two ways. The elites pressured the Japanese government to protect their business interests in Shanghai. On September 29, 1931, the Shanghai Japanese Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to the Japanese foreign minister:

As long as the relationship between Japan and China does not reach the level of a breakdown in diplomatic terms, the Chinese government is undoubtedly obligated to fully protect the lives and property of Japanese residents, as well as the freedom to live and operate businesses. Especially given the nature of the situation, once retreated, there is no hope of an easy return to the same place. Therefore, if the residents retreat, it means giving up their benefits, unknowingly falling into the tricks of the Chinese, and destroying the economic foundation we have built after years of hard work.... From a holistic and long-term perspective, to solve the outstanding issues in Manchuria and Mongolia and to protect vested interests, which are related to the goals of Japan-China relations, [the matter] should be treated with the understanding that any sacrifices can be indulged.... We request that the Nanjing government fundamentally change its historical policy towards Japan with the most serious attitude and eliminate any anti-Japanese movement.¹²

In light of the success of the military operation in Manchuria, Japanese business elites began to challenge the authority of the Chinese and seek Japanese officials to interfere with the Chinese affairs on their soil. Instead of downplaying their Japanese pride before Chinese' aggression, they demonstrated the nominal privileges as Japanese citizens and actively engaged in the conflict, asking both the Japanese and Nanjing governments to eliminate anti-Japanese movements with extreme measures. However, how did the masses react to this increasingly hostile environment?

There are very few records on the lives of ordinary Japanese in the 1930s, but a handful of mass media outlets emerged to target the residents in Shanghai which can provide a sneak peek into what a Japanese resident in Shanghai might discuss. Criminal Science was a monthly magazine founded in June 1930 and ended in December 1932. Each publication had roughly 340 pages and was priced at 60 qian. The magazine had more discussion around Shanghai than its contemporary counterparts.¹³ In June 1932, the magazine reduced its price to 50 qian. The Editor's Note explained the price change:

12. Sokaze Muramatsu, "上海事変を觀てくる," *Chūō Kōron*, April 1932, 343.

13. Qing Xu, *Modern Japanese Perception of Shanghai, 1862-1945* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2012): 52.

“Anything detached from public life is powerless. From now on, this magazine will be with the masses.”¹⁴ What distinguishes *Criminal Science* was its explicit target towards the “masses,” which was only a new concept to Japanese society that emerged in the 1920s after the Great Kantō earthquake.¹⁵ The magazine was filled with hiragana, manga, photos, illustrations, and short stories, and all the kanji were supplemented by furigana to ease the literacy burden for readers.

The year before the First Shanghai Incident (also known as the January 28 Incident), *Criminal Science* published a special edition titled “Shanghai Study.” Many influential Japanese journalists and scholars based in Shanghai publish their work here such as Itaru Nii (新居格) and Asatarō Gotō (後藤朝太郎).

Shanghai is a free port. It's a place where you don't need a passport. So the daughters of Nagasaki came to Shanghai with indifferent faces (无所谓の嘴脸) . . . The result of the turmoil between us and them was the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. It is the victory of Japan, which used to be insulted as an inconsequentially small country. In the future, China will be the stage where the Japanese can show off and play a role. Where, the daughters of beautiful Nagasaki raised their yellow voices, “It's too boring in the mainland, go to Shanghai to make a fortune” “It's okay to be a concubine. Be a foreigner's concubine and you can make a lot of money” Anyway It is said that Shanghai is an exhibition venue for ethnic groups from ten thousand countries. . . For us, Shanghai is a very interesting place with different nationalities.¹⁶

Compared to merely forty years ago when the Japanese needed to compete with Chinese and Westerners for survival, Shanghai was now perceived as an “interesting place with different nationalities” where the Japanese could easily make a fortune and show off to the world. The superior side of Shanghai no longer existed in Japanese perceptions. In turn, Shanghai had, on a conscious level, been incorporated into the broad concept of the Empire of Japan: “The city of Shanghai in the Prefecture of Nagasaki.” Daughters of Nagasaki now traveled to Shanghai not with faces of amazement but with indifference because to them, the trip to Shanghai was shorter than the trip to Osaka, and the streets in Shanghai were full of Japanese with Nagasaki accents since 70 percent of Japanese residents, the largest foreign population in Shanghai, were from Nagasaki at the time.¹⁷

The Japanese Communist Party might be related to this organization. Many people

14. “Editor's Note,” *Criminal Science*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1932.

