

Shanghai's Lens on the New(s)—1

Dianshizhai Pictorial (1884-1898)

by Jeffrey Wasserstrom & Rebecca Nedostup

Picture Windows

Shanghai Myths

Machines in the City

Drama & the City

Sources & Credits



Between 1884 and 1898, Chinese readers were treated to a revolutionary publishing undertaking aimed at a mass audience: the Dianshizhai huabao—literally “Illustrated News of the Dianshizhai Lithographic Studio,” and more concisely rendered as “Dianshizhai Pictorial.” Published three times a month in Shanghai, imperial China’s most cosmopolitan metropolis, this periodical offered more than just a graphic window on contemporary Western as well as Chinese happenings and developments. In its format, illustrations, and textual commentary, the Daishizhai Pictorial was itself a dramatic example of what was deemed both new and/or newsworthy in the closing decades of the Qing dynasty.

Image-driven commentary by Rebecca Nedostup and Jeffrey Wasserstrom follows here in Part 1. Part 2 complements this with a full set of images from the first six issues, including Chinese texts and English translations. Part 3 provides access to over 1000 black-and-white illustrations that appeared in the pictorial over the course of its decade-and-a-half run. These were generously digitized at the request of MIT Visualizing Cultures by the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University.

For anyone interested in late-Qing society and culture as Chinese of the time literally depicted and viewed it, the Daishizhai Pictorial can be seen as a fascinating counterpart to such famous Anglophone weeklies as England’s Illustrated London News (1842–2003) and, in the United States, Harper’s Weekly Journal of Civilization (1857–1916) and Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper (1855–1891).

The images in this unit unless otherwise noted are illustrations from the 1898 edition of the Dianshizhai huabao, generously provided by the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University.

PICTURE WINDOWS

Rebecca Nedostup

Introduction

When a reader delved into an issue of the *Dianshizhai huabao* (*The Illustrated News of the Dianshizhai Lithograph Studio*, or as we will call it *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, or simply *Dianshizhai*), he or she was not merely gazing into a window onto the enormous cultural and technological changes visible in the periodical's home, the treaty port of Shanghai. In fact, he held in his hand the physical manifestation of this new world, a publication that did not just depict novelties in "China" and "the West" but in its very way of showing and seeing argued for a different way of approaching the times.

The novelty that the *Dianshizhai* offered was a combination of lithographic illustration and on-site reporting (or the illusion of such), which together packed a potent one-two punch of detailed verisimilitude and high drama. Eventually, the power and authority of the illustrations even superseded that of the original news items on which they were based, and the textual descriptions that accompanied them (authored separately from the hand of the artist). Like many of the American and European illustrated newspapers that served as the *Dianshizhai*'s early inspiration, the periodical was born in a serendipitous mixture of commerce and exploitation of a public's hunger for wartime news (in this case, that of the 1884–1885 Sino-French War).

It flourished, however, feeding an appetite for renderings and explanations of the influx of new technologies and customs from outside China, as well as the equally bewildering domestic shifts in mores, politics, and customs. Similarly, though early issues contained copies of illustrations from publications such as *Harper's Weekly* or *The Illustrated London News*, the house style most frequently melded the kind of technical renderings that lithography allowed with illustrative flourishes adopted from woodblock prints, ink painting, and other older techniques in which the stable of artists were trained. Such skills only heightened the dramatic effects for the viewer (which, in deference to the visual as well as verbal primacy of these documents, is how we will refer to the *Dianshizhai* audience).

“Escape from Danger”

The piece “Escape from Danger,” from the first year of the Dianshizhai’s 14-year run (1884 to 1898), offers a striking example of the marriage of foreign subject matter, new technology, and local artistic sensibility in the service of high drama. Offering a commentary on urban crowding, predatory landlords, and tenement conditions as the context for disaster, the text relates how nonetheless the advanced equipment of New York City firefighters allowed them to “fly” to the rescue of women overcome in a burning high-rise.



To depict the swirling smoke, artist Ma Ziming draws on the undulating “clouds” most often seen in Chinese religious sculpture, bas-reliefs, and prints, heightening the emotion and atmosphere of a scene already full of the frisson of male firefighters pulling prone, unconscious young women from their bedroom. Yet he also uses the delicacy of lithography to show in fine detail the stove, coal bucket, and kettle—not to mention the unfamiliar aspects of the firemen’s uniform and grooming.

“Escape from Danger” 脱人於危

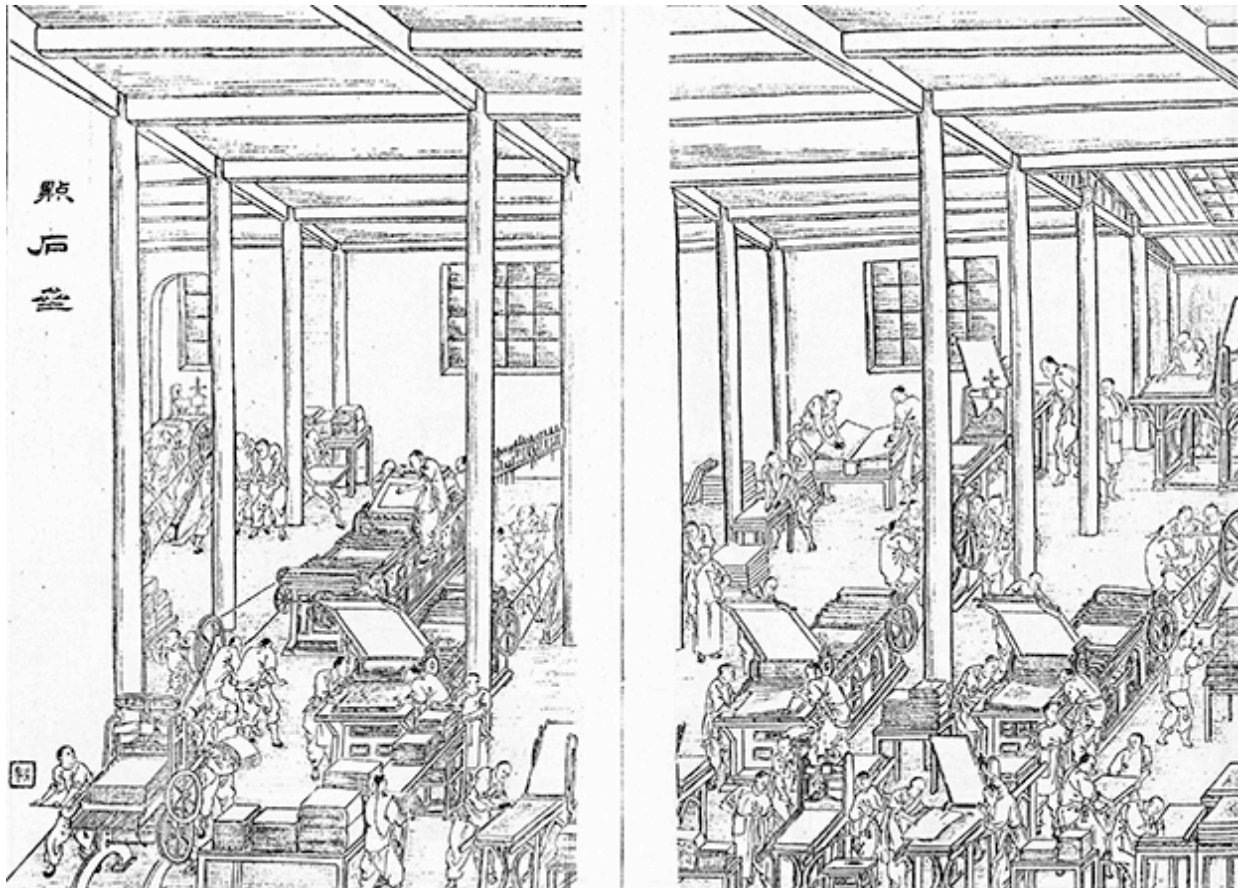
1884 jia (Vol. 2, p. 23)

artist Ma Ziming

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 2.024 [dz_v02_024]





Dianshizhai Print Shop
from Shenjiang shengjing tu,
(Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1884)

Image courtesy Yale University
 [Dianshizhai_Print_Shop]

The *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was merely one leg of a communications strategy embraced by the media entrepreneur of 19th-century Shanghai, an expat Londoner named Ernest Major (1841-1908). In his mid-century ventures in China, Major made the early and canny move from trade to industrial investment, which led him to found the seminal Chinese-language newspaper *Shenbao* in 1872. From that base he hired Chinese lithographers to create the *Dianshizhai* Studio in 1878, generating from the technology a tremendously successful series of books, art reproductions, and albums of local sights. [1]

The appetite for rapid-response visual depictions of current events near and far was already strong, and Major and the Chinese editors he hired, such as Cai Erkang, experimented with ways to meet the demand. The *Shenbao* house distributed copper-engraved world maps, photographic prints, and a short-lived supplement that used woodblock technology to copy scenes from the English illustrated press; these competed in a marketplace alongside woodblock-print depictions of battle scenes and court paintings, illustrated novels, handbooks, ritual manuals, and devotional texts. [2]

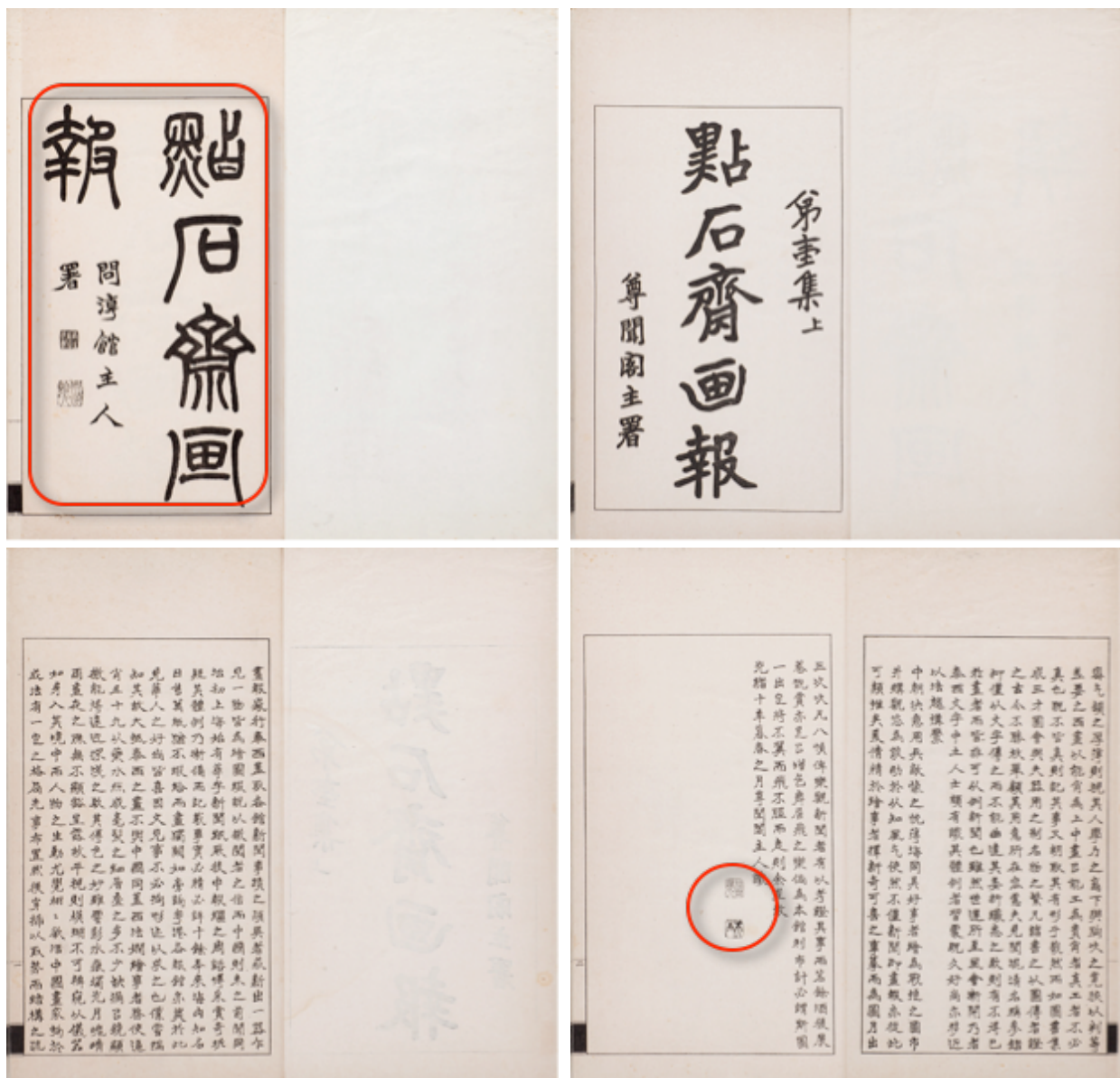
Lithography offered to enhance the number of prints that could be made and circulated—100,000 prints could be made from a lithographic plate, as opposed to 25,000 from a high-quality woodblock—but perhaps more crucially, also the type of information that they could convey. On May 8, 1884, Major launched his illustrated newspaper with a direct argument that the lithograph was the proper instrument for comprehending the times, including rapidly-moving and technologically-significant events such as the Sino-French War being fought in Vietnam:

Western drawing is different from Chinese. Those accomplished in the drawing of events in the Western method [with copper engravings] will make efforts to get a close likeness. Nearly all of them will furthermore use an acid for highlighting, and even in details as fine as finest hair and with a multitude of different layers [in the perspective], they still do not lack small empty spaces [between the lines]. With a magnifying glass one can fully appreciate their achievements in terms of space and depth.

