

PART I

Promise of New Opportunities

第一章

孕育新机

我序之天演者西國格物家言也其學以天擇
 義綜萬彙之本原考動植之蕃耗言治者取焉
 遞嬗深挈乎質力聚散之義推極乎古今萬國
 壞之由而大歸以任天為治赫胥黎氏起而盡
 如盤石周故園守一意寒
 星吞不察我以我血虜
 軒轅

二十一歲時作五十一歲時
 寫之時辛未正月廿六日也 魯也

ONE

WANGPING STREET – FUZHOU ROAD

The Changing Scene of Chinese Literature

THE REASON WHY I'VE CHOSEN TO START RECOUNTING the story of China's modern literature with its earliest newspaper street, Shanghai's Wangping Street (望平街) (similar to London's Fleet Street), is to emphasize that from its very outset the country's modern literature, yet to continue for more than 100 years, took place within a new range of contexts totally different from those of classical Chinese literature. Besides economic development, the most important factors for literary activities among these contexts involved drastic transformation in the intellectual circle as well as social and cultural reconstruction, both of which were best represented by the rise of modern journalism and the publishing industry.



1.1. Map of Shanghai District in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644)



1.2. Wangping Street (today's Fuzhou Road and Shandong Middle Road) was lined with newspaper offices and publishing houses

Tushanwan (土山湾) is a place-name that should be familiar to us, but has probably been obscured from historical memory: it was the predecessor of Wangping Street. After the Western powers won the Opium War, some French Catholic missionaries came to Shanghai, settled in Xujiahui (徐家汇), and built a church (the one that is still standing there today, St. Ignatius Cathedral, rebuilt in 1910), monastery, public school, library, museum, observatory and orphanage, among other things, around nearby Tushanwan. The name Xujiahui (literally, “Xu’s junction”) has far-reaching significance. On the one hand, this area was originally the property of the family of Xu Guangqi (徐光启, 1562–1633), Minister of Rites of the late Ming dynasty, a Chinese scientist and Catholic convert who, under the influence of the Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), started the

Chinese people’s centuries-long journey to learn Western science and technologies. Xu was buried in Xujiahui after his death, and his descendants lived in the district for generations. (The mother of the famous Soong sisters was a descendant of Xu. Soong Ching-ling [宋庆龄, 1893–1981], the second of the sisters, and her parents are all buried in Xujiahui. The parents of Xie Wanying [谢婉莹, 1900–1999], the modern Chinese writer better known by her pseudonym Bing Xin [冰心], are also buried there.) On the other hand, it was



1.3. Bird’s-eye view of the area around the church in Xujiahui, where modern civilization was first introduced to China. City and countryside already appear to be merging

1.4. Western-style sketching class at Tushanwan Painting Studio (土山湾画馆), the earliest institution to teach Western fine arts in China. Many modern Chinese painters hailed from here



here that Western church culture found its way into China. Western church culture, so to speak, was as much modern as it was colonial. The church originally built its crafts factory, and its painting and printing studio, to provide job opportunities for the orphans raised in the Tushanwan Orphanage, but no one had expected it to become the birthplace of modern Chinese painting and the origin of the country's modern printing and publishing industry.

The popular belief holds that Dianshizhai Lithographic Studio (点石斋石印局) was the first printing institution to abandon ancient Chinese block printing and adopt lithography in 1879, but actually, it was through hiring Qiu Zi'ang (邱子昂), a technician from Tushanwan Printing Shop (土山湾印刷所), that Dianshizhai acquired the technique. Tushanwan Printing Shop adopted lithography in 1876, three years earlier than Dianshizhai. And it was doubtless the very first institution in China to adopt the collotype printing technique, nearly thirty years earlier than the Commercial Press (商务印书馆), which did not adopt this technique until 1907.

