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The Habitable City in China

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CHAPTER 8

Habitability in the Treaty Ports: Shanghai and Tianjin

Isabella Jackson

Treaty ports were among the most habitable cities in Republican China, for those who could access the features of the treaty port environments that made them good to live in. The racial inequality characterized by treaty ports entailed inequality of access to space, especially green spaces. In most cities, habitability meant (and means) different things for the poor and the wealthy, and the poor could be pushed out to cater for the needs of the wealthy, as was true in the treaty ports. But administrations primarily serving foreign interests rather than Chinese ones further divided those who had access to a habitable environment from those who did not. Such exclusion of the Chinese from elements of what made the treaty ports habitable at times fuelled anti-imperial nationalism. The unique environment of the treaty ports, where colonial administrations experimented with town planning alongside Chinese municipal governments in the same cities, is what distinguishes urban development in China most clearly from that of other countries. This chapter focuses on habitability in treaty ports, to examine the role played by colonial administrations in both shaping and responding to demands for habitable cities by the people residing in them.

The first crucial element of habitability is safety: a city has to have effective policing, defense, and firefighters to ensure that the population is physically safe. The next requirement for habitability is hygiene and

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sanitation, including a clean and safe water supply. Ruth Rogaski provides a masterful exploration of the ways in which hygiene was bound up for both European colonizers and new Chinese elites with notions of modernity, which was as true in Shanghai as in the focus of her study, Tianjin.¹ Cities also need effective transport networks and sufficient employment opportunities for their inhabitants. Once these requirements are met, the middle classes begin to demand educational opportunities, which, as Aaron Moore's chapter in this volume shows, in China resulted in aspirational rural families sending their children to cities for schooling. Yet such practical considerations are not the sole indicators of habitability. What came to be particularly valued by the urban middle classes in Republican China, both Chinese and foreign, was space, particularly green spaces. As urban populations expanded, space was increasingly at a premium, and the ability to access larger homes, a garden, open public spaces, and parks became ever more desirable. Wealth bought access to space in cities, and so the relative habitability of different areas of a city was linked directly to the inhabitants' class. In the fraught urban environment of treaty ports, where foreigners abused their privileges—won through war and unequal treaties—and viewed their Chinese neighbors as racially inferior, divisions based on class as well as race shaped the urban space.

Treaty ports are particularly illuminating when examining the intimate relationship between class and space. Chinese cities had long expanded beyond their original walls, while many walls were destroyed in the early twentieth century, either forcibly by the foreign troops of the Eight-Nation Alliance during and after the Boxer War of 1900–1901 (as in Tianjin) or in the reforms of the late Qing or the early Republic: Shanghai and others pulled down their city walls after the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 to facilitate free movement of people and goods, physically marking the break with the old.² Chinese urban communities and their local authorities were not, therefore, constrained in their expansion. The delineated boundaries of the foreign settlements in the treaty ports, however, were somewhat less flexible, and their consuls and colonial municipal authorities were acutely aware of the pressing need for ever more space to meet the habitability requirements of their growing populations. The municipal councils secured formal expansion of the settlements and sought informal expansions through building roads external to the settlements. They purchased land for parks and passed building regulations to ensure streets were a certain width and were not overshadowed by buildings above a certain height. Wealthy Chinese and foreigners alike invested and lived in the most habitable areas in the treaty ports, whether they were in the foreign settlements or not.

This chapter focuses on the two largest treaty ports—Shanghai and Tianjin—and primarily on the policies of the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) and Tianjin's British Municipal Council (BMC), to compare how they sought to create habitable settlements. The two administrations are examined in terms of the size of their respective settlements and their efforts to expand them, their building regulations, and their provision of public spaces. Teasing out the similarities and differences in their approaches and the response of the inhabitants of the Shanghai International Settlement and the British Concession at Tianjin allows us to understand what was perceived as important for habitability and who had access to the most habitable parts of the city. Colonial administration was crucial to the development of both cities, but their differences in governance allow a comparison between the two to reveal important commonalities and differences in treaty port habitability.