—Ernest Major, Founding Statement for Inaugural Issue of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, May 1884, translated by Rudolf G. Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," p. 133.

Major openly remarked on the public's appetite for news images of the war in Vietnam:

People who wish to do something good draw pictures about victories in this war, and they are bought and looked at in market places, and quite easily become props for conversation... I have therefore asked people with fine skill for drawing events to pick sensational and entertaining scenes and make illustrations of them. [3]



First four pages of inaugural issue of
Dianshizhai Pictorial, May 1884.

lower row: Major's founding statement, signed by the "Master of the
Pavilion of Respecting the News" (Zunwenge)

[View text & English translation]

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[dz_v01_003] [dz_v01_004]



Just as in today's media world, however, that Major sensed an opportunity to feed desires for the "sensational and strange" did not mean that he, his artists, and his editors embraced either wholesale Westernization or a revolutionary shift in visual and verbal vocabularies. Rather, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* should be seen as a vehicle for melding new ways of rendering scenes and information into a local context.

Wagner notes how careful Major is always to refer to Chinese textual tradition, such as the long history of illustrated collectanea he cites in his founding statement. He commissioned editor Shen Yugui (1808-1898) to write the magazine's title in a seal script in vogue among literati of the time.

Furthermore, Major softened the radicalness of the periodical's content by presenting it in a format that resembled a book more familiar to a scholar of the day. Each page was folded over, and eight pages bound in an issue, along with additional material including advertisements, supplements, and reproduced paintings glued in as inserts. [4] Most illustrations (with their accompanying text) took up one page, though one page of each issue would bear two half-page drawings. Occasionally a magnificent illustration would stretch across two pages. Three issues a month were produced, totaling 528 by the time the *Dianshizhai* ceased publication on August 16, 1898.

Neither was the *Dianshizhai* exactly a periodical in the sense of a general-interest magazine that would regularly appear in someone's mailbox. Bound sets of issues and reprints began to appear almost immediately, and the publisher encouraged viewers to give these as gifts. Very soon, then, as Wagner points out, the illustrations began to be detached from their moorings in the "what/when/who/where/how" of "news," and began to take on independent lives in the visual realm.

Reproduction & Innovation

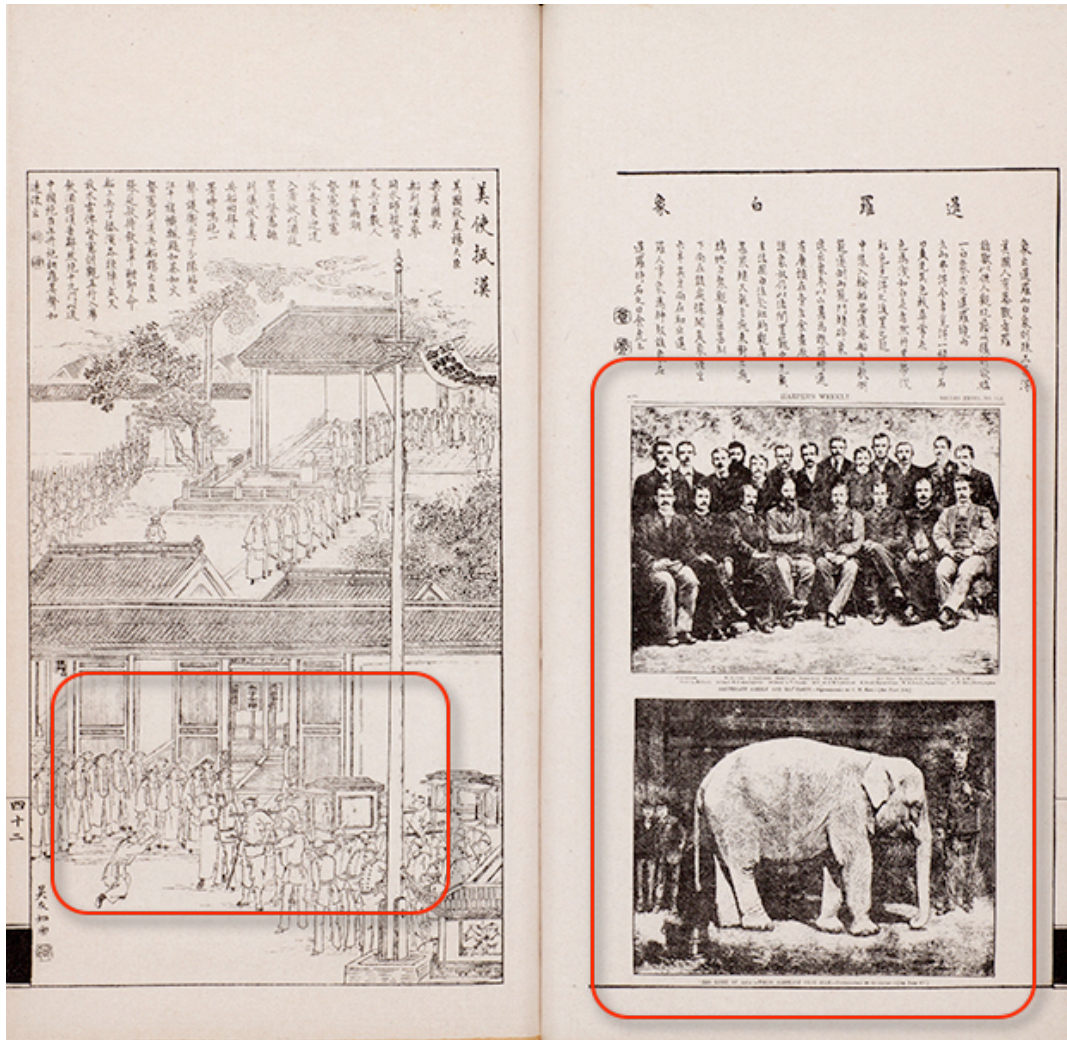
In the pages of the *Dianshizhai* the reader could discover a microcosm of the multiple technologies and moral-cultural systems of the late Qing world. This sometimes extended to the visual styles mixing in the very illustrations themselves. Historian of print culture Cynthia Brokaw points out that lithographic products continued to be but one option available to consumers through the end of the Qing, along with woodblock books and other kinds of publications. Looking at the *Dianshizhai*, one can see that even the Chinese lithograph itself changed tremendously in a short period.

“American Consul Arrives at Han[kou]”

&

“White Elephant of Siam”

These facing pages reveal the roots of the *Dianshizhai*. On the righthand page, the remains of Ernest Major's first efforts to pass on pictorial news of the world to Shanghai consumers, when he would simply commission reproduction of images (in this case photographs) of visual goodies from overseas publications too tempting to pass up.



Left: “American Consul Arrives at Hankou”

美使抵漢

1884 jia (Vol. 1, p. 42.2)

artist Wu Youru

Right: “A White Elephant from Siam”

暹羅白象

1884 jia (Vol. 1, p. 42.1)

Following page: details (highlighted in red)

Yale 1.044 [dz_v01_044]

Here a page containing two photographs is reproduced directly from the American *Harper's Weekly* (detail at right). The details of a Thai elephant's appearance in New York are rendered in Chinese for the reader, along with florid descriptions of the animal himself. The men of Lieutenant Greely's ill-fated polar expedition get no verbal explanation, however, but simply hang on as a ghostly presence in the middle of the page.

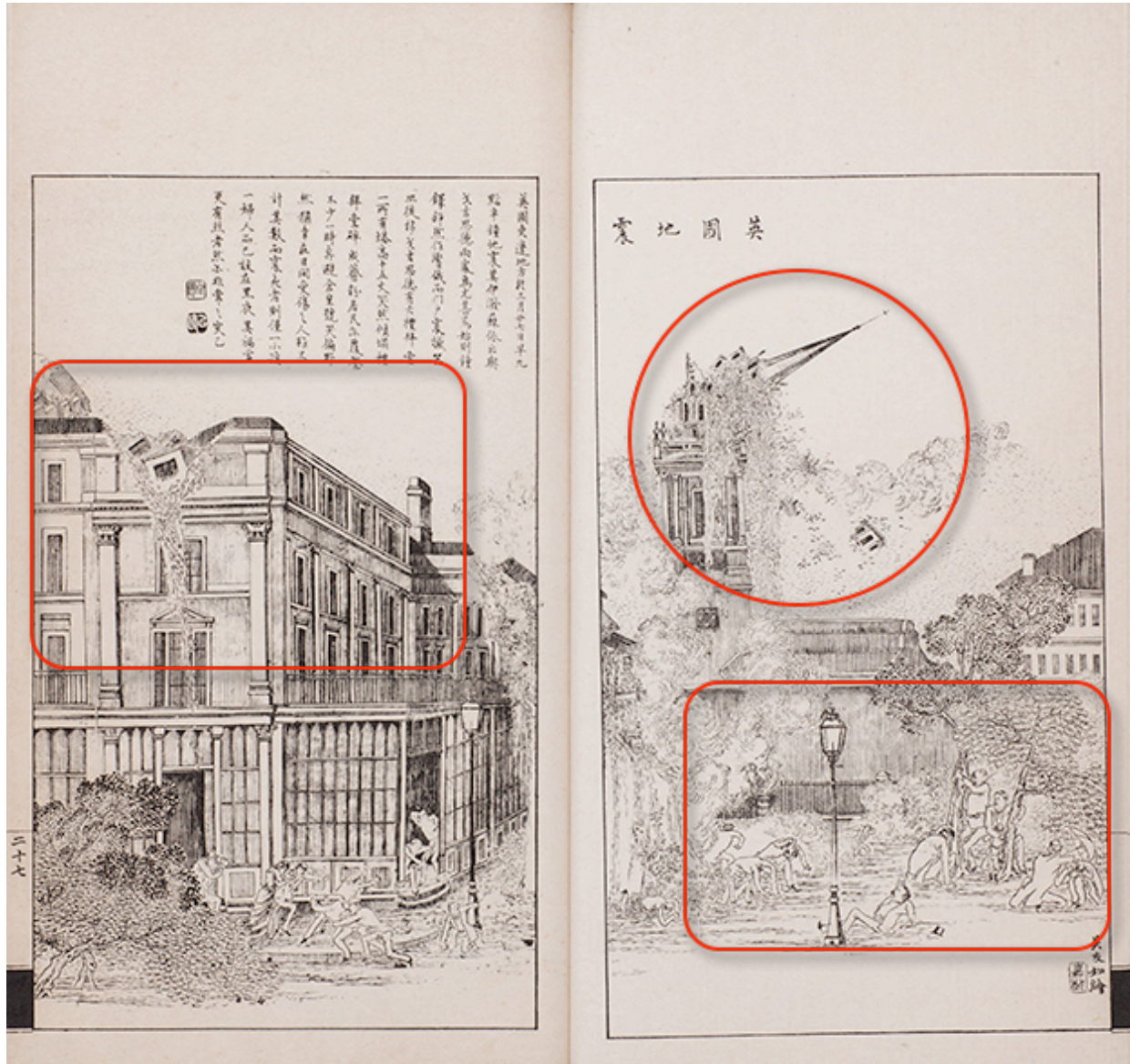
On the lefthand page of the spread, meanwhile, readers found an illustration in a much more conventional style of a more standard political event—the greeting by Qing officials of an arriving foreign consul (detail below). This was done by Wu Youru, a painter and illustrator who had become especially known for his genre drawings depicting women in domestic and leisure settings, and who would produce around a third of *Dianshizhai's* visual output during its first four years of existence.

Here his style is not much different from that of woodblock prints and paintings depicting official and court doings already in circulation—except that we catch a faint glimpse of the faintly comical variation in facial expression and individual demeanor among the arrayed ranks of bureaucrats and policemen that the lithograph afforded, and that would become the hallmark of *Dianshizhai* artists.

