



The Influence of Geographical Factors on the Development of the Bund Port Area and Shanghai Port during 1842 and 1880

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Abstract. This thesis focuses on the influence of geographical factors on the development of the Bund port area in Shanghai during the period 1842-1880. This study further explores the influence of geographic factors on the development of modern Shanghai ports, showing the role of geography and indeed other causes in the rise of China's most important port. The research relies primarily on a combination of primary and secondary literature including minutes of meetings, travelogues of foreign missionaries, geographic analysis of port conditions, etc. The paper analyzes the extent to which geographic factors affect Shanghai through a case study of the Bund port area. Several aspects brought by the geological advantage played a vital role in the rise of Shanghai port in modern history, while other factors like policy monopoly also contributes to the process. The investigation of this issue not only broadens the geographic perspective of the study of Shanghai's modern port and even urban development, but the Bund port area and its other terminals to the north also form a similar situation to several port areas in Shanghai today, and the lessons learned from the development of modern history can also be used today.

Keywords: Shanghai Port, Port Bund Area, Geography.

1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the influence of geographical factors on the development of the Bund port area in Shanghai during the period 1842-1880. The investigation of this issue not only broadens the geographic perspective of the study of Shanghai's modern port and even urban development, but the Bund port area and its other terminals to the north also form a similar situation to several port areas in Shanghai today, and the lessons learned from the development of modern history can also be used today.

A number of Chinese and foreign scholars have previously studied the amazing rise of the city of Shanghai in modern times, trying to find the reasons why it rose from a number of towns to become one of the most important metropolises in East Asia; others have unfolded the transformation of the port of Shanghai or focused on the connection between the port and the city. All of these studies have shaped contemporary understandings of Shanghai and its ports, but at the same time it is still relatively rare to

narrate the impact of the transformation of a particular port in Shanghai from a geographical perspective. This paper can fill some of the gaps in the study of geographical factors in the Bund Port area.

The full paper will be developed in the form of a case study. First, the paper will outline the changes of Shanghai ports and the Bund during the period 1842-1880 and mention their current status; then the paper will analyze through topically narrative how geographical factors helped the Bund to rise and fight against its competitors, and how the port business gradually moved to other ports. Then the paper will mention the influence of other factors and end with a conclusion as well as suggestion on the Shanghai port today.

2 The Bund Port Area

The Bund Port Area developed rapidly between 1845 and 1860 and became the center of Shanghai's port. Around 1861, large port operations gradually shifted to the docks north of the Huangpu River. During this period, the Bund port area was not only the center of foreigners' commercial activities in Shanghai, but also served as an important transshipment port for Chinese and foreign goods.

Before the Bund opened, "the area along the river was full of old shipyards and wooden houses, behind which were rice and cotton fields, and a small village a little further away". "The ground was mostly wet and uninhabitable", and "at first it was a depressing yoke". It remained a rural countryside 1. By 1856, "the area of the concession, from the Huangpu River to the end of the Yangjing Hong, and the back only to the end of Jiangxi Road". This shows that although September 24, 1846, the British concession had opened up the "border road" (today Henan Zhong Road) as the western boundary, the real urban area, however, was still very small 2.

In the early days of Shanghai, the foreign trade was still sailing, and since there were not many goods, the Bund as a port area could meet the demand; therefore, it was mainly concentrated in the Bund area, and "the Shanghai Concession itself showed obvious signs of activity and prosperity in all respects, and everyone who cared about its prosperity was bound to be satisfied with it" [3]. However, around 1861, the trade of the port of Shanghai had already begun to shift partially from the Bund area to the shores of the Pu River, north of the Huangpu River. In October 1862, the River and Sea Customs and Moorings Office submitted suggestions to the Bureau of Public Works regarding improvements of the port system. The office explained that the port system was in dire need of improvement, because of "the great changes in the appearance of the tenements, especially the remarkable growth of the population, both Westerners and local Chinese, and the developments in trade". It argued that "today Shanghai has the potential to become a huge commercial center for northern and central trade. It is clear that the arrangements of the early inhabitants, although often improved, are totally inadequate to meet the requirements of the extensive and huge growth in traffic" 3. From their perspective, the current dock system is a serious obstacle to growing trade.