Shanghai was among the first five treaty ports opened by the Treaty of Nanjing, which concluded the First Opium War in 1842. The International Settlement was formed by the merging of the so-called English and American Settlements in 1863 and was situated to the north of the original Chinese city. It was managed by the SMC, which was dominated by Britons but included Americans, Germans, Russians, latterly Japanese, and eventually Chinese members. Because it was international, the settlement was not subject to the same level of consular management of the neighboring French Concession, or the various foreign settlements in other treaty ports like Tianjin. The SMC developed regulations and policies as it saw fit, subject only to the approval of the foreign ratepayers who qualified to vote in annual meetings through property-ownership. The SMC therefore primarily served the interests of business and the wealthy foreign community.

Tianjin was opened as a treaty port by the Treaty of Tianjin of 1858 (ratified in the Beijing Convention of 1860) at the culmination of the Second Opium War. The Qing government granted land at Tianjin to be leased to the British, French, and American governments for concessions, though the Americans never fully established their concession. By 1902, seven further nations had opened concessions at the port, and each concession authority had to negotiate with the others and with the Chinese municipal authorities in its efforts to manage the city. The BMC (and the British Municipal Extension Council, which ran the extension area from 1898, with many of the same members as the senior council) ran affairs in a similar way to the SMC, answering to local foreign ratepayers, but the British consul held ultimate authority and had to approve the council's proposals before they were put into practice.

The cities' geography and economy brought challenges for maintaining habitability. Summers in Tianjin were hot and humid, while winters

were long and fiercely cold, particularly the winter of 1930–1931 when ice fields extended 70 miles out to sea.³ The city, including the foreign settlements, was sometimes flooded, as in 1917. The British Concession had had to be drained and the level of the land raised before the foreign settlers could live there.⁴ Shanghai, 600 miles further south, had much milder winters but the summers were hotter and the humidity was year-round, with the associated risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera. Both cities were defined by their status as ports, with a huge volume of maritime trade passing through them: 17.5 million tons in vessels passing through Shanghai annually at the turn of the century and 2.4 million tons passing through Tianjin.⁵ Tianjin developed a strong heavy industry, largely in the areas outside the foreign concessions, while Shanghai's industry was dominated by textiles and factories proliferating in all areas of the city. Both cities attracted large numbers of immigrants for the working opportunities available, putting pressure on the urban space.

Town planning and responsibility for rendering cities habitable falls to municipal governments more often than to central governments, and this was certainly the case in late Qing and Republican China. In treaty ports, colonial municipal councils borrowed practice from their home countries to regulate urban space. They devised rules governing the width of roads, height of buildings, and availability of light and air inside buildings. They also established public parks and recreation grounds to ensure residents had access to adequate open spaces. These measures were all designed to render the settlements more habitable: more pleasant for inhabitants and more desirable for the middle classes who sought out recreation and leisurely enjoyment of green spaces. These efforts were used by the councils, the cities' foreign inhabitants and visitors, and some Chinese reformers to claim foreign administrative superiority.⁶ Guide books contrasted the wide roads and well-kept streets of the foreign settlements with the 'Chinese city'.⁷ Treaty port administrations were thus partially legitimized by their ability to render their settlements habitable, as many Chinese took advantage of the habitability afforded by colonial authorities despite opposing foreign imperialism on Chinese soil.

'MODEL SETTLEMENTS'

The SMC believed that it administered a 'model settlement', a claim repeated in municipal reports and internal memoranda, by guide books to Shanghai, and by the self-regarding English-language newspaper the

North China Herald.⁸ In reality, it was more of a reference point than a model: British residents in other treaty ports demanded the same developments pioneered in Shanghai, such as residents of the British Concession in Tianjin demanding a clean water supply after a waterworks was established in Shanghai in 1883.⁹ The idea that the International Settlement represented a model of urban management in China was also present in British government discussions about Shanghai and even on occasion by local Chinese officials seeking to build an advanced municipality following the establishment of the Shanghai Municipal Government in 1928.¹⁰ The idea of 'model settlements' originated in nineteenth-century Europe and referred to places where the needs of modern commerce and industry were met by the amenities of the modern age under the auspices of an enlightened political authority to secure social order and public welfare for all. It implied peaceful coexistence of different groups (primarily different classes in Europe) with equal access to everything from clean water to a public library. A classic example of a model settlement is the *Exemple* ('extension') section of Barcelona, developed outside the walled town at the same time as Shanghai's International Settlement.¹¹ Other foreign enclaves in China claimed to be model settlements. Kuling (Lushan), for example, was to be established as a model settlement according to its founder (English missionary Edward Little) in 1899. The resort was always tiny, but its location in the mountains south of Jiujiang made it a healthy environment and Britons, Americans, Germans, Russians, and, by the 1920s, Chinese retreated there in their hundreds to escape the summer heat. Dalian was seen as a model city by both its Japanese authorities and later by the Chinese press in the early People's Republic, as explored by Christian Hess.¹² The idea was not unique to Shanghai, but nowhere was it described as a model as consistently as the International Settlement. It was a reputation the settlement authorities were keen to promote, and which depended on the settlement being habitable.