Soon, however, Wu was reproducing neither drawings and photographs from abroad nor prints from his local environment, but along with his fellow artists was creating a third style that was wholly their own. Rather than use the lithographic technology to reproduce and disseminate another new form of representing reality, such as the photograph, the *Dianshizhai* artists deployed it to heighten the drama and detail of a panoramic medium that was already in their wheelhouse—the woodblock print.

“Earthquake in England”

So in drawing the 1884 Colchester earthquake Wu Youru uses the new medium on the one hand to depict the literally granular detail of the crumbling buildings, and their dazzling European architectural design—something that city dwellers may have seen the likes of, but may have still been in the imaginations of many countrymen (see detail below).



“Earthquake in England” 英国地震

1884 jia (Vol. 1, p. 27)

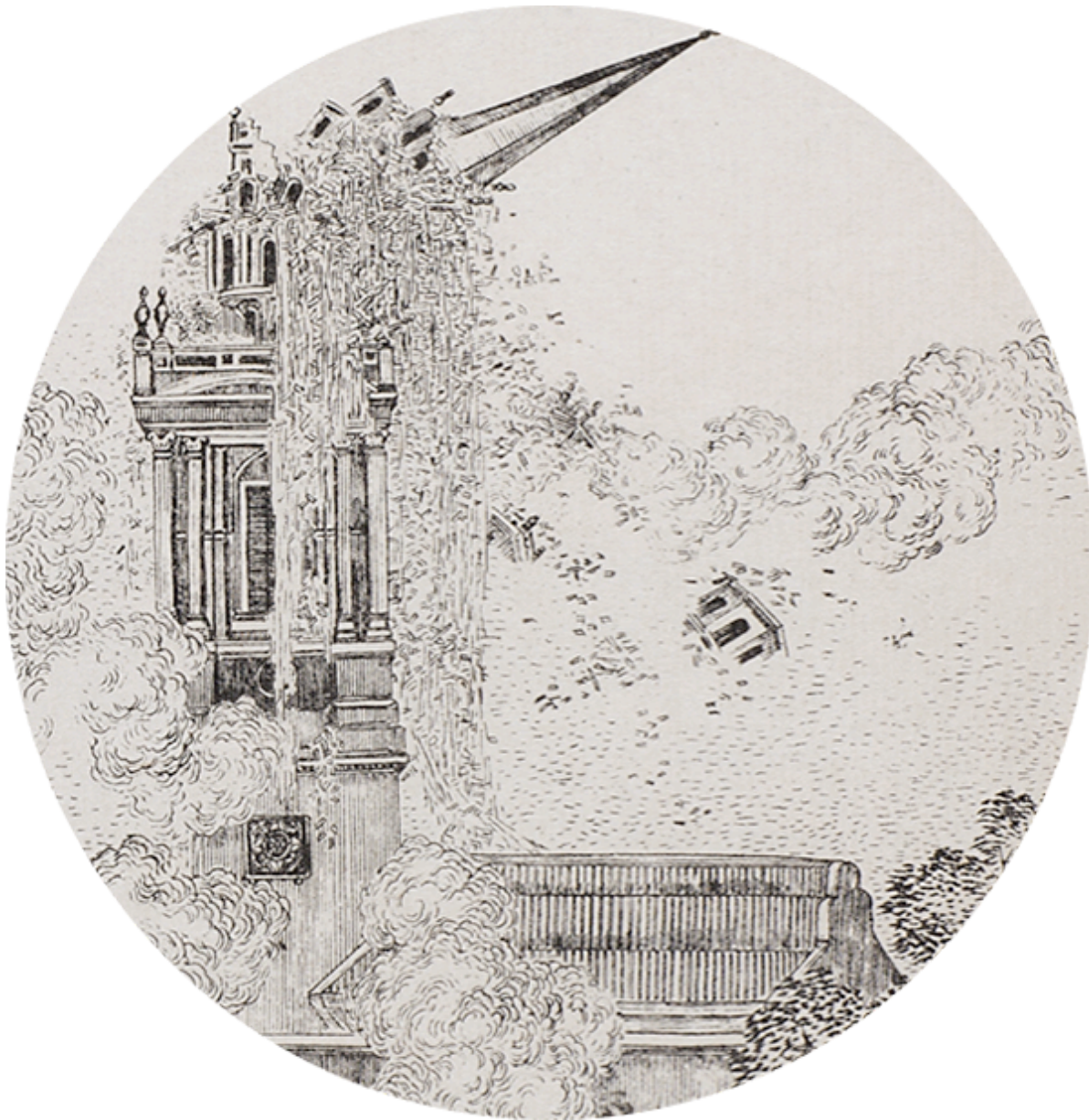
artist Wu Youru

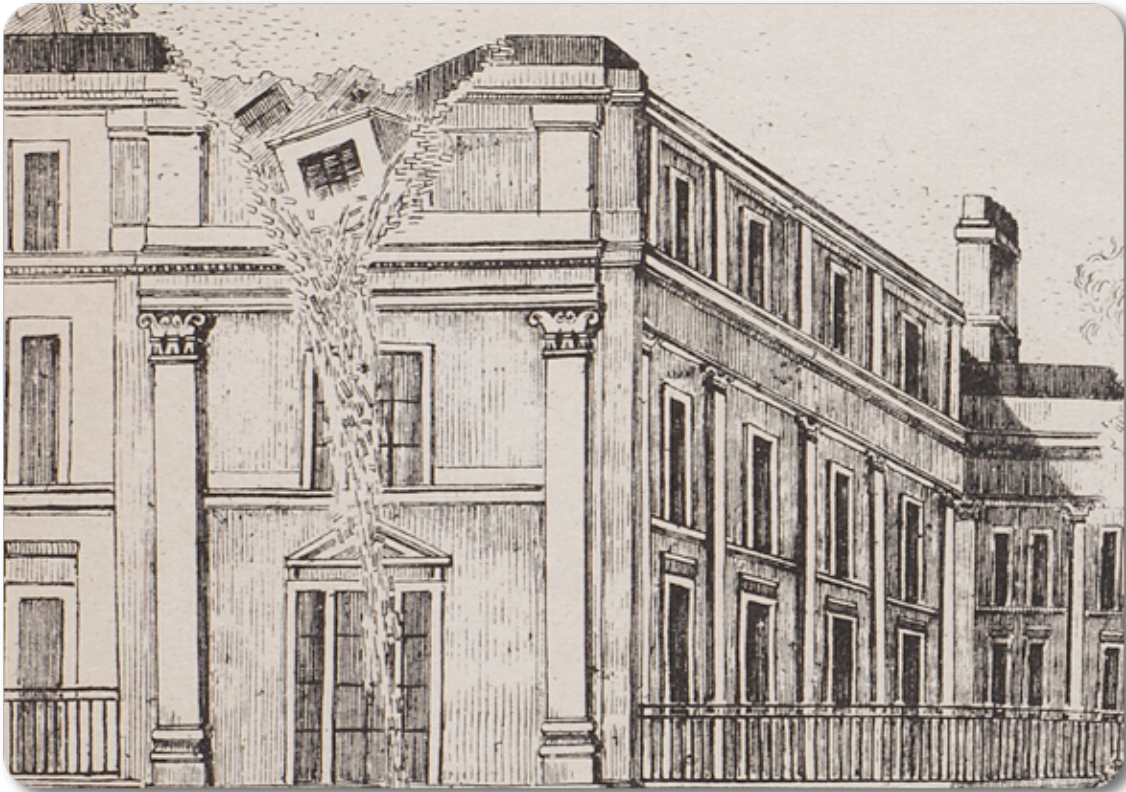
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Yale 1.029 [dz_v01_029]

Like the American Civil War battlefield artists who produced drawings that ended up as prints in *Leslie's Weekly* (for examples, see ["The Becker Collection/Drawings of the American Civil War Era"](#)), Wu Youru often sketched news on the spot.

Here, though, he was forced to draw from his mental image bank and technical proficiency and so the distant melds with the local in the shape of an English church tower crashing onto a Lower-Yangzi-style roof (detail below).





Yet he also takes care to reveal pathos and fellow suffering of the human beings struck by disaster as seen in the men and child cowering under the trees (detail below).



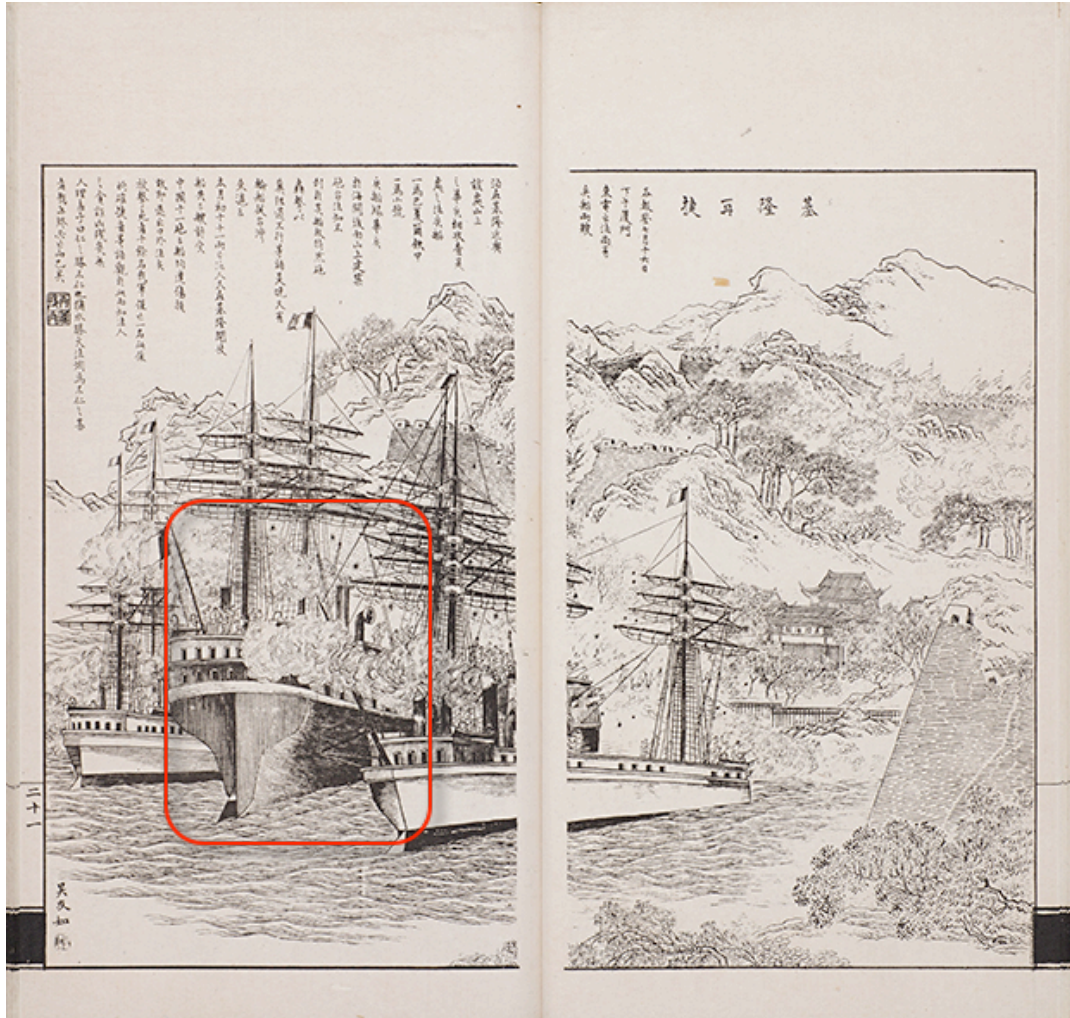
Looking at Ships: From Far-Away to Close-at-Home

Wu Youru was instrumental in helping *Dianshizhai* make its name depicting naval battles of the Sino-French war, a key conflict that tested the Westernized military technology introduced by the “Self-strengthening” (*zhiqiang*) reform movement that followed the Taiping Rebellion. Through his work and that of other artists the portrayal of marine technology and the drama of warfare at sea became something of a house specialty.

The following three images show us how *Dianshizhai* artists began by depicting for Shanghai viewers a war taking place in relatively distant south China and Southeast Asia, rendering in minute detail both the exciting action of war and the rapidly-shifting military technology that accompanied it. Eventually, they turned the skills they had acquired onto events closer to home, using the same visual flair to generate excitement via the drama of the familiar mixed with the spectacular. Visually evocative, staged views of the news feature ships at war—“Second Attack on Jilong,” and in domestic dramas—“A Steamship Stranded” and “Rescue on Lake Tai.”

“Second Attack on Jilong”

In the war scene (“Second Attack on Jilong”) the textual account describes the second attack of French forces on the Taiwan port of Jilong (Keelung) in fall 1884, after their first attempt during the summer was repelled. Though the reporter decries the inhumanity of the barrage of cannonfire launched by three ships upon the Qing fortifications, Wu’s illustration rather seems to send another message.