3 Geographical and Other Factors

The next part of the paper will focus on the impact of geographical factors on the development of Shanghai's Bund port area in terms of shipping conditions, proximity to production and manufacturing centers, and the decline of its competitors. In addition, a brief assessment of the impact of other factors is also presented at the end.

3.1 Shipping Conditions

After the First Opium War (1840), Shanghai was classified as one of the five treaty ports open to the outside world. Foreigners soon found the unexplored banks of the Huangpu River, which flowed through the plains, was ideal for port expansion, and the Bund port area was one of the most important among newly developed ports. A British missionary traveling through China's coastal ports in 1845 wrote: "The opposite bank of the Huangpu River is full of fields and not yet open for building. The area along the river, one and a half miles long, has been planned for foreign merchants' buildings. The area includes the northeastern suburbs of the city, less than a mile from the city. The location is good, the air is fresh, and it is easy to load and unload ships" 3.

However, it is worth noting that for the Bund port area these shipping conditions have become a disadvantage with the dramatic increase in cargo volume and deeper vessel drafts. After the rise of steamship shipping, the port area around the Bund gradually became unable to accommodate large ships due to its hydrological conditions 5, and it was only natural that the port area was transferred.

In October 1862, the River and Moorings Division of the Jianghai Pass had already mentioned to the Bureau of Public Works that because of "the great change in the appearance of the tenements, especially the more striking growth in population, both Westerners and local Chinese, and the more exciting development in trade," the port system was yet to be improved, as "Today Shanghai has the potential to become a huge commercial center for trade in the north and central part of the country, apparently arranged by the early inhabitants. Although often improved, but completely inadequate to meet the requirements of the extensive and huge growth in traffic", the current dock system, said to grow the growing trade, is a serious obstacle, so "my attention is certainly drawn more to the past and present delivery, loading and unloading the state of arrangements for goods and the state of equipment, in short was drawn to the whole system of wharves and freighters," and in the light of the visionary development of Shanghai, he suggested that "an increase in the number of wharves would only partially solve the evils that have arisen," and that the best solution would be for "the Bund to be expanded outward so that its embankment line extends as far into the river as to enable all vessels of any size to moor on the outer side of the embankment and to load and unload their cargo there", a proposal that "would constitute a nucleus around which all secondary practical details would be centered to complete the scheme of the undertaking", to which, with the exception of some articles, the Bureau of Public Works largely agreed 6.

From the whole process, it can be seen that the superior shipping conditions in the 1840s were inextricably linked to the initial growth of the Bund port area as the most

important port area in China north of Hong Kong, while the shift from superior to inferior shipping conditions was also a vital reason for the eventual decline of the Bund port area.

3.2 Proximity to Production and Manufacturing Centers

Shanghai was in a unique position. Shanghai located between the Yangtze River and the East China Sea, while the river also intersects with the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, forming a vast central artery of wealth and need for trading and exchanging, transporting vitality and warmth to the most remote and distant parts of China. China-ware produced in Jingdezhen and various goods from upper stream could easily reach Shanghai. In addition, Shanghai is located in the middle of China's 6,000-mile north-south coastline and is the closest of all free ports to the present capital city of Beijing. And all that aside, what is even more important is that Shanghai's neighboring regions, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, have been the richest regions in China for centuries. Suzhou, a city 150 miles from Shanghai, is famous for its textiles; Hangzhou, Nanjing and Jiaxing have always had a considerable wealth of handicraft products of all kinds, all of which provided the necessary goods for Shanghai and the Bund to grow into a trading center 7.

3.3 Decline of Competitors

The rise of the Shanghai port has been accompanied by the decline of other port competitors in the region. Their decline has also been largely influenced by geographic factors. In this paper, the falling of two notable competitors, namely Ningbo and Liujiagang, would be analyzed.