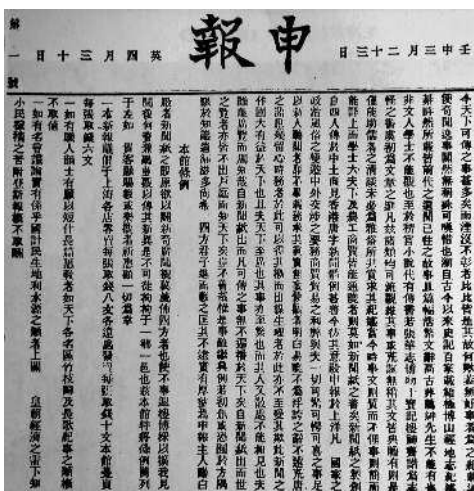
The boss of Dianshizhai Lithographic Studio, Ernest Major, founded one of the earliest Chinese newspapers in modern China, *Shun Pao* (《申报》, literally “Shanghai Newspaper”). Before the Qing dynasty ended, he sold the newspaper to Chinese owners, having turned it into a well-established commercial newspaper. *Shun Pao* put an end to the history of missionary-run religious-oriented Chinese newspapers. Being a commercial newspaper, it incorporated cultural and literary content, and enjoyed such a great popularity that citizens of Shanghai considered *Shun Pao* their only newspaper and called it “*Shun Pao Zhi*,” something like “*the Paper*.” When *Shun Pao* was launched in 1872, its office was located at the junction of Hankou (汉口路) and Jiangxi (江西路) roads, and in 1882, it moved two blocks westward to 309 Hankou Road at the corner of Shandong Road (山东路), and thus was on Wangping

6 PROMISE OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Street. Also known as Temple Street (庙街) and Majiaquan (麦家圈), Wangping Street (a north–south street located where today’s Shandong Middle Road (north section) is, and based on traditional Chinese measure, its length was no more than fifty or sixty *zhang*¹) became the center of a major cultural network consisting of newspaper offices and publishing houses. This certainly had something to do with the fact that Wangping Street was immediately adjacent to Baoshan Street (宝善街, also known as Guangdong Road or Fifth Avenue) and Fuzhou Road (福州路, also known as Fourth Avenue and which later became a famous cultural street), both extremely prosperous during the late-Qing period. At that time, when people came across Yangjing Creek (洋泾浜) by boat to the urban section of Shanghai, they would first come to these busy streets. For example, at the beginning of *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai* (《海上花列传》), when Zhao Puzhai (赵朴斋, a character in the novel) came to Shanghai to learn business, the very first place he arrived was the red-light district around Fifth and Fourth avenues. At that time, the modern printing technique had already been introduced into China, and people, having just been inspired and enlightened by the Self-Strengthening movement (洋务运动, aka Westernization movement) and Reform movement (维新思潮), recognized the importance of newspapers in promoting intellect and spreading new ideas. The great progress of the modern printing industry, as well as the concentration of newspaper offices, thus made Wangping Street and Fuzhou Road the birthplace of modern Chinese newspapers and journals.



1.5. Façade of the *Shun Pao* office during the late-Qing dynasty

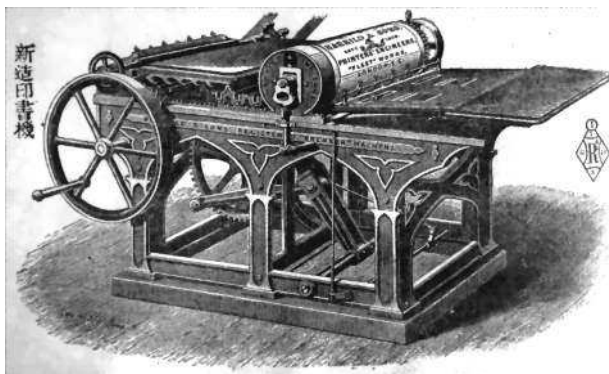


1.6. Inaugural issue of *Shun Pao*, April 30, 1872

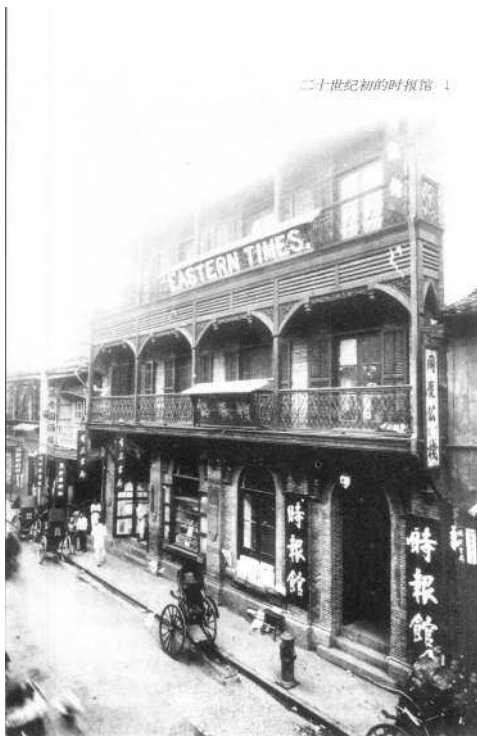
¹ *Zhang* (丈): a traditional Chinese measurement of length equal to 10 *chi* (尺), or 3.58 metres (11 feet 9 inches). – Translator’s note

On account of the length of time that has elapsed, the rise and fall of newspapers due to fierce competition and their frequently moving in and out, it is extremely difficult to trace the specific locations of newspaper offices along Wangping Street during the late-Qing period, but let me try to give a general picture of the thriving newspapers at that time.