“A Second Victory at Jilong”

基隆再捷

1884 yi (Vol. 11, p. 20)

artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 11.022 [dz_v11_022]



Eagle-eyed viewers (perhaps armed with magnifying glasses!) could not only follow the trajectory of dozens of cannonballs, they could marvel at every detail of the French steamships' funnels and rigging, and delight at the gestures and poses of the animated crewmen. This was not the first time a *Dianshizhai* written text and its accompanying illustration would seem to be at odds, nor would it be the last.

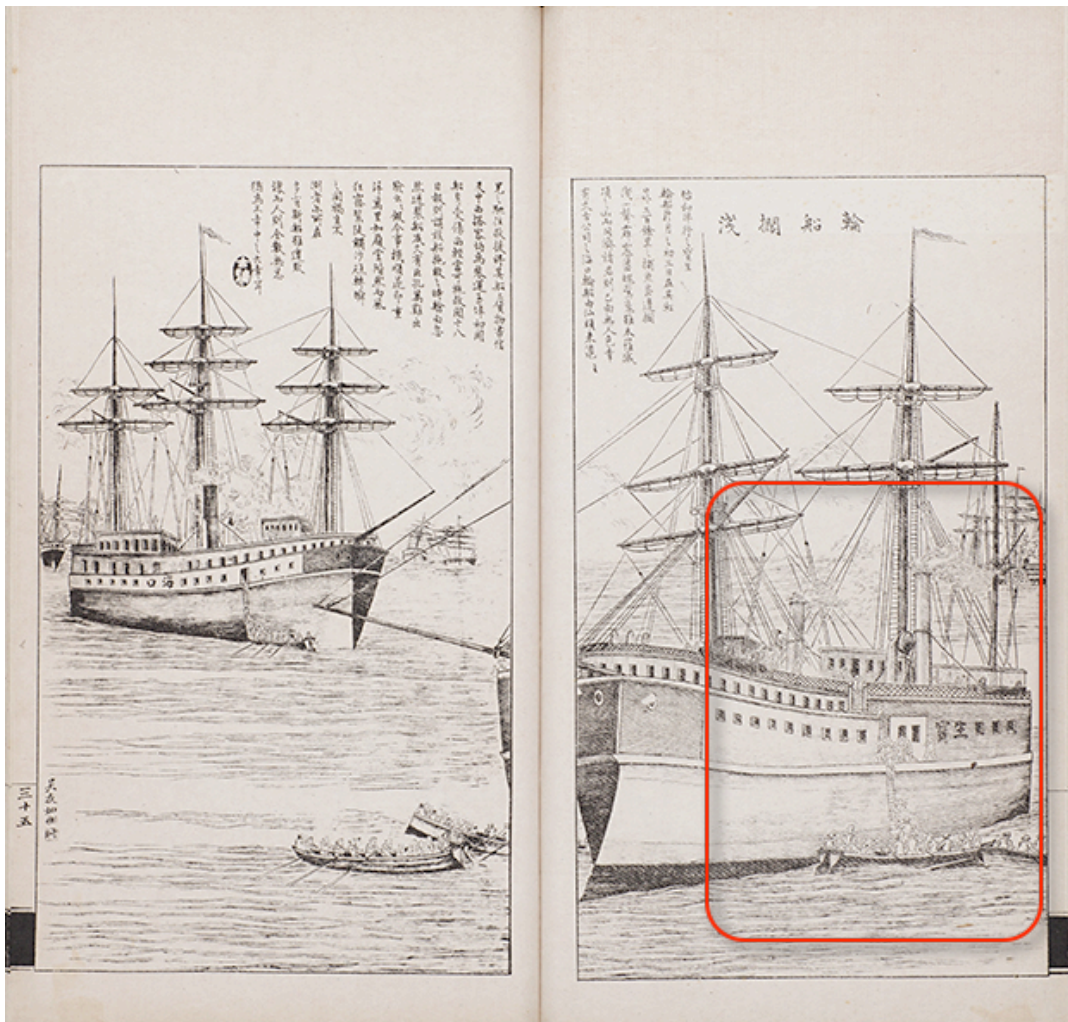
We should not conclude that Wu Youru was therefore politically apathetic. This seems to have been more a matter of artistic sensibility and deploying the medium in a way that late Qing literati viewed as natural.

That is to say, there was no shortage of moral exhortation in the *Dianshizhai*, but it came across most clearly in the writing, which was done in a classical style. Text was still seen as the primary venue for such expressions for the literarily-trained men who by and large made up the Shanghai media world of the time.

Conveying moral or political ideas solely through a non-textual, visual medium was an argument some decades away from being made in China. Yet Wu and the other Dianshizhai artists—however inadvertently—pushed that latter world into being through their staged views of the news that heavily emphasized some visual elements (and therefore some elements of the story) over others.

“A Steamship Stranded”

Here again Wu cannot help himself in illustrating the news of a passenger steamship run aground at the port of Wusong; the magnificence of the ship overwhelms the evacuation of the passengers, and calls into being several other steamships to accompany it.



“A Steamship Stranded” 輪船擱淺

1884 (Vol. 1, p. 35)

artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

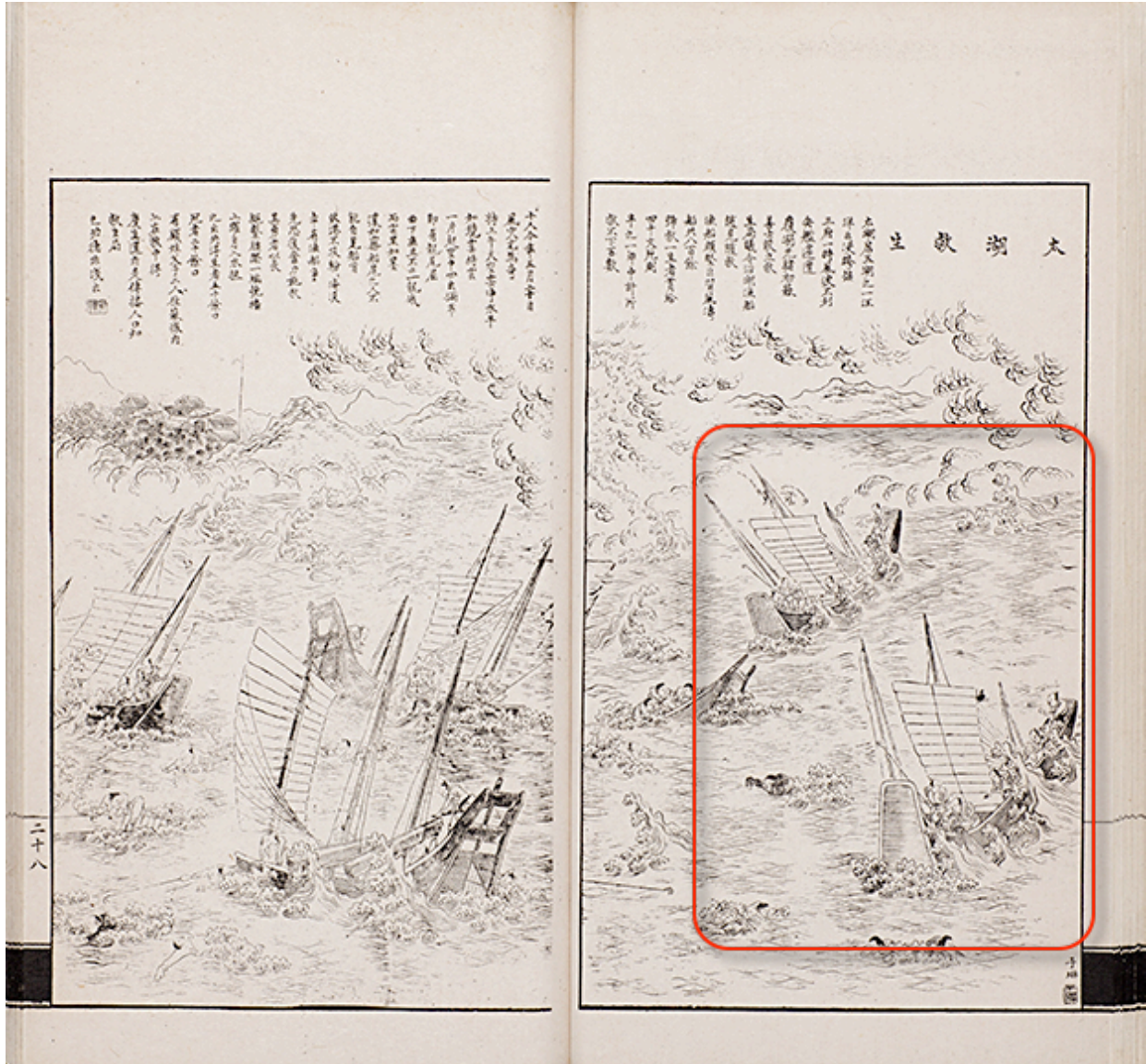
[dz_v01_037]



An image shows the transport of people from the stranded vessel to a rescue ship on the left. Another paddlewheel steamer is also on the scene in the background.

“Rescue on Lake Tai”

Other artists would find ways to make lithographic marine drama work in the service of the literati ethics and, as Ye Xiaqing points out, somewhat conservative politics that *Dianshizhai* writers espoused. Tian Zilin lavishes as much loving care on the local sailing boats of Lake Tai, not far from Shanghai in Jiangsu Province, as Wu Youru did on the new technology of the steamship.



“Rescue on Lake Tai”

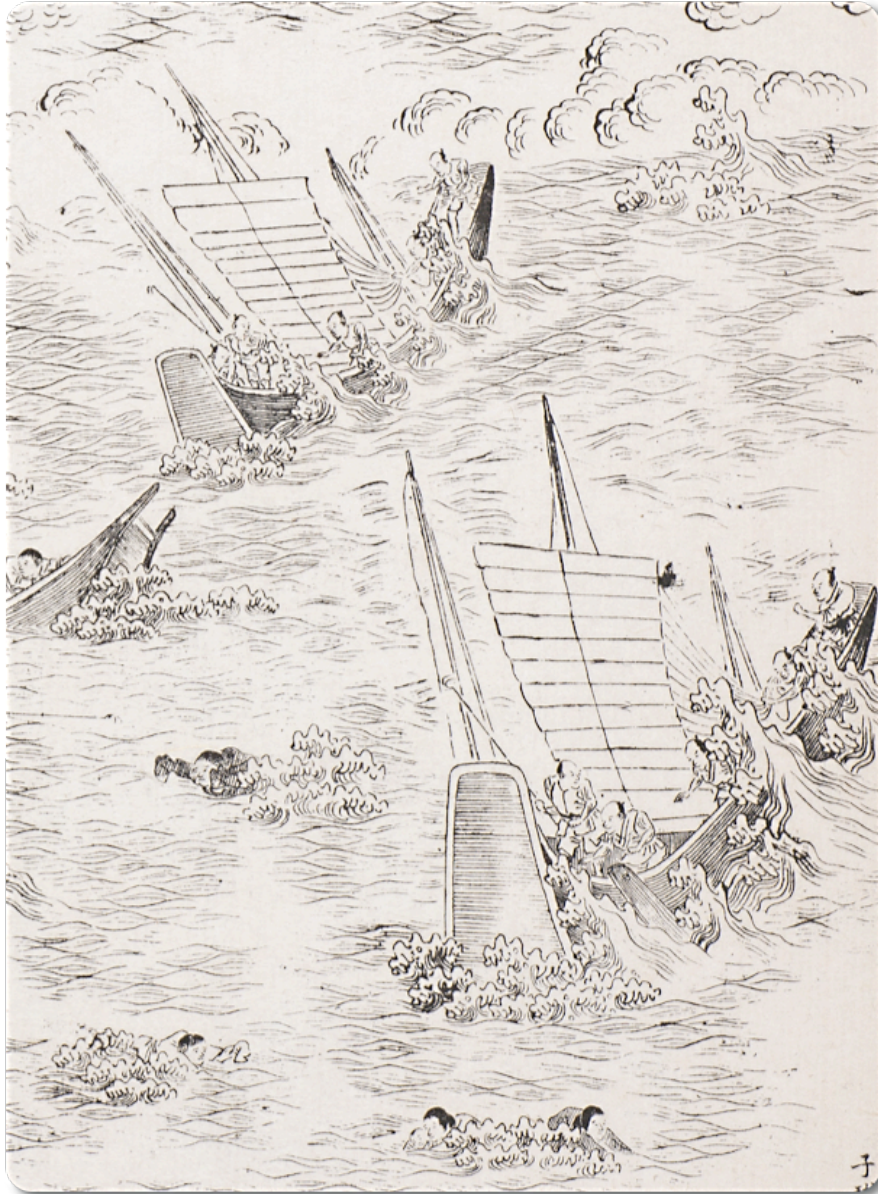
太湖救生

1886 xin (Vol. 11, p. 27)

artist Ma Zilin

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 11.029 [dz_v11_029]



The boats are whipped by wind and waves as their occupants use ropes and hooks, or dive into the stormy lake, to rescue capsized fishermen.