In Tianjin, the different concessions sought distinction through different means. The Japanese obtained expensive central urban space for their concession, establishing the Japanese empire as a force in north China. Other concessions emphasized the role of architecture in stamping the national character on the physical city. The Italian Concession aspired to celebrate Italian architecture and recreate the 'aristocratic' essence of Italian culture, as described by Maurizio Marinelli.¹³ The Austro-Hungarians had high hopes that their concession would be symbolic of their imperial aspirations in China, similarly expressed in distinctive national architecture.¹⁴

For its part, the BMC at Tianjin wanted to achieve distinction by administering a singularly habitable urban enclave.

The motivations behind the efforts of the members and employees of such colonial municipal councils to create a habitable environment were varied. They wanted to ensure the settlements were attractive places in which to invest and do business for both foreigners and Chinese. More businesses and higher-value property meant higher rates for the municipal revenues. More importantly, the foreign ratepayers who voted to approve council budgets and byelaws and the councilors who formulated policy were drawn from the business community and served the interests of their own kind. Among settlers (more than those who sojourned for shorter periods) there was also a strong element of municipal pride, which encompassed a sense of local, national and imperial honor.¹⁵ Among foreigners this local pride was compounded by racist assumptions that foreign urban management was superior to Chinese municipal government. It was a view that helped justify claims to bring more of the city under foreign control.

EXPANSION

Shanghai and Tianjin, and their foreign settlements, grew through the treaty-port era in both population and area. Population growth was rapid as Chinese and foreign migrants arrived seeking safety from rebellions and warfare and the opportunities afforded by the cities. The rapidly growing population produced anxiety among established inhabitants, both Chinese and foreign, as they sought to distinguish themselves from new arrivals. Among Shanghai's Chinese, this was most pronounced in the prejudice against Subei people explored by Emily Honig, while foreigners similarly sought to distance themselves from White Russian refugees.¹⁶ Concern about these incoming groups led those who could afford it to seek physical distance from the poorer migrants, but in the crowded environment of Shanghai, this was not always possible.

The foreign settlement authorities sought greater urban space directly through securing formal expansions to their jurisdictions. The French and International Settlements at Shanghai expanded several times in the nineteenth century. The first extension to what was then called the English Settlement came in 1848, the same year as the establishment of the American Settlement and the signing of the agreement between the French consul and the Shanghai Daotai for the French Concession, which was founded the following year. The extension was achieved through a simple agree-

ment between the British consul and the Daotai to extend the western boundary of the Settlement.¹⁷ In 1863 the English Settlement combined with its American neighbor to form the International Settlement, as the foreign community sought to better defend itself from external disorder during the Taiping Rebellion. A further extension was secured in 1893, but the greatest expansion was to be the last, agreed in 1898 and enacted the following year, bringing 10,000 more houses and over 50,000 more Chinese residents under the direct authority of the SMC.¹⁸ This rendered the Settlement over 40 times its original size at 5583 acres or 8.7 square miles: still a small area for the population, which was 350,000 according to the 1900 census and numbered over 1 million by 1930.¹⁹ The French Concession also expanded in 1900 and again in 1914, to a final area of 2525 acres. Though smaller, the French concession was far less industrialized and less densely populated than the International Settlement, so it provided a more spacious and habitable environment for its residents. They included leading politicians (notably Sun Yat-sen), warlords (including Zhang Xuefeng 张学良), businessmen (particularly Catholics like Zhu Zhiyao 朱志尧), and criminals (among them Du Yuesheng 杜月笙): those with means in Shanghai often chose to live in the French Concession for the space that it afforded.