15. Qing Xu, *Modern Japanese Perception of Shanghai, 1862-1945* (Shanghai People's Press, 2012): 53.

16. Nagai Tokutaro, “Shanghai in the Prefecture of Nagasaki,” *Criminal Science*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1931.

17. “Kyushu University Graduate School of Comparative Society and Culture Comparative Culture Research Symposium,” 2001.

had planned conspiracy activities in Shanghai, just as the world knows. However, [they did it] in Shanghai not only because of the profits there but also because it is the most beneficial base for conspiracy. It can also be said that it receives the least interference from other places. Therefore, as a strange land, it is feasible to plan all kinds of conspiracy activities. For Chinese nobilities, there are many who avoid the Zhongyuan and slowly retreat to Shanghai, planning a comeback. It is a natural result that places like Shanghai not only have international prisoners but also are cultivating such people. Now all these have become famous products in Shanghai.¹⁸

Another notable fact is that the articles frequently commented on the rebellion in Shanghai against the ruling of the Japanese Empire, most notably on Japanese communism. In 1921, the Communist Party of China was founded in the French concession of Shanghai. In 1925, the Communist International convened in Shanghai and instructed the reestablishment of the Communist Party of Japan, which was dissolved by the Japanese government a year ago. As an authoritative Sinologist scholar from the mainland, Asatarō Gotō equated rebels and revolutionaries to criminals when describing Shanghai. He then added, “In the demonic alleys (魔巷) of Shanghai, first, it’s dangerous to carry a lot of money while walking; second, it’s dangerous to move around in a car; third, it’s dangerous to be followed on the street; fourth, it’s dangerous to be hiding criminal activities. No matter what, Shanghai is a city full of dangerous atmospheres.”¹⁹ “The conspiracy” that the communist “criminals” were planning contributed to what made Shanghai a dangerous city of sin. Rather than praising the city for its modern development and huge business returns, Japanese mass media started to picture a version of modernity that was filled with drugs, prostitution, and danger. However, the question of how Japanese residents in Shanghai reacted to the shifting perception of Shanghai remains unsolved.

“In the eyes of the new generation of Japanese, a superior identity of Japan was formed and inherently connected to modernity and civility.”

. 1937, Compositions by Primary School Students

Itaru Nii, the famous leftist journalist who created the term “moga” (modern girl), compiled and published a series of compositions by primary school pupils. In these

18. Gotō Asatarō, “在逆光中辉煌的上海魔巷,” *Criminal Science*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1931.

19. Gotō Asatarō, “在逆光中辉煌的上海魔巷,” *Criminal Science*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1931.

compositions, Japanese pupils described Shanghai as an international metropolis. The awareness of ethnic and national diversity was introduced to them for the first time as they encountered people who were different. Their childishly pure observations of the city revealed their process of internalizing identities: who is Japanese and who isn't, and what it means to be Japanese.

After getting up in the morning, the Japanese brush their teeth, whereas Chinese people barely brush their teeth. In the summer, they put their meal in a very huge bowl, one side with rice and the other with food, and stand outside to eat. Japanese people would never do this as it is considered very ungracious. There are countless ditches in Shanghai... There are no ditches in Japan. Japanese river water is entirely different from ditch water. The water in the creek is clear and not turbid, but the water in the ditch is muddy, and there is no place that is not turbid. Moreover, there are hundreds of thousands of dead Chinese soldiers under such turbid water. Such disgusting water, but the Chinese can use it as if nothing happened, such as washing rice and washing clothes. People who do not have tap water even boil the water for drinking. From the perspective of us Japanese, this is simply unimaginable.²⁰