Ma's dramatic scene does not undercut the text's explanation that this rescue happened courtesy of a local civic service, a water rescue in place since the early Guangxu era (ca. 1870s), which distributed cash rewards for people brought back. "Meritorious deeds continue," the reporter noted approvingly.

A Notebook for the Shanghai Man

In neither text nor illustration, then, should we understand the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* to be "objective" news in the way that modern journalism has come to enshrine reporting. Three issues a month—nine illustrations an issue—demanded choice, and Major's writers and illustrators reflected the very hybrid quality of the audience for which they decided what was "sensational and entertaining."

These “settlement literati” (Ye Xiaoqing’s term) were by and large trained in the scholar-official system of the Qing, but by choice or happenstance, found themselves operating outside of it in the Shanghai commercial and social world. Far from abandoning their cultural underpinnings, though, they simply applied it to the urban whirlwind around them. Thus their *Dianshizhai* functions somewhere in between a modern newspaper and an elite gentleman’s *biji*, a diaristic collection of interesting tidbits along with his own commentary (in that sense, the late Qing illustrated newspaper served many functions that we expect of a blog now).

Stories were meant to excite, shock, and spur innovation, but they were also meant to caution, moralize, and provide an anchor in times of rapid social change. There was no single editorial voice for the *Dianshizhai*, and writers did not always agree with one another on important political or cultural issues of the day. And as we have already seen and will continue to see throughout this unit, sometimes the text of a story imparts a stern message that is directly contradicted by the intrigue and excitement generated by the image.

The audience, or viewership, is difficult to ascertain with any certainty, because it was common to recirculate issues of this and other publications among many hands. Major rather grandiosely claimed the desire for the pictorial to make its way to the workers of Shanghai, and farmers and tradesmen beyond, but the written style would have limited the reading of the texts to the “middle-brow” educated and above. There is little documentation as yet, however, on the lives of the illustrations themselves, but print culture is a thriving topic among young scholars of China around the world, and perhaps we will soon know.

Although Ernest Major and the *Dianshizhai* editors took a restrained view of the political upheavals of the time—obliquely commenting on but not supporting, for example, the demands for reform of the dynastic government—the publication could not remain immune to them. In the chaotic environment following the ill-fated Hundred Days of Reform in 1898—a period of aborted moves toward constitutional monarchy, power plays at court, and the jailing or exile of a number of political reformers and radicals—the *Dianshizhai* ceased publication. Its collective visions continued to circulate and reverberate, however, beyond Shanghai and beyond these 14 influential years.

Shanghai's Lens on the New(s)—1

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SHANGHAI MYTHS

Jeffrey Wasserstrom

Introduction

The urban theorist Michael Sorkin, fascinated by the degree to which Los Angeles had become associated with Hollywood imagery and hyperbolic statements about its rise to fame and infamy, once described the metropolis as having become “virtually unviewable save through the fictive scrim of its mythologizers.” [1] The same is true for Shanghai, another celebrated and notorious Pacific-rim city that by the 1930s had rocketed to a position of global fame and infamy.

Written works have played an important role in Shanghai’s modern mythologizing, which began in the wake of the Opium War (1839–1842) that ended with a diplomatic agreement that made it one of five special “treaty ports” along the China coast in which Britons would have the right to settle and conduct business according to the rules of their homeland rather than those of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). In the case of both Shanghai and Los Angeles, visuals as well as words contributed to the “fictive scrim” in which these great cities became encased. For Los Angeles, brochures, postcards, and films of the early 1900s showing palm-tree-lined boulevards did much of the mythologizing work (with other media such as television supplementing them later on). For Shanghai, which began its surge to mythic status a bit earlier, line drawings such as those found in the *Illustrated London News* and *Dianshizhai* were particularly significant at the start of the process.

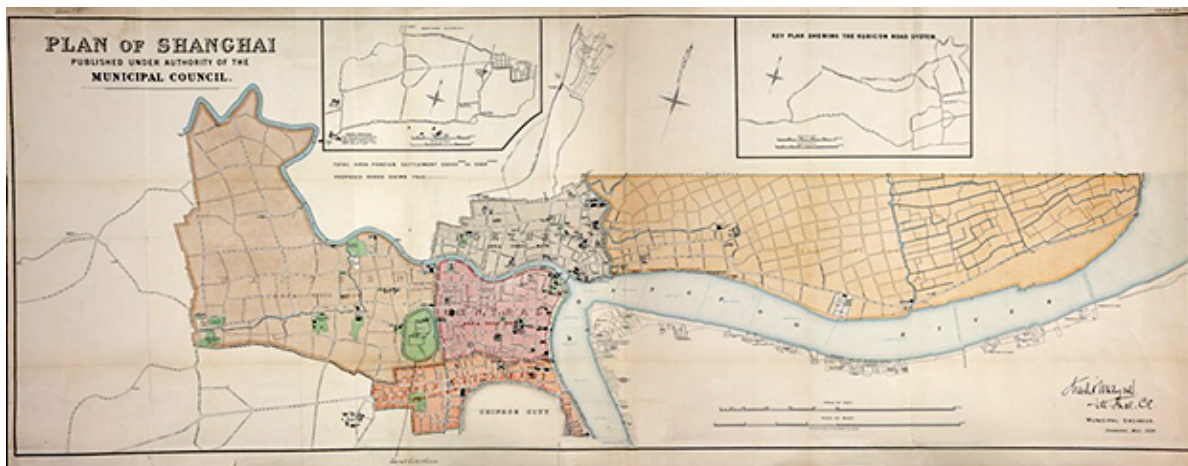
The period of the *Dianshizhai*’s publication was a crucial one in the formation and circulation of two especially significant partially true and partially misleading stories about Shanghai. For simplicity’s sake, these can be called the “Fishing Village Legend” and the “China-meets-the-West City Tale.” These two stories deserve to be treated as two of Shanghai’s most important and enduring “city myths”—a term borrowed here from another insightful analyst of Los Angeles, Mike Davis. In his classic work on Southern California, in which he limns the powerful “sunshine” and “noir” visions of Los Angeles, Davis employs “city myths” to refer to deeply embedded narratives that come to define an urban center and are often used for strategic purposes, from legitimating a set of political relationship to encouraging outsiders to move to or invest in the place. [2]

Visual materials unquestionably helped to spread the partly misleading notions associated with the two Shanghai city myths in question. At the same time, however, such graphics can also be used to pierce through the “fictive scrim” of these deeply entrenched notions, revealing things that the “Fishing Village Legend” and “China-Meets-the-West City Tale” conceal or force into the shadows. Sometimes, this fiction-busting function can only be achieved by moving from one image to another, with one that reinforces the myth giving way to one that exposes not so much its falseness but its limitations. In other cases, though, all it takes is looking very closely at an image that seems at first to confirm a city myth.

What exactly is the “Fishing Village Legend,” and how is it misleading? It is an approach to narrating Shanghai’s past that asserts or takes for granted that Shanghai lacked all trappings of an urban center before the Qing leaders were pressured into signing the Treaty of Nanjing in 1843. Thereafter, the legend goes, Shanghai very rapidly evolved, through an almost magical process, into one of the world’s great cities. In some versions of the story, the growth of the city is described, in fairy tale-like terms, as a site awakening to a great destiny. Phrases such as Shanghai being in pre-Opium War times merely a “wilderness of marshes” or “city of reeds” rather than buildings are used. [3]

The problem with this legend is simple. While Shanghai changed dramatically and grew exponentially after the terms of the Treaty of Nanjing were implemented, it was much more than a “fishing village” prior to that point. It was not the most important or even second most important city of the region. Those distinctions belonged to Suzhou and Hangzhou, and Shanghai was sometimes called “Little Su” or “Little Hang” to flag its lowlier status. And the changes it underwent after the Opium War were extraordinary—leading eventually to Suzhou and Hangzhou being seen as satellites to Shanghai. Still, Shanghai already had temples, stores, a city wall, and all the trappings of a Chinese urban center before the Opium War.

One kind of written text that points to the problem with the “fishing village” myth are descriptions of Shanghai as a bustling port, filled with ships carrying goods from China’s hinterland to Southeast Asia, that appear in works of the pre-Opium War era by early Western visitors. A European account of a visit early in the 1830s described it as the “famed emporium” of Shanghai where “a vast number of junks of every variety” could be found. Later in the decade, the Chinese Repository referred to it as a “large commercial place.”



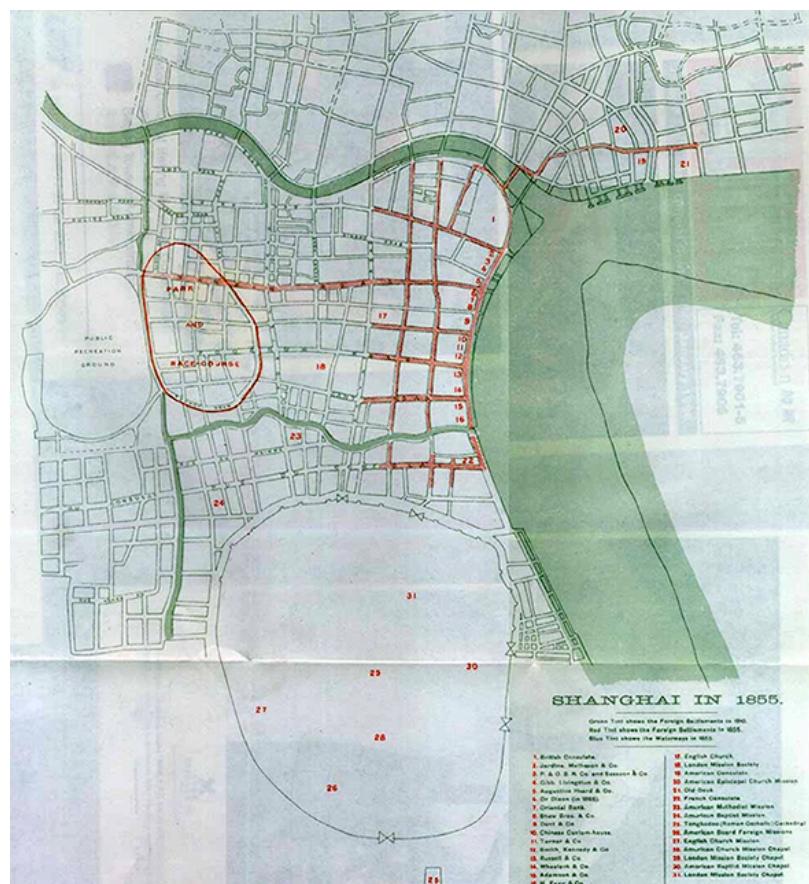
Plan of Shanghai, 1904

Map ID-76, No-1

Source: Virtual Shanghai Project [view]

[dz500]

This map was made by the Shanghai Municipal Council, which ran the International Settlement, so it makes sense that that district is shown in more detail; but the French Concession, a separate entity, gets detailed attention while Chinese districts do not. This 1855 map, meanwhile, shows the old walled city, but the only points of interest in it are buildings built by missionaries after the Opium War, suggesting that the area lacked structures of significance before then.