The port of Ningbo has played an important role for the past thousand years, and its shipping history with Japan and Guangdong is much older than that of Shanghai. However, geographically, Ningbo's inland rivers and the adjacent Zhoushan waters are full of reefs, making it very easy for foreign merchant ships unfamiliar with the surrounding waters to run into the reefs and sink, which adversely affects navigation 8. In addition, although Ningbo was close to Hangzhou, it was relatively isolated compared to Shanghai's central position in the affluent area and could not enjoy the flow of goods and people brought by the canals and the Yangtze River 9. When the missionaries came on their expedition, they had already noticed the relative lack of foreign merchants and the small amount of trade in Ningbo 10.

Liujiagang, on the other hand, declined even earlier. This port also has a long history and was once China's most important shipbuilding base, but being situated on the banks of the Yangtze River, some 300 kilometers from the sea, it was quite naturally not the first choice for foreign merchant ships and did not have the economic benefits of a treaty port. In addition, Liujiagang has long been plagued by the buildup of silt in the harbor, and clearing the silt for navigability has required a great deal of human and financial resources, making it inconvenient to build a large port 11.

3.4 More Open Space

Shanghai also has a unique advantage that no other port in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces has - a lot of open space for foreigners. The less developed area around the Bund was also noticed by foreigners – “Wusong-dong (here refers to the Huangpu River) is full of fields on the other side of the river and is not yet open for construction. The area along the river, one and a half miles long, has been planned as a building site for foreign merchants.” The area is less developed, partly because most of Shanghai has only been exposed to the water in recent centuries, and also because the rivers in the area are frequently diverted, causing flooding and flooding that has only recently been resolved. As the two maps below show, except for the intersecting streets in the British Concession, the rest of the area is almost entirely sparsely populated by roads and farmland. The open space available to foreigners gave the necessary conditions for the establishment of the Concession and allowed enough space for foreigners to build houses and plan streets in a European style, while staying away from the potentially hostile local Chinese population. All of this provided the conditions for the rapid development of the Bund and the attraction of foreigners.



Fig. 1. Lao Shanghai ditu, the Album of Shanghai during the Past 150 Years, Shanghai, Huabao chubanshe, 2001, p. 37.



Fig. 2. Map of the British Concession in 1855, Lao Shanghai ditu, The Album of Shanghai during the Past 150 Years, Shanghai, Huabao chubanshe, 2001, p. 41.

3.5 Other Factors

While the impact of geographical factors on the development of Bund Port Area and Shanghai port is clearly shown, it's necessary to mention the role of some other factors beside the geographical one. Policies and residents' attitude toward foreigners are two remarkable reasons under the rise of Shanghai port.

While there were five treaty-ports as well as Hong Kong open to foreign ships and merchants after the Nanjing treaty, Shanghai had a special status among treaty-ports north of Hong Kong – in other ports like Ningbo and Xiamen, foreign ships still need to go to Hong Kong first and then reach these cities. Western ships, specifically those from the British Empire, could get direct access to Shanghai port. This policy monopoly drastically enhanced Shanghai's role as a regional trading center.

Many missionaries and foreign captains also mentioned that the local residents lived in Shanghai were more friendly to foreigners than those lived in Canton. Although missionaries could feel that residents' respect and kind attitude came from fear, the smoother coordination between Chinese and Western people give more convenience for trading and port development.

4 Conclusion

Combining the above geographical factors as well as other factors, we can see from the case of the Bund port area that geographical factors still hold the key to the rise and fall of the port; however, policies and other aspects that have helped Shanghai cannot be ignored.

Looking at the present, the Bund port area is not only a piece of history, but also a microcosm of Shanghai's port today. As Shanghai became the world's largest container port, its northern terminal, which began to develop in the late 18th century, also began to be unable to accommodate large ships due to geographical constraints. Shanghai has leased islands from neighboring Zhoushan for the development of the new port, as it has historically. Further development of the Shanghai port will still need to be based on the consideration of geographical factors.

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