The British and French concessions at Tianjin expanded when they could: firstly in 1897, at a time when expansions were taking place in treaty ports all over China as foreign powers took advantage of China's weakened position after its defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War. Further expansions were gained in 1902, alongside the opening of new concessions by members of the Eight-Nation Alliance following the Boxer War. The British Concession expanded from its original 76 acres to over 1000 acres (1.6 square miles), absorbing the American Settlement along the way, while the French Concession grew from 60 acres to 382 acres (0.6 square miles). The French authorities resented that their concession was smaller than the British, Russian, German, and Japanese concessions, and sought a further expansion by force in 1916, supposedly to protect local Catholics.²⁰ The French authorities predicted no opposition to their occupation of Laoxikai 老西开, to the north of the concession, but were met instead by a surge of nationalist resistance, including a sustained strike and boycott, that prevented the expansion.²¹ This was an early spur to the growth of Chinese nationalism.²²

Such attempts at expansion were rarely successful following the fall of the Qing in 1911, as Chinese nationalism grew, but the colonial authori-

ties in Shanghai and Tianjin continued to expand beyond their boundaries through road-building, policing, and the provision of amenities, charging taxes in return. In Shanghai, the SMC had to give up its expansionist ambitions by the end of the 1920s as the Nationalist city government made the control of extra-settlement roads increasingly difficult. From 1928 the roads were policed jointly by the Shanghai Municipal Police under the auspices of the SMC and the Chinese city's police force. But in Tianjin, where the administration of the Chinese city was less a priority for the Nanjing government and multiple foreign concessions created a complicated web of jurisdictions, the colonial authorities were even slower to give up their hold over such extra-settlement areas. As late as 1937 the BMC approved the provision of water and electricity to residents of the Race Course Road Extension Area, even though they were beyond the concession's boundaries in the Chinese city.²³ These expansionist activities were justified on the basis that they were providing crucial services for their residents, and demands for the formal incorporation of new extensions to the settlement were based on the need for more space. Both the provision of services and the greater availability of space combined to make these areas more habitable for the wealthy Chinese and foreigners who lived there.

In Tianjin, the British Concession divided between the 'old concession' and the so-called Extension and Extramural Extension (translated respectively as 擴充界, *kuochongjie* or 'expanded concession', and 推廣界, *tuiguangjie* or 'extended concession', while the concession proper was called the 老租界, *lao zunjie*—'old concession'). Initially, the first extension area was managed by a separate 'British Municipal Extension Council', while the second extension area, dubbed the 'Extramural Extension', was left without administration and largely undeveloped: 'a curious and indeed ridiculous situation' according to a long-term British resident.²⁴ It was not until 1918 that the three separate British areas were merged into one municipality under a single administration, but that did not stop both extension areas becoming popular residential districts.

Space was at a premium in the crowded International Settlement at Shanghai, but in Tianjin residents of the British Concession enjoyed much more space. More than 1 million people lived in Shanghai's International Settlement alone by 1930, whereas the population of the whole city of Tianjin was a little over a million. Of these, almost a quarter lived in the foreign concessions, while the vast majority were in the Chinese-administered city. The three areas under British administration had a population of 39,000, while the core concession, excluding the extension

areas, was the most densely populated with 30,000 residents, leaving the extension areas much more sparsely populated. The British Concession at Tianjin (including extension areas) therefore had on average 24,000 people per square mile, while the International Settlement at Shanghai had 115,000 per square mile (higher than the population density of twenty-first-century Shanghai). The most densely populated concession in Tianjin was the French concession, with 50,000 residents:²⁵ a population density of 83,000 per square, still nearly a third lower than that of Shanghai's International Settlement.