According to the information available so far, by the time the Republic of China (ROC) was founded, there were over twenty newspaper offices on this street. The less popular ones included *Minli Bao* (《民立报》), *Tianduo Bao* (《天铎报》), *Minqiang Bao* (《民强报》), the *Chinese People's Newspaper* (《中华民报》), the *Pacific Newspaper* (《太平洋报》), *Jing Bao* (《晶报》), the *Shanghai Pictorial* (《上海画报》) and the *Asian Daily* (《亚西亚报》), etc. Then came more influential newspapers, including *Shun Pao*, *News Report* (《新闻报》), the *Current Affairs Newspaper* (《时务报》), the *Su Newspaper* (《苏报》) and the *Eastern Times* (《时报》). *News Report* was launched in 1893, originally at Wangping Street, but later moved to 274 Hankou Road nearby. It was the only newspaper that could rival *Shun Pao*. The *Current Affairs Newspaper* was launched in 1896, with its office located at Fuzhou Road. As Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873–1929) was its editor-in-chief, the newspaper disseminated Reformation ideas, making it popular all over the country. The *Su Newspaper* was also launched in 1896, first at Fuzhou Road, then moving to 20 Hankou Road. It was known for the notorious “*Su Newspaper case*” brought by the Qing imperial court against its editorial staff for articles written by Zhang Taiyan (章太炎, 1868–1936) and Zou Rong (邹容, 1885–1905) that advocated revolution to overthrow the Qing. The *Eastern Times* was launched in 1904, with its office at 6 Wangping Street, later moving to Chessboard Street (棋盘街, now Henan Middle Road 河南中路). Its founder, Di Baoxian (狄葆贤, 1873–1941), had a peculiar pagoda-style office building built, which became the feature of many historical pictures (see Figure 1.9). The de facto head of the newspaper was Liang Qichao, who made daring innovations in news reports, and established new columns such as Fiction and Entertainment, which formed the earliest literary supplement unique to the *Eastern Times*. In his article “Looking Back Over Seventeen Years” (《十七年的回顾》), Hu Shi (胡适, 1891–1962) mentioned how the *Eastern Times* “became China’s first daily newspaper that opened a ‘supplement paper’ with literary interest,”



1.7. Printing machine used to print *Shun Pao* in its early days



1.8. *Eastern Times* office, located in Wangping Street during the late-Qing period

and this “supplement paper” later became the literary supplement of the newspaper. The *Eastern Times* later became increasingly successful in terms of sales and popularity, and was one of the three major newspapers in Shanghai, the other two being *Shun Pao* and *News Report*. Then there was the *Shenzhou Daily* (《神州日报》) launched by Yu Youren (于右任, 1879–1964) in 1907 at 161 Wangping Street, and two other newspapers launched by Yu Youren later in 1909, the *Minhu Daily* (《民呼日报》) and the *Minyu Daily* (《民吁日报》), which both had their offices at 160 Wangping Street. Another well-known newspaper, the *China Times* (《时事报》), was published in 1907, with its office at Wangping Street. Its Chinese name was later changed to 《时事新报》, “*New Current Affairs*”.

There is a bamboo twig ballad (竹枝词, a literary form adapted from folk songs) about the busy metropolitan scene of



1.9. South end of Wangping Street (at the corner of Shandong Road and Fuzhou Road), with a view of the pagoda-style building of the *Eastern Times* office, which was quite a visual spectacle

Shanghai dedicated to this thriving newspaper street: “Every piece of news goes all over the city from Wangping Street, which is lined with newspaper offices on the east and west sides. Nearby were some shops doing other business, which have had to move to other places and put up new signs.” Following the market rules, those who engaged in other business had to move, while the newspapers not originally headquartered on Wangping Street made every attempt to get a foothold along the street, or to at least open an outlet or sales venue there. This shows the attractiveness of this cultural center. At that time, every day before daybreak, vendors would gather along Wangping Street to buy newspapers wholesale, making it an extremely busy and exciting place. On the days when breaking news happened at home or abroad, people could not wait to see the “special editions” of newspapers, making the street even more busy and crowded.