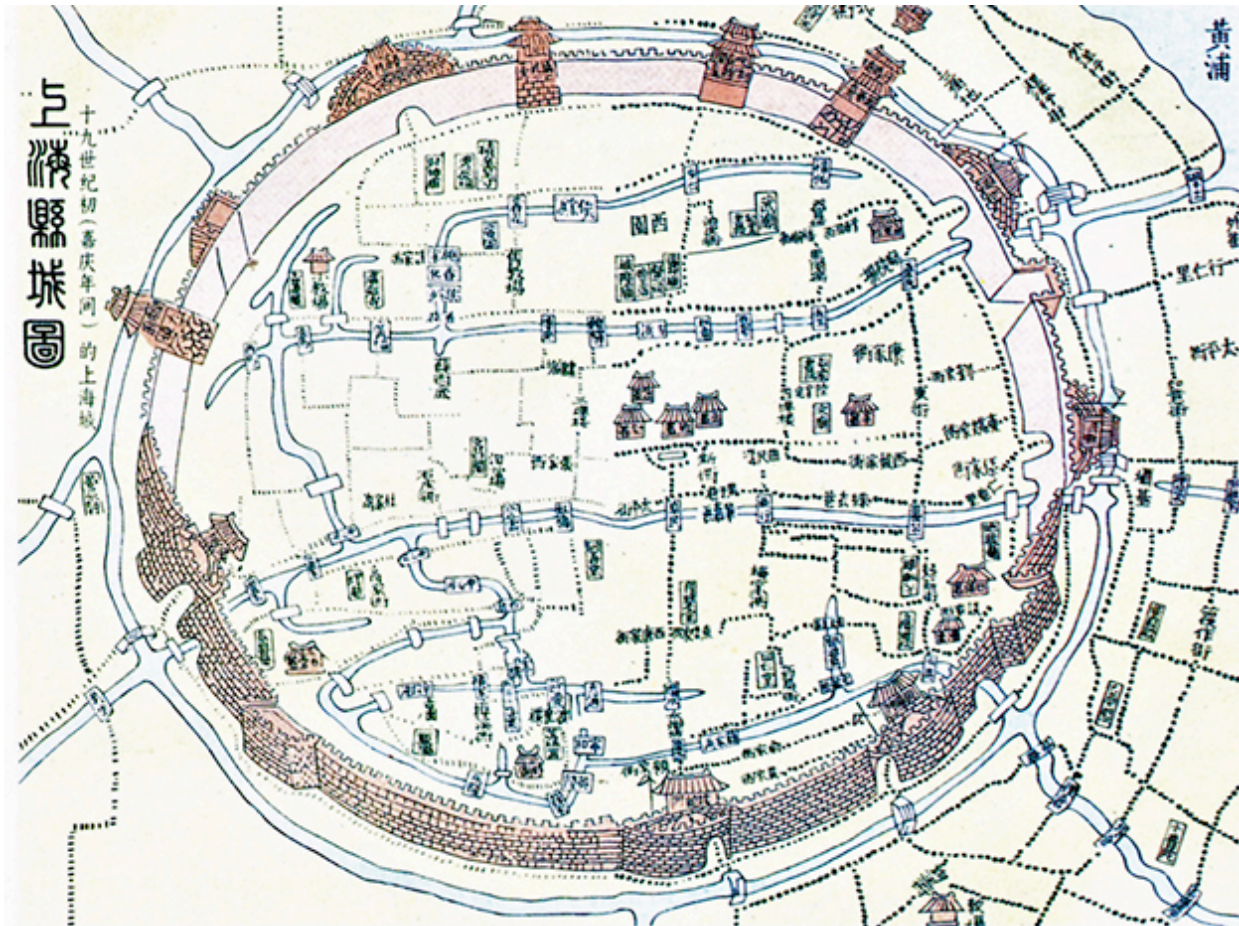


Map of Shanghai
1855

Source: Earnshaw
[view]

[dz501]

The limitations of such cartographic imperialism are exposed dramatically by other maps from the early and late 1800s that show the foreign-run and Chinese-run parts of the city in a more holistic fashion, suggesting a metropolis that had grown dramatically but by no means had gone from nothing to something nearly overnight.



Map of Shanghai, 1800-1820

Original title: 上海縣城圖

Source: Virtual Shanghai Project [view]

[dz502]

The City Where China-Meets-the-West

The second misleading story revolves around the idea that Shanghai in particular, and treaty ports more generally, became in the 1840s special sorts of Orient-meets-Occident locales. As this myth would have it, they became places defined by juxtapositions of "Chinese" individuals, objects, customs, and lifestyles, on the one hand, and "Western" ones, on the other. Where Shanghai is concerned, there is more substance to this notion than to the "fishing village" legend.

By the time *Dianshizhai* was launched, and for many decades after, Shanghai was divided into Western-run and Chinese-run districts, something that was also true of other treaty ports such as Xiamen and Tianjin. All of these hybrid locales were important in linking China to the West. The period saw these treaty ports go from having completely Chinese populations to having populations that included

Westerners. They also became places where vehicles from the West, such as horse-drawn coaches of the kind shown here (one of many *Dianshizhai* images to feature such conveyances) became commonplace on local streets, some of which were paved in the style of European and American cities.



"Giving up Life for Lust" 貪色忘命

1896 heng (vol. 38, p. 16)

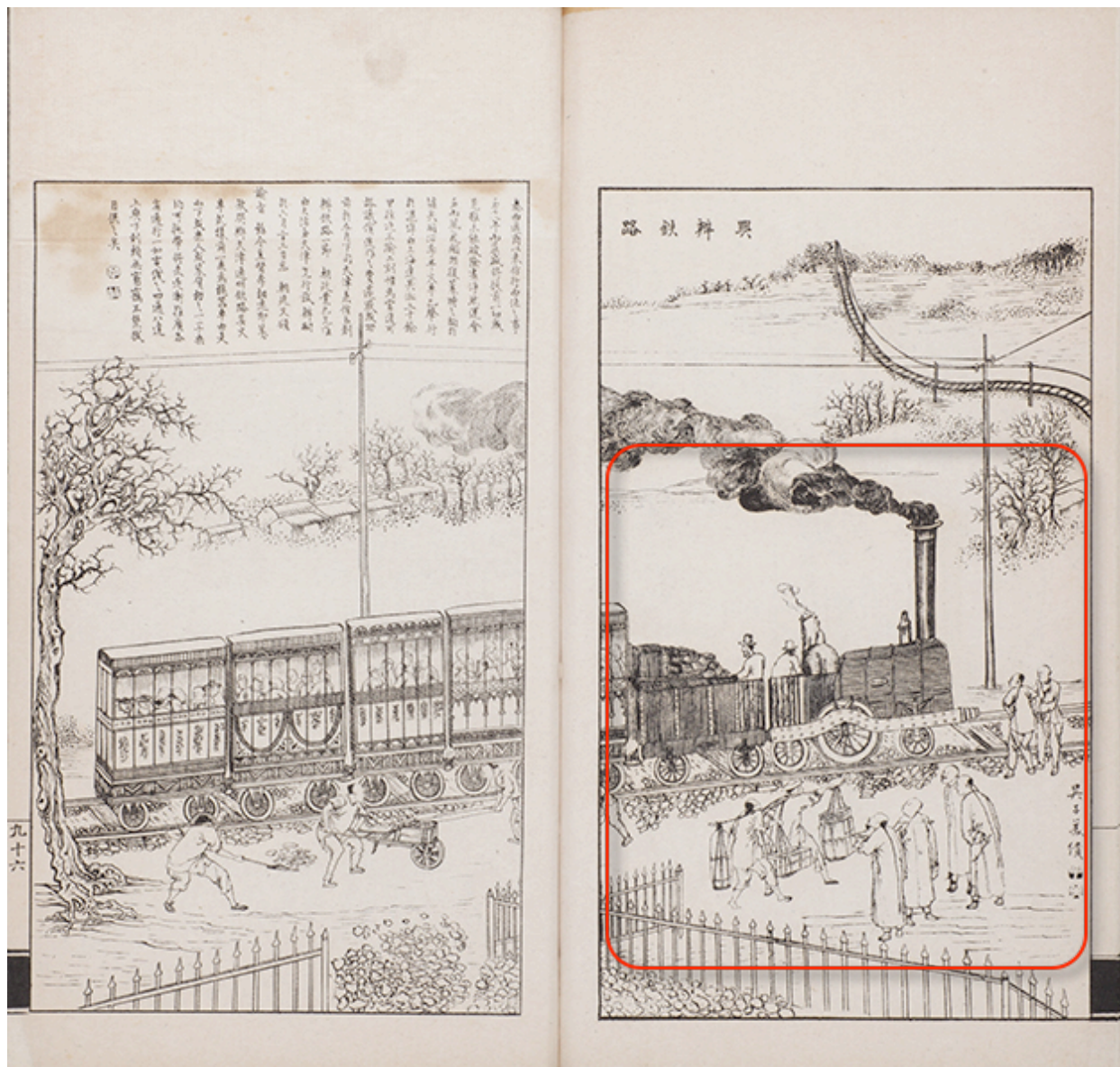
Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 7.017 [dz_v07_017]

The close-up detail
reveals a couple
kissing in the back seat.



Shanghai usually outpaced other treaty ports when it came to importing Western modes of transportation, though in the case of trains, as the illustration below from the *Dianshizhai* makes clear, it had to share early-adopter honors with the most important treaty port in North China.



"Launching the Railway"

1884 jia (Vol. 2, p. 47)

artist Wu Youru

Yale 1.029 [dz_v02_048]

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)



“Since the commencement of a trading relationship with the West, it has grown increasingly popular in recent years to emulate Western ways. Even though not all stereotypes and prejudices have been discarded, the era of meticulously observing rigid conventions has gone, the tide of opinion has changed, and a new climate has set in. In the last year of the Tongzhi Reign (1874), trains appeared for the first time in Shanghai ... ”

Last but not least, by the 1880s Shanghai’s famous waterfront area known as the Bund confirmed that there was some basis to the China-plus-elements-of-the-West vision of the city. When *Dianshizhai* began publishing, the Bund, which ran along the eastern edge of both the International Settlement and the French Concession, had a series of buildings that frequently appeared in paintings and photographs. Most of them had a distinctively Western look, having been built in what was known as the “colonial” style, but one that stood roughly midway up the Bund, called the “Custom House,” had a distinctively Chinese look, with a sloping tiled roof.



Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs (first building), 1857-1891

Source: Virtual Shanghai Project [view]

[dz503]

At the Bund's northern end, moreover, there was a park, complete with a gazebo, which looked as though it could have been transplanted directly from London. Images of this park, known as the Public Garden, sometimes showed it with junks sailing nearby, one more visual way of marking that Shanghai had a look that evoked Europe yet was clearly in China.



Postcard of the Public Garden, 1908
Source: Virtual Shanghai Project [view]

[dz504]

Just to the west of the Bund was a racecourse that looked much like the ones found in Britain itself and in various British colonies, including Hong Kong. Not far from that were some of Shanghai's French churches, which resembled those found in France and cities in other parts of the world that were part of its empire, such as Saigon. And in both the International Settlement and the French Concession, there were many buildings with clocks that looked like those found in the United States and in European cities. The most famous of these was built on the same spot as the Custom House, which was torn down in the early 1890s to make room for a Big Ben-like structure.



Chinese Maritime Customs House (second building), 1893

Source: Virtual Shanghai Project [view]

[dz505]

The new building also served as headquarters for the customs service. It opened to much fanfare in 1893—the year foreign residents held a “Jubilee” to mark the city’s fiftieth “birthday,” or more accurately the anniversary of the arrival of the first Western settlers. From that point on, the Bund contained only Western-style buildings. (When the Custom House was torn down again in the 1920s, it was replaced with another clock-towered structure that remains in place to this day.)



View of the Bund, 1929

Source: Virtual Shanghai Project [view]

[dz506]

Pictures of the Bund commonly included the waterfront, with junks that made clear to viewers that it was not actually in Europe. This did not stop one British visitor, a young Margot Fonteyn, the later-famous ballerina, from remarking upon arrival after a stay in North America that Shanghai looked more like London than any city in the United States had. [4] To move between these Western-style landmarks, one passed shops and homes that were built in traditional Chinese styles, as well as structures that mixed local and imported architectural motifs and forms of construction.

In light of all of this, it is understandable that one of Shanghai's main nicknames became "Paris of the East," a sobriquet also used in the late 1800s and after for a host of other cities, from Bucharest to Beirut, that were outside of Western Europe yet seen as influenced by that part of the world. It was also referred to as the "New York of the West"—a much less common term, but used, for example, in *All About Shanghai and Environs*, one of the most widely read foreign guidebooks of the time.

What, then, makes the China-meets-the-West vision of Shanghai a city myth rather than a straightforward description of reality? The answer is simple. While the city was certainly marked by cosmopolitanism and a mingling of influences and people, this involved more than just a jumbling together of "Chinese" and "Western" elements. Shanghai was an East-meets-East as well as China-meets-West locale.

The *Dianshizhai* is an ideal source to use to explore this issue. At first pass, it seems to give substance to the China-meets-the-West idea, but on closer inspection can be used to demonstrate the importance of making room for an East-meets-East vision of Shanghai.

First, consider its China-meets-the-West dimensions. Like the *Shenbao* newspaper to which it was linked, its publisher was a Briton but most of its employees were Chinese. Its drawings were clearly influenced by British and French illustrated magazines, yet Chinese aesthetic and artistic traditions also shaped the look of its images—and all of its textual glosses were written in characters. Some drawings showed Western events, some showed purely Chinese ones, and some portrayed mixed groups of Chinese and Western individuals. Many graphics depicted purely Chinese groups wearing apparel or surrounded by objects—from macadamized streets with street lamps to buildings with clock towers to horse-drawn carriages—that brought the West to mind. [5]

Several *Dianshizhai* images could serve as poster children for the “Shanghai as a China-Meets-the-West locale” idea. One that is often reproduced depicts a parade sponsored by a local guild titled “Western Music in a Religious Ceremony.”