Many wealthy Britons and Chinese, including merchants, retired warlords (including Sun Chuangfang 孙传芳), and former Qing officials (like diplomat Zhou Xuexi 周学熙), lived in the suburban British extramural extension, enjoying the space for large houses and gardens.²⁶ Building regulations made property too expensive for poorer Chinese,²⁷ so the Municipal Council achieved unofficial segregation by class. This contrasts with other sites of large scale urban migration in this period, such as the Manchurian cities of Mukden, Changchun and Harbin, where migrants occupied the lowest level occupations but were distributed evenly through the cities.²⁸

Land purchases continued throughout the existence of the settlements. Between one quarter and one third of the SMC's budget was set aside for land purchases and road-building projects, forming the vast majority of extraordinary municipal expenditure (spending on long-term projects intended to benefit future generations of ratepayers). This meant spending 27.3 million *tael* on land and works in 1930.²⁹ The BMC had a similar emphasis on building and land purchases, publishing the public works report first in its annual reports (whereas in Shanghai it was always the Watch report that took prime position). The British municipality at Tianjin devoted a third of its general budget to works, excluding its further investments in the Electricity Department and Water Works, representing 376,000 dollars in 1936. Acquiring space for urban development was thus central to these administrations. The demand for ever more space for urban residents was used to justify colonial expansion: seeking new urban space for a more habitable city.

BUILDING REGULATIONS

Ruth Rogaski stresses how public health regulations were used to impart notions of hygienic modernity, but the regulations that shaped the development of a city's buildings performed a similar modernizing function.

In most cities, regulations are used by authorities to civilize their own urban populations, but treaty authorities were seeking to impose their ideas of what constituted civilized behavior on an 'other'. This was more apparent in the British Concession in the competitive colonial environment of Tianjin than in the more *laissez-faire* International Settlement at Shanghai. The BMC employed zoning to keep industrial and residential areas separate,³⁰ serving both the industrial activity on which much of the local economy depended while preserving the habitability of suburban quarters. Residential areas were further zoned according to different classifications of housing, creating a degree of segregation comparable to that identified by Carl Nightingale as typical of colonial administrations and therefore much of the world.³¹ There was no such zoning formally in Shanghai: It was primarily the cost of land that dictated whether business, industry, or residential buildings predominated in different parts of the city. The Chinese city government attempted to establish a residential zone in 1935, but the cost of housing, a lack of employment opportunities, and fears about the safety of the zone in the case of Japanese attack meant few settled there.³² The central district of the International Settlement, the original English Settlement nestled next to the Huangpu riverfront, was by far the most expensive, and so was dominated by banks and hotels.³³ Larger textile factories were concentrated further up the river in the northwest of the Settlement, which had briefly been the American Settlement in the early treaty-port era, and around the Soochow Creek for the ready supply of water, though smaller workshops were scattered throughout the city.³⁴ Residential buildings were found throughout the Settlement, with modest alleyway 里弄 (*lilong*) housing and poorer dwellings concentrated in Hongkou in the north of the Settlement and more spacious garden alleyway-houses or detached houses, foreign-style 洋房 (*yangfang*) in the western areas incorporated into the Settlement in 1899 or in the extra-settlement areas beyond.³⁵ Despite this variation, everywhere in the International Settlement was, compared to the rest of the city, heavily built up: space was to be found in the French Concession and the wider Chinese city, but these areas lacked the safety and building regulations of the SMC-administered Settlement so were, to some renters and buyers, less desirable.

The shortage of space and lack of zoning in the International Settlement at Shanghai meant that industry and private residences existed cheek by jowl. Hanchao Lu's evocation of the crowded housing of the *lilong* shows how they provided not only housing but business and social functions.³⁶

This was the chaos of treaty ports criticized in the 1920s by one of China's earliest town planners, Dong Xiujia 董修甲, who advocated the careful zoning of cities.³⁷ Regulations were one way to overcome this problem and improve the habitability of the Settlement. The less interventionist SMC, however, preferred safety measures to be adopted because they were in the interests of companies and their insurers rather than due to coercive municipal regulations. It was constrained by the difficulty of introducing new bylaws, which had to be approved by the ratepayers at public meetings; in other foreign concessions in China, consuls could impose new bylaws as they saw fit, and in Chinese-administered urban areas the authorities had all the powers invested in them by the state. The SMC's Public Works Committee was reluctant to allow mixed residential and commercial uses in the same building, but concluded in 1925 that it was powerless to prevent it if all safety regulations were met.³⁸

Early building regulations addressed public health requirements. In 1909 this came to include measures to render houses rat-proof to prevent the spread of plague: raising the floor level and eliminating any hollow spaces in the walls and floors.³⁹ The other early priority was safety, primarily the prevention of fire, which was achieved through mandating a minimum width of roads, the provision of water hydrants on streets and in commercial buildings to control fires that might break out, and the use of fire-resistant building materials. Building regulations could also ensure access to light at street level: A lack of light in alleyways was cited in a police report in 1909 as a factor in crime rates, but light came to be valued for less pragmatic reasons.⁴⁰ When the new skyscrapers of the central district were proposed in the last great building spurt in the 1920s, the SMC debated what should be the maximum height to ensure sufficient light in the streets. The principle was laid down that the maximum height of buildings would be 1.5 times the width of the road (with no height limit on the Bund where light was guaranteed from the riverfront) drawing on practice in Hong Kong and American cities.⁴¹ Natural light and air were valued because they made the dense urban space more habitable.