1.10. Until the 1920s, Wangping Street was busy every morning with vendors buying newspapers and journals wholesale

Certainly, not all modern Chinese newspapers were launched in Shanghai. In chronological terms, Southeast Asia was in fact the birthplace of Chinese newspapers. For example, the *Universal Circulating Herald* (《循环日报》), launched in Hong Kong in 1874, was the very first major newspaper successfully launched by a Chinese national, and its founder, Wang Tao (王韬, 1828–1897), was thus hailed as the “Father of China’s Newspaper Industry” by Lin Yutang (林语堂, 1895–1976). In Tianjin, the largest commercial port in North China, the *National News Report* (《国闻报》) was launched in 1897, with Yan Fu (严复, 1854–1921) as one of its founders, and *Ta Kung Pao* (《大公报》) was launched in 1902. In Beijing, the *Pekingese Daily News* (《京话日报》) was launched in 1904. Nevertheless, Wangping Street was the only place in China where so many newspaper offices amassed. This evidenced the rapid growth of Shanghai as a modern metropolis, and that Wangping Street, as a national



1.11. *A Short Account of the Commonwealth of America* (《大美联邦志略》), a book printed using movable type by the London Missionary Society Press (Mohai Shuguan) in Shanghai

newspaper center, played a significant role in shaping a new literary scene in which modern Chinese literature burgeoned during the late-Qing period.

Besides newspaper offices, the thriving printing industry also resulted in the concentration of publishing houses around Wangping Street and Fuzhou Road (the Chinese terms *shu-ju* [书局, literally “book bureau”] and *shu-guan* [书馆, literally “book house”] meant publishing institutions whose front shops sold books). China’s first modern publishing house was London Missionary Society Press (*Mohai Shuguan* 墨海书馆), founded in the old town of Shanghai in 1843 by Walter H. Medhurst (1796–1857), an English Congregationalist missionary to China, and it was moved to Maijiaquan two years later. At first the publishing institution printed and published *The Bible* and other religious texts, while later it hired Wang Tao and others to translate Western literary, historic, and scientific books. In 1857, Mohai Shuguan launched the monthly magazine *Shanghai Serial* (《六合丛谈》), the earliest Chinese magazine issued in mainland China.

Then there were translation and publishing institutions, which played a significant role in introducing Western ideas as well as literary and scientific learnings to China, but they were initially run by the government, such as the Imperial Interpreters College (京师同文馆) founded in 1862 and the Shanghai Foreign-Language School (广方言馆) founded in 1863. The Translation Division of the Jiangnan Machinery Manufacturing Company (江南制造局翻译馆) was founded in 1868, only to be merged into the Shanghai Foreign-Language School one year later. Thus even when government-run translation and publishing institutions were taken into consideration, Shanghai was still the publishing center of the country. Dianshizhai Lithographic Studio was established in 1876, and when it finally decided to reprint the *Kangxi Dictionary* (《康熙字典》), as many as 100,000 copies went to press in a matter of months! This encouraged other publishers, with Hongwen Shuju (鸿文书局) and Hongbaozhai Lithographic Printing House (鸿宝斋石印书局) being established successively along Wangping Street and Fuzhou Road, respectively. Seeing the huge profit earned by printing books and magazines, large-scale publishing institutions financed by domestic venture capital funds finally took shape in Shanghai. In 1897, Chinese capitalists Xia Ruifang (夏瑞芳, 1871–1914), Xia Cuifang (夏粹芳), and Bao Xian’en (鲍咸恩, 1861–1910)² raised funds and founded the Commercial Press in Dechang Alley (德昌里), Jiangxi Road, and later established its distribution agency in Chessboard Street, making huge profits by publishing textbooks.

² According to the translator’s research, the founders of the Commercial Press should be Xia Ruifang, Bao Xianchang (鲍咸昌), and Bao Xian’en, the latter two being brothers. Cuifang (粹芳) is the literary name (字) of Xia Ruifang; that is, Xia Ruifang and Xia Cuifang are two names for the same person. — Translator’s note