"Welcoming the Gods with Western Music" 西樂迎神

1884 jia (Vol. 12, p. 20)

artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail

Yale 1.029 [dz_v12_021]



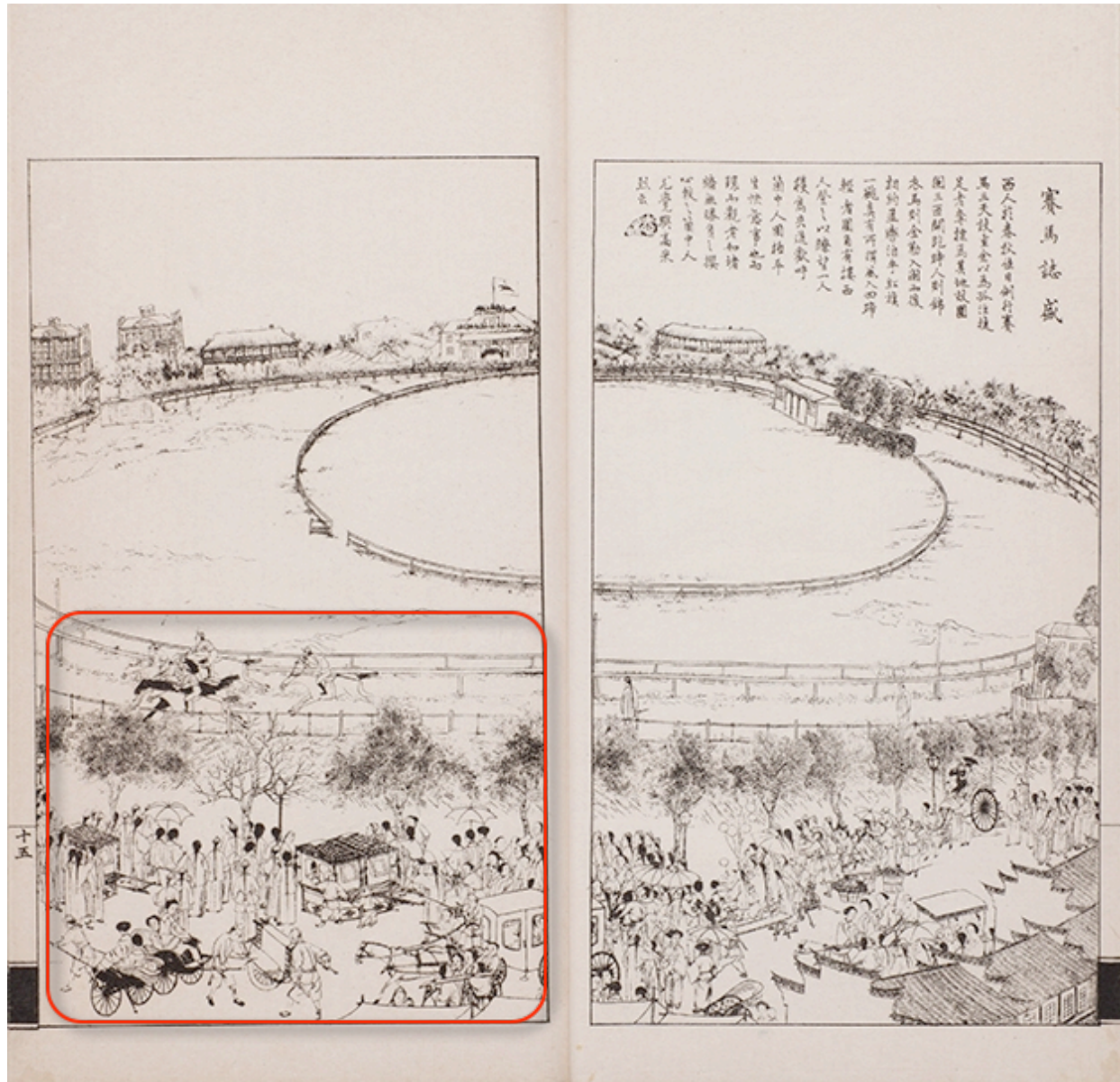
It shows a mix of Chinese and Western musicians walking together while playing instruments associated with both China and the West. The accompanying gloss, which adopts a critical tone, describes the scene as an example of a Chinese group that has gone too far in being influenced by foreign fashions, in this case by hiring Westerners to perform in one of the sponsoring guild's rituals. Accompanying text reads in translation:

Westerners use music to accompany everything. According to what I have seen, this includes military parades, funerals, the horse races held in the spring and autumn, and officials arriving at the quay to take up a new position. Yi-yi-ya-ya—it is quite pleasant to the ear. The tempo and the rhythm are like the movement of 10,000 feet, like beating time with clappers. Sometimes people with the means and curiosity in this commercial port hire such performers. This year, at Double Nine Festival, Cantonese merchants resident in Shanghai participated in the procession to the Temple of the Queen of Heaven. Apart from the usual banners, gongs, fans, and umbrellas, they hired a Western band to accompany the procession. Anyone with any education would not have thought of anything so vulgar.

[Translation by Ye Xiaoqing in her *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*, p. 132.]

Nevertheless, a closer look at the publication reveals a good deal of evidence of Shanghai's "East-meets-East" dimensions. Some of the images that seem at first glance to be purely China-meets-the-West pictures actually reflect an Asian but non-Chinese presence in their portrayals of individuals and objects. This is true even in the built environment and settings that are typically described as emblematic of the city's China-meets-the-West character.

A case in point is the richly detailed image of the local racecourse that also appears at the start of this unit. The viewer sees Western jockeys on racehorses, a crowd made up of mostly Chinese but some Western spectators, a mix of horse-drawn carriages and palanquins, and the racecourse surrounded by buildings that look Western in style (at the top of the image, below), or Chinese in style (at the bottom). All of this fits a China-meets-the-West reading. Yet, a third key form of transportation is shown at the bottom, left: rickshaws. These were a Japanese import. In Western representations of Shanghai, they could be used to stand for its non-Western aspects but they were no less an import than the horse-drawn coaches.



"Horse Racing"

賽馬誌盛

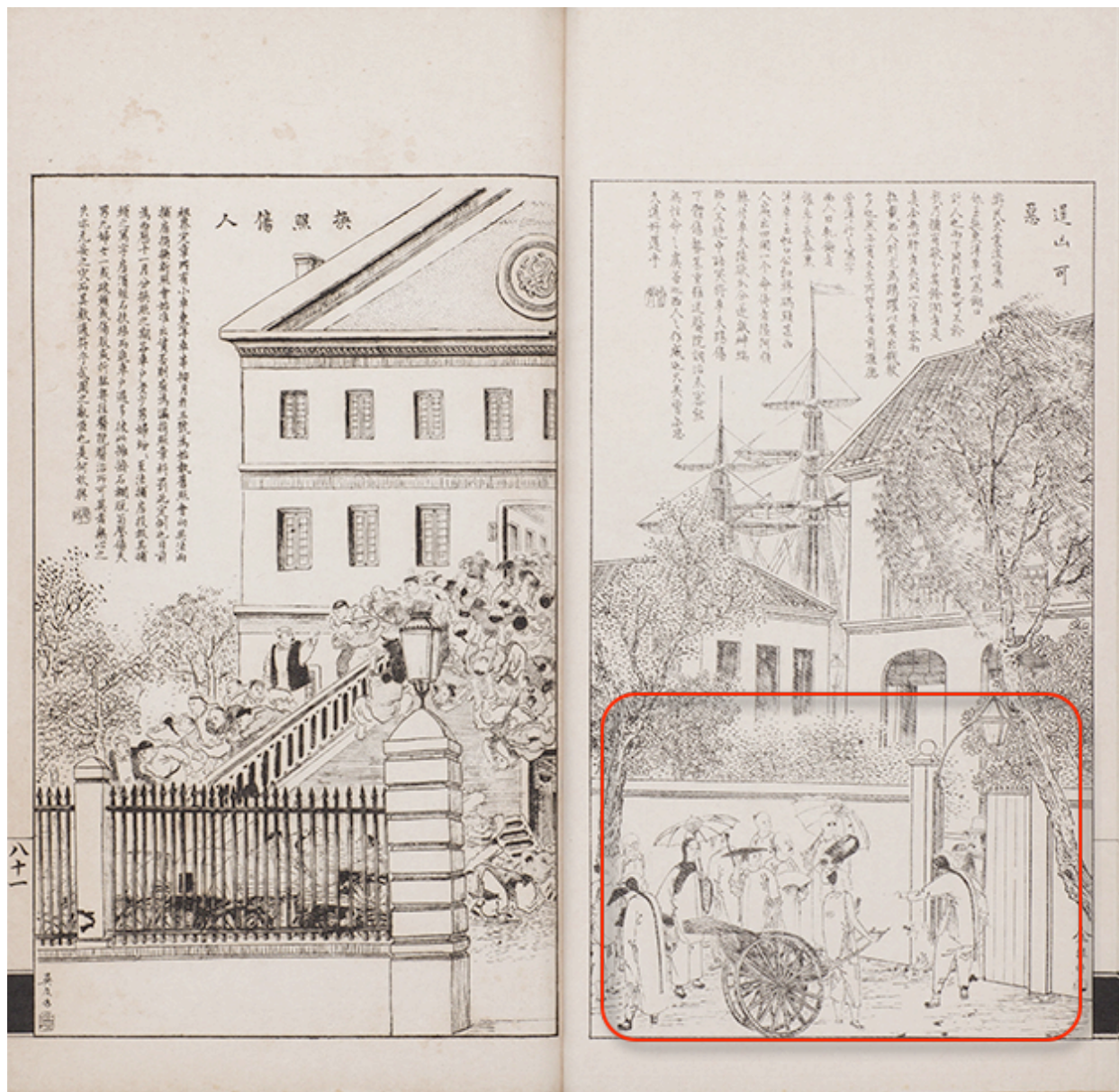
1884 (Vol. 1, p. 15)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 1.017 [dz_v01_017]



The racecourse image can thus be seen as one that shows Shanghai as primarily defined by China-meets-the-West elements, with one East-meets-East element slipped in. The same can be said of another image in which we see markers of the Western presence in Shanghai (the ship's mast, the architecture, the sunglasses), but also a rickshaw.



"Violent Behavior is Abhorrent"

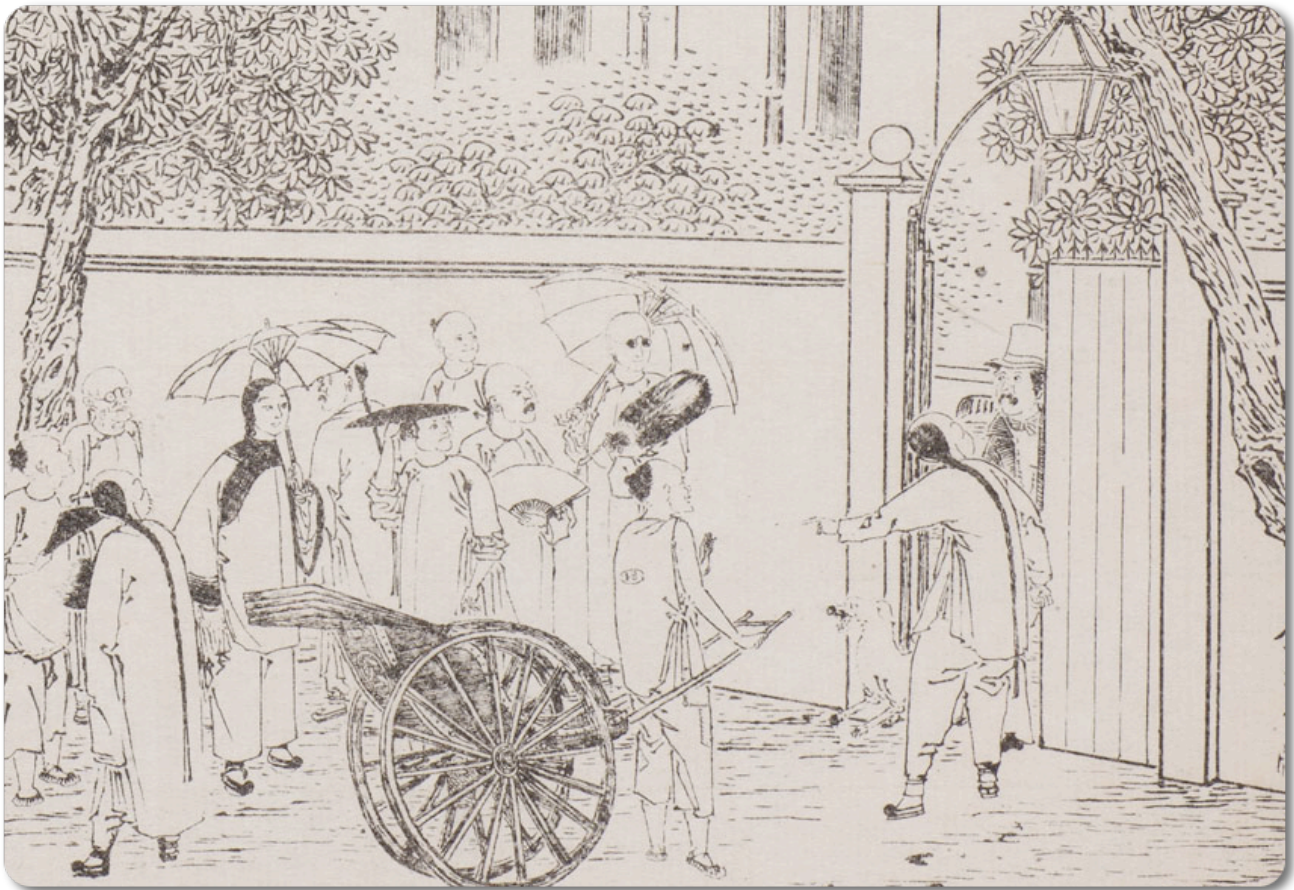
逞兇可惡

1884 jia (Vol. 2, p. 33)