Linking the availability of space to the height of a building had the result that Chinese houses, which were not permitted to rise above two stories, had less yard space than foreign-style houses: two-story buildings were only required to have three feet of space between them and the row of buildings behind.⁴² This resulted in the distinctive *lilong* housing associated with Shanghai, which provided the close-knit communities described by Hanchao Lu, but also meant Chinese had access to far less open space

in Shanghai than in other Chinese cities like Tianjin, while Shanghai's foreigners, whose houses were not governed by the same regulations, had access to more space in the suburbs. The different regulations for different categories of housing meant not only de facto segregation by race but also that race determined a resident's access to space, light, and air.

In making the city more habitable for its wealthier inhabitants, the SMC denied living space to the poor. The SMC repeatedly attempted to use its regulations to justify forcibly expelling whole communities, notably the inhabitants of huts erected 'as temporary structures from straw and salvaged material' by refugees to the city.⁴³ Initially hut-dwelling communities, made up of factory workers, rickshaw pullers, traders, and the unemployed, were confined to the Chinese-administered city, though where they bordered the International Settlement they were opposed as unsightly and a potential source of crime and disorder: The SMC attempted to order their removal in 1921, without success.⁴⁴ In the 1920s huts spread into the northeastern Settlement area of Yangshupu, numbering over 1000 by 1925. The SMC then discussed these huts as a threat to public health, but attempts to remove them were again thwarted. In 1931 the SMC decided to remove 10 percent of the huts per year until they were eliminated, starting with those posing the greatest health hazard. The number of huts only increased following the destruction caused by the Sino-Japanese conflict of early 1932 and concerted opposition by the inhabitants of the huts meant the removal policy was abandoned in 1934. But two years later, with over 5000 huts housing over 25,000 inhabitants, the Commissioner for Public Works insisted that action must be taken once more.⁴⁵ He claimed he could act only once Public Health Department inspectors reported unsanitary conditions to their counterparts in the Public Works Department, but the Commissioner for Public Health argued he had not the resources to take on this responsibility.⁴⁶ The latter's reluctance suggests that the impetus for removing the huts came from concerns for the urban landscape, under the purview of public works, rather than strictly the protection of public health, as had been claimed. The Commissioner of Public Health told the *China Press* in 1938 that the hut villages were easier to monitor for disease than their inhabitants would be 'if they were scattered into squalid buildings which already are overcrowded'. 'Until new homes are found for these people', he expanded, it would be difficult to address the problem.⁴⁷ Public health reasons thus did not underpin the desire to remove the huts, but were an excuse for removing unsightly dwellings for the benefit of Shanghai's

wealthier inhabitants. The SMC hoped that the private sector would provide cheap housing for the hut-dwellers, but made no efforts to incentivize building work. Since 1928, the Labour Commission of the Greater Shanghai Government had been building 'model villages' where housing would cost no more than \$2 per day, to provide for the hut-dwellers.⁴⁸ The SMC's concern was the habitability of the settlement for the foreign business community, whereas the Chinese City Government addressed the needs of the city's wider population. Despite repeated efforts, the SMC failed to eliminate the huts, meaning their inhabitants continued to live in poor conditions and the Settlement's wealthier residents had to tolerate their continued presence.