Japanese kids were very much aware of the difference between Chinese and Japanese people through their daily experiences. Similar negative descriptions of the Chinese appeared in most compositions. Some simply described the discriminatory treatment, "Chinese people in dirty clothes have to show their pass to the sentries before they can pass, and Japanese people in neat and clean clothes only need a simple bow to pass."²¹ They could clearly come to the conclusion that the Japanese were a more educated, beautiful, and simply greater nationality than the filthy Chinese. However, in 1937, even though the compositions mentioned the effects of war such as "hundreds of thousands of dead Chinese soldiers," they seemed to show no empathy towards the violence and casualties that the Chinese people suffered, nor did they think any less of Japanese when they witnessed the military invasion in Shanghai which prompted thousands, if not millions, to flee from their home. In the eyes of the new generation of Japanese, a superior identity of Japan was formed and inherently connected to modernity and civility.

20. Nose, Yoshi, "Shanghai JRA Normal Primary School Six Grader" in *Compositions by Primary School Students*, ed. Itaru Nii, 1937.

21. Yoshida, Yuki, "Shanghai JRA Normal Primary School Second Grader" in *Compositions by Primary School Students*, ed. Itaru Nii, 1937.

II. Japanese Identity Consolidation in Shanghai

A. Cultural Identity

It is impossible to define the formation of Japanese identity in Shanghai without discussing the soil that nurtured it. Shanghai, one of the few multinational and multi-religious trade centers that emerged in the world as the product of Western imperialism, was arguably the birthplace of “modern” culture as we know it today. This notion of “modernity” emerged in the concessions driven by the Western industrial economic system and, as a result, was dominated by Western emigre communities. The prominence of Shanghai as a model of modernity came from its high amount of international trade and foreign investments in certain industries, especially the publishing and leisure industries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, books and periodicals were among the most important industrial products - as had been the case in nineteenth-century New York.²² Through a massive and deliberate media campaign, such as guidebooks, advertisements, and serial fiction, “Shanghai” became a widespread cultural construction. Being a “Shanghaiander” was a uniquely “modern” identity, a collective consciousness of all foreigners who decided to reside in the concessions in Shanghai. Alexander Des Forge, in his book *Mediasphere Shanghai*, argues that the Shanghaiander rhetoric, created in the late nineteenth century, identified the crucial role of Western colonialism in Shanghai’s very existence as a prosperous city, hence “the colonial modernity” paradigm.²³ Newcomers of the city quickly transformed themselves into “Shanghaiander,” a native place identity, which, as argued by Des Forge, “reconfigures the relationship between local identity and larger economic and political forces.”

If guidebooks and other reference works provide the “vocabulary” of the Shanghai experience for newcomers to the city, Shanghai fiction supplies the “grammar” of that experience both to visitors and to residents of the city: not only what a Shanghai person should know, but how he or she acts on that knowledge.²⁴

No other foreign nationals had experienced Western cultural hegemony more than the Japanese residents of Shanghai. Shanghai was figuratively and legally detached from China as a uniquely “European” territory where Westerners enjoyed the same, perhaps even more luxurious lifestyle and did not have to bother learning any language or tradition

22. George G. Foster, *New York by Gas-Light and Other Urban Sketches*, ed. Stuart M. Blumin (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990): 1–61.

23. Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007): 12.

24. Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai*: 13.

of Asia.

The Japanese, on the other hand, did not seem to have left a visible legacy in Shanghai. The modern culture in Shanghai was entirely Western or a Chinese imitation of Western fashions.²⁵ Newspapers rarely reported on Japanese residents in Shanghai. Only when the Japanese army was fighting in the city, or when the boycott of Japanese goods made daily life inconvenient, did the Japanese people appear in the headlines of the newspapers in Shanghai. But even then, it is difficult to find any substantive reports of the lives of Japanese civilians.

Early Japanese experience in Shanghai took place in the context of the pursuit of a modern nation-state where the emperor was the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people. However, when Japanese merchants set foot on the soil of Shanghai, they had to absorb an unparalleled socio-economic shock. Yukio Ozaki, the former mayor of Tokyo, uncritically praised everything he saw in the international concessions for their prosperity in the 1880s, from bridges to pavements, gardens to music.²⁶ Additionally, the Japanese saw themselves as marginalized latecomers to the city where opportunities were already exploited. More importantly, Japanese residents, who were mostly merchants and corporate employees, saw a distinct lack of state involvement and protection in their business interests. They saw this as an existential threat and competed fiercely for survival with other skillful people in the city. Culturally, the mental vulnerability prompted “a sentimental response to a global ideology.”²⁷ For every story of success in Shanghai, there were countless individuals who the news infrequently recognized. This is the problem of the “Global City Model,” as argued by Tsung-yi Michelle Huang.²⁸ Collectively, the Japanese were hidden behind every picture of prosperity in Shanghai. From then on, the quest for modernity no longer equated to following European powers, but to compete with them for a limited amount of resources. The cultural response present in Shanghai Shinpo is a specific political endorsement of a particular expansionist and somewhat predatory approach to global capitalism and its commercial culture.

B. Political Identity

The Imperialism of Free Trade, by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, which

25. Fogel, Joshua A. “The Recent Boom in Shanghai Studies.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 2 (2010): 314.

26. Jianhui Liu and Huijie Gan, *Mo Du Shang-Hai*; Ri-Ben Zhi Shi Ren De Jin Dai Ti Yan 魔都上海 日本知识人的“近代”体验, Shanghai: 上海古籍出版社, (2003): 85.

27. Tsung-yi Michelle Huang and Muzi Dong, “Imagining the Entitled Middle-Class Self in the Global City,” in *The Routledge Companion to Urban Imaginaries*, London, Routledge, (2018): 359.

28. Huang and Dong, “Imagining the Entitled Middle-Class Self in the Global City:” 359

mainly focused on the formation of British imperialism, described the mechanism of integrating less developed regions into the domestic advanced economic system. This was a policy termed “informal empire” based on the principles of free trade that sought to dominate the region not by formal imperial control, but through a series of unequal treaties and concession ports to seek economic dominance over the region: China. Japan sought to join European forces in setting up informal empires in China after the First Sino-Japan War in 1895. The situation turned out during the First World War when Japanese imperialism and economic prosperity rose to an unprecedented height in East Asia as the war-devastated Europe.

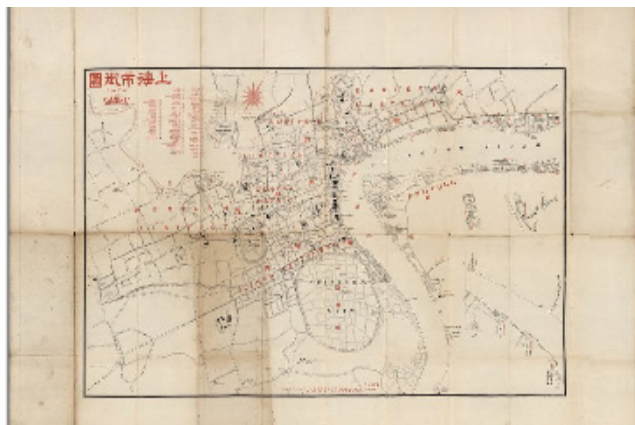


Figure 1. New map of Shanghai²⁹

After the establishment of the concessions, Shanghai was divided into two parts, the advanced international modern city and the traditional premodern city occupied by the Chinese, as shown in figure 1. After the Taiping Civil War, Chinese refugees fled into the modern concession port, creating a unique place where the West met the East, or “traditions” met “modernity.” Scholars have argued that it was precisely this paradox that led to the rise of the Chinese nationalist movements.³⁰ The problem of modernization for