Provisions to make the Settlement more habitable increased over time, as building regulations became more extensive, governing not only safety but also hours of operation and other measures to reduce noise and disturbance to the public. Chinese cities, particularly Shanghai, were seen as excessively noisy by both Chinese and foreigners. Ji Wen's 魏文 1904 novel about the lives of Shanghai's industrialists and merchants was entitled *City Noise* 市声 (*Shisheng*). American Carl Crow devoted a full chapter of his 1938 memoir to noise in China, in which he claimed that 'quiet in China is so rare and so hard to obtain that it is looked on as a luxury to be enjoyed only by the fortunate few'.⁴⁹ The zoning in Tianjin's British concession ensured that residents could enjoy some peace and quiet, but in Shanghai the SMC attempted to restrict noise at night and the police were given powers to enforce the regulations. Residents, Chinese and foreign, called on the SMC to enforce the regulations more tightly to improve their living conditions. In 1929 six residents, three Chinese and three foreign, wrote together to the Assistant Commissioner of Public Works to complain about the excessive noise, often continuing all night, from a Chinese-owned ironworks on Singapore Road.⁵⁰ Municipal police visited the ironworks and for a few days the disturbances were reduced, but the complainants wrote again when the noise resumed. They called for action in no uncertain terms:

We put it to you that if these Works were situate [sic] in a more centrally located district, they would ere now have been closed down or their activities restricted... We further venture to suggest that were there fifty people living in the immediate vicinity instead of six, this letter would have all fifty as signatures. Under the circumstances we as *bona fide* ratepayers, appeal to you to take definite action in respect to what is indubitably a public nuisance.⁵¹

The reference to central districts is revealing: The residents believed that those who lived in the most exclusive parts of the International Settlement, with the highest rents and land values, were treated more favorably by the SMC and enjoyed a more habitable environment. Basing their appeal on their status as ratepayers asserted a desire for equal treatment on the basis of contributing to the municipal revenues and a sense of belonging to the Settlement. The regulations did not preclude noisy activities during the day, so the SMC's officers declared that they were powerless to help further, but a final letter from the residents declares that the 'courteous assistance of the police' resulted in a great improvement in local noise levels.⁵²

Even wartime did not deter complainants. In 1938, a Chinese resident of Singapore Road wrote to the SMC to object to the issuing of a permit to a Chinese-owned nail factory on the road, despite it breaking municipal regulations barring noisy factory work between 10 pm and 6 am. The municipal inspectors investigated and requested that noisy work cease at night and thick walls be installed around the sheds. The factory owner subsequently wrote, confirming that he would cease the manufacture of nails at night, as this was the noisiest part of the work, but expressing the hope that 'the complainants will be more sympathetic toward their fellow-countrymen who have not only lost their entire plant in Hongkew but unluckily happen to be factory owners at these difficult times with numerous handicaps to be confronted with'.⁵³ Yet the complaints continued, including a letter written in English by a student objecting to the noise when he was trying to study for his examinations at the Polytechnic Public School. He urged the SMC's inspectors to 'please come and hear for yourself how noisy it is'. The dispute continued: habitability could not be ensured, particularly following the destruction wrought by the war in 1937.

Other subjects of complaints included alterations to houses and business buildings that might collapse and endanger pedestrians (as in the case of a bridge connecting a house to a restaurant on Fuzhou Road), pose a fire hazard (such as a wooden construction used as a tailor's shop), or a health hazard (as was claimed of an old police box converted to a latrine), compromise natural light (as did a sleeping loft erected above a rice shop on Henan Road), or simply present an inconvenience or an unsightly view.⁵⁴ All these middle-class complaints came from Chinese residents, demanding that the SMC take action to improve their living environment. These problems did not arise in the more habitable British concession in Tianjin with its careful zoning of residential and commercial property and much lower levels of industry.

PUBLIC SPACES

Public parks, gardens, and recreation grounds became increasingly important in nineteenth-century notions, particularly in the west, of what made a city habitable, and they continue to be promoted as key criteria for livability in China, as elsewhere, today.⁵⁵ Treaty-port Shanghai and Tianjin both boasted a number of such green spaces, though the rules governing them differed in revealing ways. Infamously, in Shanghai, Chinese were barred from the so-called public gardens on the Bund until 1928. The bar was put in place in the 1880s as the population grew and the Settlement's foreign residents sought to create a rarefied foreign-only space for their own relaxation, with Chinese admitted only insofar as they catered to foreign needs: as the servants of foreign children. The SMC went so far as to open a separate Chinese public garden in 1890 to firmly establish the segregation of the communities.⁵⁶ It received complaints, however, that it was frequented largely by the 'coolie class', so middle-class Chinese did not want to use it: Naturally enough, they sought admission to the same parks as the foreigners. Other parks under the authority of the SMC admitted Chinese only when dressed in Western clothing or with special passes, notably the Hongkew Park (Hongkou; now Lu Xun Park) and Jessfield Park (now Zhongshan Park). Both were beyond the limits of the Settlement and were thus much larger in area. The SMC also opened small playgrounds for children: In total it oversaw 14 parks, gardens, and recreation grounds within the Settlement and a further four beyond.⁵⁷ All the municipal parks attracted large numbers of visitors and praise in the local press, as the foreign and Chinese communities alike enjoyed having public spaces to take their children and escape the pressures of the city. The Shanghai French Concession, known for being more spacious and green than the International Settlement, also included eight small parks and squares, with no racial bar to entrance.

Parks in Tianjin's French and, when they existed, German and Russian concessions, and in the Chinese-administered city, had no racial criteria for entry.⁵⁸ The British were the least tolerant, but even the BMC admitted 'respectably dressed' Chinese to its only park, Victoria Park (the same basis as the SMC had admitted Chinese until the 1880s, coinciding with the opening of Victoria Park in 1887). The British in Tianjin were not necessarily any more enthusiastic about sharing their public space with Chinese than their compatriots who dominated the International Settlement at Shanghai, but their prejudice was much more firmly directed toward

working class Chinese who could be excluded by a simple dress code. The difference was that space was at less of a premium in Tianjin: Middle-class Chinese, who would be those meeting the dress code, could be admitted to the park without risking crowds of visitors disturbing the peace, as was feared in Shanghai. The desire for space, an essential component in a habitable city, hardened the racial prejudice of Britons in Shanghai. The righteous nationalist anger that the exclusion of Chinese provoked continued to reverberate through the twentieth century, as Robert Bickers and Jeffrey Wasserstrom explore.⁵⁹ The Shanghai Public Gardens became a symbol of the imperialism of 'old China' and the fundamental inequality, both racial and class-based, of the treaty port world.

CONCLUSION

Space was critical to habitability in Chinese cities, and the premium placed on access to space had a twofold effect. First, as middle-class foreigners and Chinese alike bought houses in the more spacious areas of the treaty ports, they achieved a degree of segregation by class. Both foreign and Chinese residents made use of municipal regulations to demand that undesirable features, whether buildings or the poor, were removed from their own areas. While this occurred in cities around the world, it was exaggerated in the foreign settlements of China due to their unusually delineated borders. The settlements created artificial boundaries that constrained urban expansion in ways comparable to the natural boundaries of Manhattan or Hong Kong Island. The middle classes increasingly valued and demanded access to green public spaces and quiet, peaceful residential areas. Second, the acute pressure on space in Shanghai contributed to the more pronounced racism apparent in municipal policies there compared with other treaty ports, as manifest in the sustained though unsuccessful campaign against hut-dwellers and in the exclusion of Chinese from the public gardens. Foreigners in Tianjin, sharing space only with middle-class Chinese and with ample space to go around, did not feel the need for such extreme policies. The racialization of space in the American south by the Jim Crow laws and in Apartheid South Africa was more pronounced, but it had echoes in Shanghai. It is therefore no surprise that the initial growth of Chinese nationalism in Republican China was based in Shanghai: In addition to the opportunities provided by the news media and sojourning populations, and the concentration of foreign imperialism on the city, the more contingent pressure on space in such a densely populated urban

environment and the resultant sharper expressions of racial prejudice provoked nationalist outrage.

The SMC may have sought to burnish the reputation of the International Settlement as a model settlement, but its habitability was limited in crucial ways. While the neighboring Chinese authorities sought to rival Western-style public health provision, in other areas the foreign administration provided not a model but a warning. The Chinese city government worked harder to provide a habitable environment for the poor, while the chaos of treaty ports criticized by Chinese observers like Dong Xiujia stimulated a demand for zoning in urban planning. Examining the delineations of space in the treaty ports highlights how habitability in Chinese cities could be exclusionary. Foreign administrations focused on rendering their settlements habitable for foreigners as a priority and, by extension, those Chinese who could afford to live in more spacious areas and who chose to adopt Western habits, but not for most Chinese. Creating a habitable urban environment for some often meant denying habitability to others.

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