29. Saito K, “New map of Shanghai,” David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY--8~1~274097~90047828:New-map-of-Shanghai---Published-by?sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort%2C-Pub_Date%2CPub_List_No%2C-Series_No&qvq=q:shanghai;sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort%2CPub_Date%2CPub_List_No%2C-Series_No;lc:RUMSEY--8~1&mi=20&trs=270. Title and place names in English and Japanese. The map shows districts, roads, railways, tramways, major firms, banks, and businesses. Legend at upper left lists Japanese businesses. A scarce early twentieth-century Japanese map of Shanghai and China hints at the rising influence and presence of the Japanese in Shanghai and in China overall following the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed between the Japanese and Chinese at the end of the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895. The map is dated Meiji 42 (1909), the year that the International Opium Commission convened in Shanghai.

30. Joshua A Fogel, “The Recent Boom in Shanghai Studies,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 2 (2010): 313-33.

Chinese and Japanese alike was that their version of modernity was never based on some version of the premodern period with Western roots. For the Japanese, the Eurocentric nature of modernity led to its total rejection and the acceptance of imperial identity.³¹ The literature overlooks is the role of Shanghai as a uniquely transnational, non-territorial place, which shaped the imperial consciousness of the Japanese residents different from other Japanese imperial territories such as Taiwan or Korea, where the Japanese were the “master,” “patriarch,” and “superior” to the other races in the political structure where they can freely control and dominate the less powerful. In Shanghai, the political identity of the Japanese was developed largely through fear. Before World War One, the fear originated from the lack of financial security and competitiveness. After World War One, investment in Shanghai boomed with the Japanese economy. The overall population also grew and surpassed the British population in numbers to become the largest international community in Shanghai. At this point, the unthinkable happened: the Chinese anti-Japanese boycott. The incident completely changed the political identity of the Japanese from a successful merchant, a Shanghailanders, to a member of a remote and anti-Chinese nation, Japan.

As Japanese territory expanded to include Korea, Taiwan, and parts of China, the glory and power of the empire and the Imperial Army had gradually become the pride and security of the Japanese residents of Shanghai. This created an “imperial consciousness.”³² Yōichi Kibata defined imperial consciousness as one who thinks they have the right to speak in world politics and may have strong domination and influence over other peoples on the earth; that is, a consciousness that they belong to the core nation in the empire.³³ Japanese people saw the domination of Shanghai as a victory not for the residents themselves, but for the nation of Japan that can be shown to the world. “China will be the stage where the Japanese can show off and play a role.”³⁴ The Manchurian Incident inspired residents in Shanghai, who believed that the Chinese in Shanghai would not have escalated the anti-Japanese movement had they witnessed the power of the imperial Japanese army like their counterparts in the Northeast³⁵. Hence, the residents’ fear of the danger of the nationalist movement, which they called a “conspiracy,”³⁶ manifested as the armed unification of all the residents, regardless of social class and background, against the rising antagonism with militaristic actions. They created their own volunteer community patrol (jikeidan, 自警団) and started destroying houses and killing Chinese whom they claimed to be militia

31. John W. M. Krummel, “The Symposium on Overcoming Modernity and Discourse in Wartime Japan” *HISTORICKÁ SOCIOL-OGIE* (Feb 2021): 83.

32. Takatsuna and Chen, *Social History of Japanese Overseas Chinese in Modern Shanghai*, 11.

33. Kibata Yōichi, *Shihai No daishō 支配の代償—英帝国の崩壊と「帝国意識」* (新しい世界史) (Tokyo: 東京大学出版会, 1987): 15.

34. Nagai Tokutaro, “Shanghai in the Prefecture of Nagasaki,” *Criminal Science*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1931.

35. 高西賢正, ed., “東本願寺上海開教六十年史” (Shanghai, 東本願寺上海別院, 1937), 396.

36. Gotō Asatarō, “在逆光中輝煌の上海魔巷,” *Criminal Science*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1931.

conscripted by the Nationalist government of China. If the act of organizing a militia could be justified as a response to physical threats to the Japanese residents of Shanghai, the subsequent action of murder and violence against Chinese civilians as a show of force and intimidation that shocked the international world can only be explained by the inflated “imperial consciousness” installed into the minds of the residents. Ernest O. Hauser, the American travel book writer, wrote, “They (Japanese residents) are people who have lived peacefully in Shanghai for decades. If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn’t believe that they would do such a thing.”³⁷



Figure 2. Chinese patriot held by Japanese agents, Zabei, Shanghai, 1932.

C. Social Identity

Although there were significant political and economical interactions between Chinese and Japanese in Shanghai, in social life, both were strictly segregated, bounded by 界 (jie, space, world). In fact, the Japanese settlement was just as extrinsic to the city as any other foreign settlement.

The Japanese emigres who enter the international metropolis of Shanghai for the first time inevitably found that Shanghai was under the hegemony of Western power, where the Chinese were in a position equivalent to slavery.³⁸ These emigres developed a deeper sense of inferiority towards Western civilizations in shock at the “modern” experience in Shanghai³⁹. This sense of inferiority translated into a sense of difference: the contempt for Chinese enslaved by Westerners reflected the superiority of self. As pointed out by Eiji Oguma, “swaying in the consciousness of admiration and confrontation for the strong while ruling the weak at the same time... was how the ‘colored Empire’ consciousness was formulated.”⁴⁰ When the Japanese started participating in social life in the International

37. Ernst Otto Hauser, *Shanghai: City for Sale* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace And Company, 1940), 208.

38. Takatsuna and Chen, *Social History of Japanese Overseas Chinese in Modern Shanghai* (Shanghai, Shanghai People's Press 2014): 13.

39. Takatsuna and Chen, *Social History of Japanese Overseas Chinese in Modern Shanghai*, 13.

40. Eiji Oguma, “日本人”の境界 (Tokyo: Shin-yo-sha Publishing Ltd, 1998), 662.

Settlement, Shanghai was already an industrialized and modernized city. The Westerners took control of the government while the Chinese also accumulated a significant portion of the capital. Different from Manchuria, Japanese residents in Shanghai were mostly commoners instead of military and bureaucratic personnel. Additional evidence can be found in Japanese investments. The major Japanese investment in Shanghai was in the textile companies such as Japan China Spinning and Weaving Company, Limited. (日華紡織株式會社) which held a similar level of significance as Mantetsu (滿鐵, abbreviated from Minamimanshū Tetsudō, 南滿州鐵道) in Manchuria. However, Mantetsu was directly funded and supervised by the Japanese state whereas the Japanese-run textile industry was purely the product of market-driven private investments from domestic capital.⁴¹

The social class of Japanese residents were divided into about 5% of the upper class, about 40% of the middle class, and the rest were lower-class common people.⁴² Those from the upper class were business executives of trading companies and banks' Shanghai branches, senior officials, and business owners who lived in the British and French concessions. The middle class was employees of textile companies, banks, and trading companies, and most of them lived in apartments provided by their employers. The lower class were small businessmen, workers in catering and various service industries, and the unemployed at the bottom. The upper class, such as business executives, almost never settled in Shanghai. After two or three years, they would relocate to the corporation's New York or Paris branch as the general managers.

“The discrepancy between the theoretical Japanese modernity and its reality prompted the Japanese to resolve the tension: a movement to overcome modernity”

In the eyes of the new generation of Japanese, a superior identity of Japan was formed and inherently connected to modernity and civility. Japanese residents in the settlements lived in renovated Japanese-style houses, bought fish and vegetables imported from Nagasaki, and lived exactly the same life as they would in mainland Japan.⁴³ There were fish shops, vegetable shops, shops selling Japanese desserts, shops ordering and selling kimonos, shops selling Japanese-style shoes, etc. Japanese residents could live a completely

41. Naosuke Takamura, 近代日本棉業と中国 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1982), 75-87.

42. Takatsuna and Chen, Social History of Japanese Overseas Chinese in Modern Shanghai (Shanghai, Shanghai People's Press 2014): 60.

43. Takatsuna and Chen, Social History of Japanese Overseas Chinese in Modern Shanghai (Shanghai, Shanghai People's Press 2014): 61-62.

Japanese life. Of all the foreign communities in Shanghai, the Japanese were beyond any doubt the most organized and regulated. Two major factors may explain this phenomenon: the strong involvement of the state in the control of its subjects, and the overreaction of Japanese residents to Chinese nationalism.⁴⁴ These unique conditions reinforced the notion that the Japanese were the most civilized in a racially diverse world, whereas their Chinese counterparts were always the object of comparison as the supposedly filthy, disgraceful, and implicitly inferior race. It was a psychological defense mechanism of the Japanese who were anxious to demonstrate their superiority when exposed to a multiracial environment.

D. Revolutionaries/Overcoming Imperialism

Nobody in the International Settlement could escape the cosmopolitan political dynamics at work here. Japanese residents inevitably found themselves involved in the power politics of interwoven relationships. While the majority of Japanese eventually subjected themselves to the imperial scheme to overcome modernity and western hegemony, an alternative humanistic approach emerged in the overcoming modernity debate.⁴⁵ While the residents were trying to mediate the conflicting relationship of British, American, and Japanese informal imperialism, some were introduced to revolutionary Russian Leninist communism. They witnessed the expansion of Marxist ideologies among Chinese laborers in Japanese cotton mills, and the subsequent founding of the Chinese Communist Party. A group of Japanese people reacted differently to the violence that the Japanese residents put out on Chinese civilians.

The soldiers in civilian clothes once dispatched by the 19th Army were constantly being arrested. Among them, many were women and children. Japanese soldiers shot them one by one. I also killed close to ten people. If I don't kill them, my boss will kill me. They questioned us, "We didn't do anything bad, why kill us? We just wanted to defend our country, isn't it wrong?" Actually, we didn't understand why they were killed either but were just killing them. The actions of the Japanese army on the battlefield were completely unnatural. Moreover, shooting them was okay, since people got killed instantly. But (we were) killing people with bayonets. We trucked the half-dead along with the corpses up on the Yangtze River and threw them into the river. The flow of the Yangtze River is divided into three layers. If the

44. Christian Henriot "Little Japan in Shanghai: An Insulated Community, 1875-1945" In *New Frontiers : Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1953*, ed. Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): 146-69.

45. John W. M. Krummel, "The Symposium on Overcoming Modernity and Discourse in Wartime Japan" *HISTORICKÁ SOCIOL-OGIE* (Feb 2021): 83.

corpses are thrown in the middle of the water, they will not come up again.
This was exactly what we want.⁴⁶

While the history of Japanese communism is not the subject of this paper, the active participation of Japanese residents in Shanghai in the global communism movement deserves special attention in future scholarship as it substantiates the Japanese experience of Shanghai and the heterogeneity of identities of imperial citizens in a transnational metropolis.

III. Conclusion

Opening the border and setting foot on a metropolis required the Japanese to reflect on their identity and positions in the world for the first time. They saw the need for modernization for the first time as it related to their survival as a nation and race. Through their eyes, modernity was anything that nobody but the Westerners enjoyed. However, when they did achieve some level of prosperity through modernization, the notion of modernity became rather ambiguous to them. They could never be accepted as a member of the Western world, nor did the Chinese follow their path to modernity. The discrepancy between the theoretical Japanese modernity and its reality prompted the Japanese to resolve the tension: a movement to overcome modernity.⁴⁷ The imperial consciousness rooted deep in the culture and history of Japan was formed as a defense mechanism in the minds of Japanese expatriates in Shanghai. This process sheds light on the evolving relationship between the ambiguous definition of modernity and empire.

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46. "From Readers: I Was Also Part of Those Who Killed Chinese Comrades," *Shimbun Akahata*, September 15, 1932, sec. 96.

47. John W. M. Krummel, "The Symposium on Overcoming Modernity and Discourse in Wartime Japan" *HISTORICKÁ SOCIOL-OGIE* (Feb 2021): 83.

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