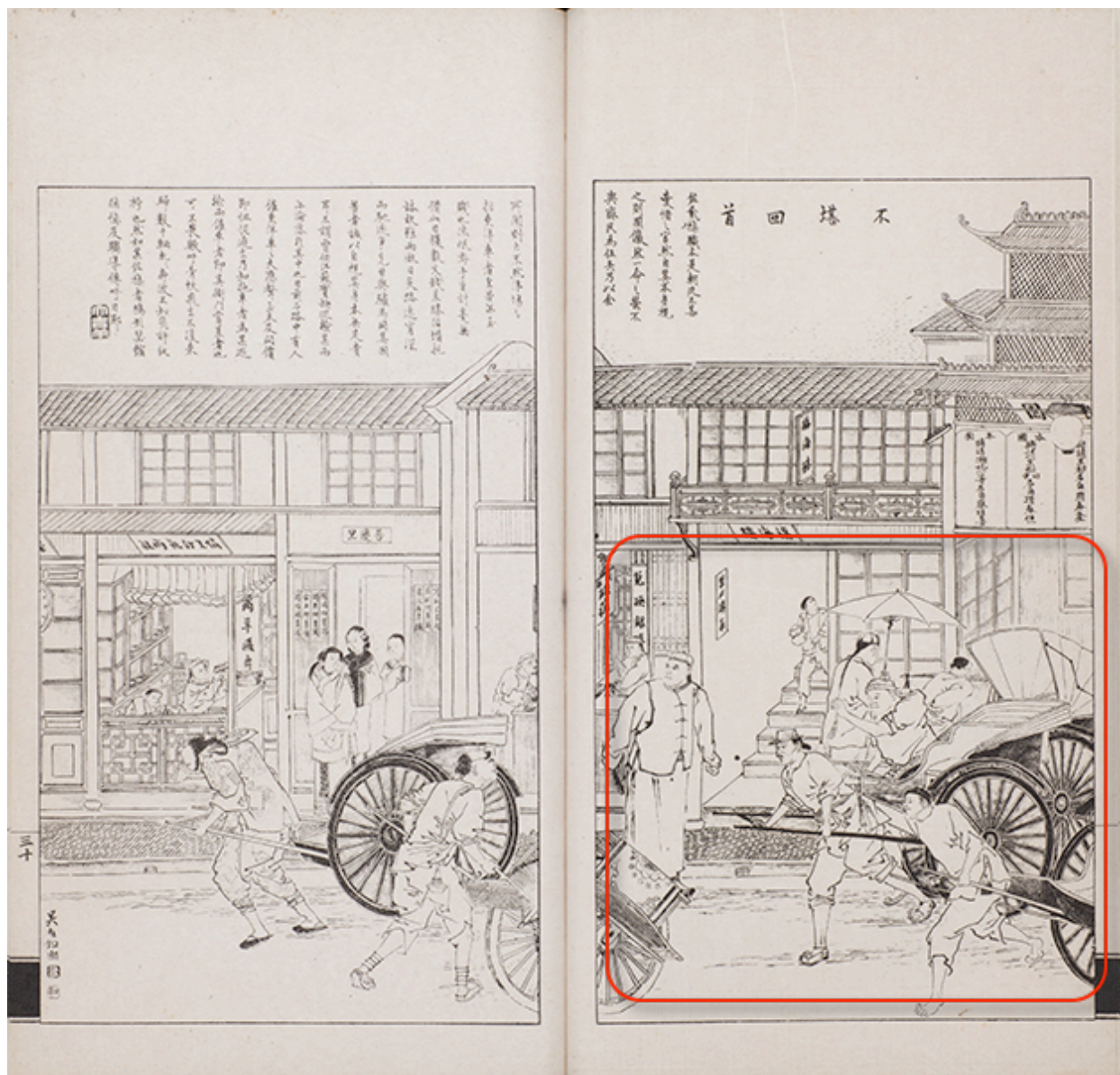
artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 1.029 [dz_v02_034]



Elsewhere, though, a rickshaw may be the sole indication of foreign influence, as shown in the image below. A Chinese viewer living in a setting other than a treaty port might well latch onto the rickshaws as key indicators that this was not a street scene in just any random urban center of the Qing Empire, but one shaped by international current.

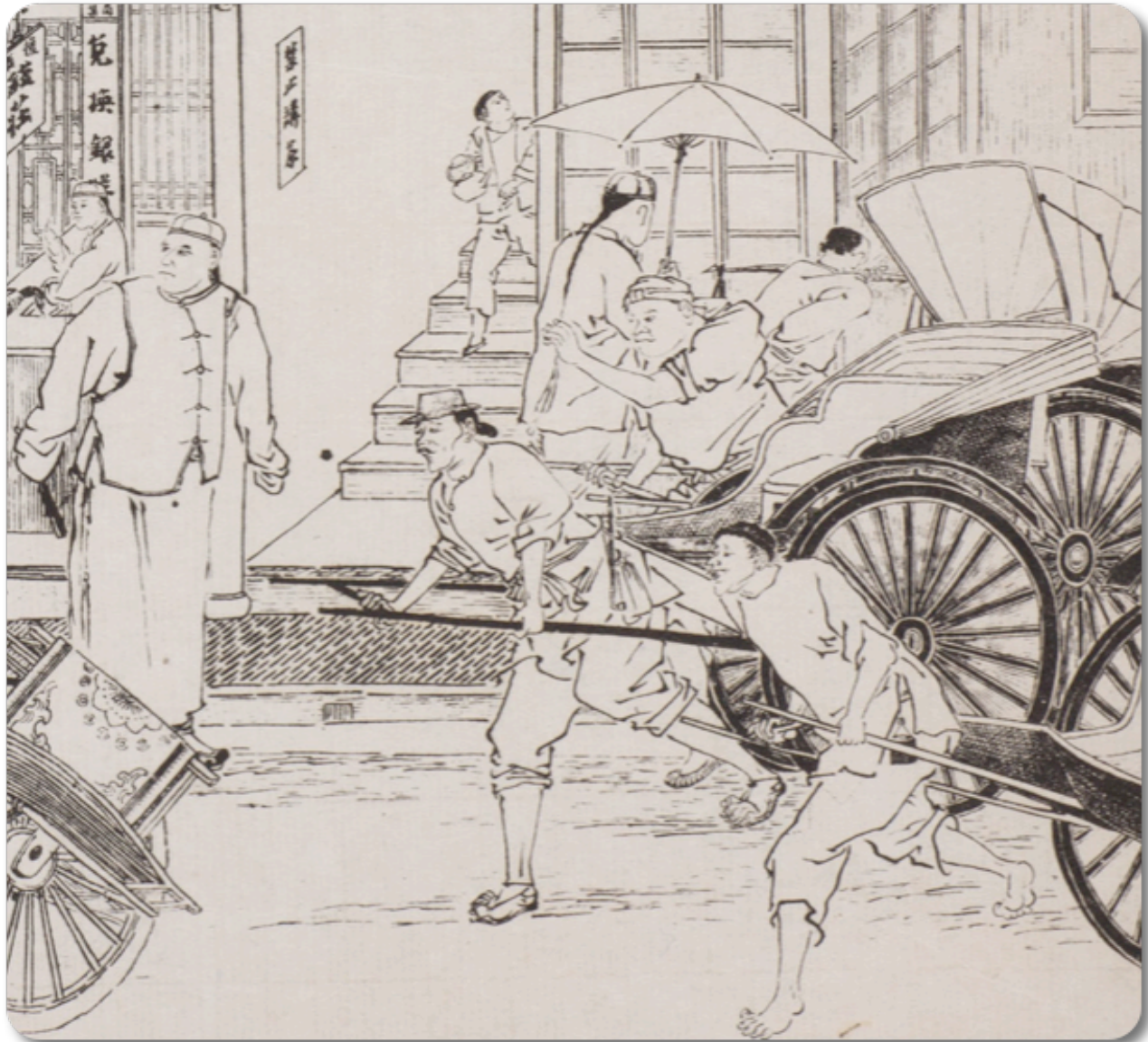


"Unbearable to Recall" 不堪回首

1884 (Vol. 1, p. 30)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

[dz_v01_032]



Rickshaws are not the only East-meets-East element of Shanghai that makes regular appearances in images of the treaty port. Equally noteworthy—and almost equally iconic a part of the Shanghai landscape—is the turbaned Sikh policeman. The police force of the International Settlement was a robustly cosmopolitan one, with Chinese constables, British supervisors, and members of different nationalities. Included in its ranks were Sikhs, who were sometimes shown keeping Chinese from entering areas set aside for Western use, patrolling streets that had Western-style buildings, keeping order in settings that symbolized European or North American presence (such as the Public Garden), and so on. [6]



"Arresting the Sailors" 圍擒水手

1886 jia (Vol. 8, p. 5)

artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 1.029 [dz_v08_007]



Both of the city myths explored here—the “Fishing Village to Great Metropolis” and “Place Where China-Meets-the-West”—took hold late in the 1800s and have persisted to the present. They have gained added force in recent years, as Shanghai has once again undergone dramatic expansion and transformation. Still, as visual evidence underscores, both city myths distort as well as reveal important things about Shanghai in the era of the *Dianshizhai*. And it is worth keeping in mind that Shanghai’s reglobalization in recent decades has been, like its first globalization back then, more than just a tale of “China-Meeting-the-West”. What was until very recently the tallest building in Pudong, the newest locale of Shanghai urban expansion, was financed largely by Japanese money. And while there are plenty of places to drink Western-style coffee in Shanghai, there are even more places that feature Karaoke, just one of the many East-Meets-East imports that are shaping the 21st century metropolis. [8]

Shanghai's Lens on the New(s)—1

Dianshizhai Pictorial (1884-1898)

by Jeffrey Wasserstrom & Rebecca Nedostup

Picture Windows

Shanghai Myths

Machines in the City

Drama & the City

Sources & Credits

MACHINES IN THE CITY

Jeffrey Wasserstrom

Balloons, Trains, & Horse-Drawn Coaches: The *Dianshizhai* & Jules Verne

The era of the *Dianshizhai* was, in some ways, an era much like our own. It was a time of rapid technological changes, which generated a mixture of excitement and worry, linked to issues such as increases in speed and potential for violence associated with novel machines and devices.

More specifically, the second half of the 19th century was a period, like the last five decades have been, when the creation or increased use of novel machines dramatically altered such fundamental aspects of life as the way people communicated, traveled, fought wars, and recorded and shared things that they were doing. Much that has been said about the Internet was once said about the telegraph, which in its early years was also called a technology that “annihilated time and space” in exhilarating ways. The notion that drones depersonalize killing has parallels in commentaries on armed gunboats and Gatling guns.

The way that the transformative effects of new jet-plane routes and freeways have been discussed echoes much that was once said of balloons that could cross vast expanses of land without touching down—and of long distance trains, that could take passengers and freight further and faster than previously had been imaginable. The thrill and mystery of capturing the look of events on video cameras had a precedent then in the fascination with the first cameras. And so on.

The wondrous machines of the 19th century did not always make it to China immediately, but when they did arrive, it was often to Shanghai; and Shanghai publications played crucial roles in spreading news of them even before they arrived.

Before zeroing in on Shanghai as a point of arrival for new machines and a center for publications describing and portraying them, it is worth asking two questions. First, how were visions of technological breakthroughs disseminated in the West? And what links or parallels can be drawn between these modes of dissemination and the ways that Chinese audiences might have been exposed to the same news? Many residents of even the most prosperous and technologically advanced parts of Western Europe and North America only had limited direct experience of some of the latest technological marvels. How did they learn about such developments in an era that predated not only the Web but also television?

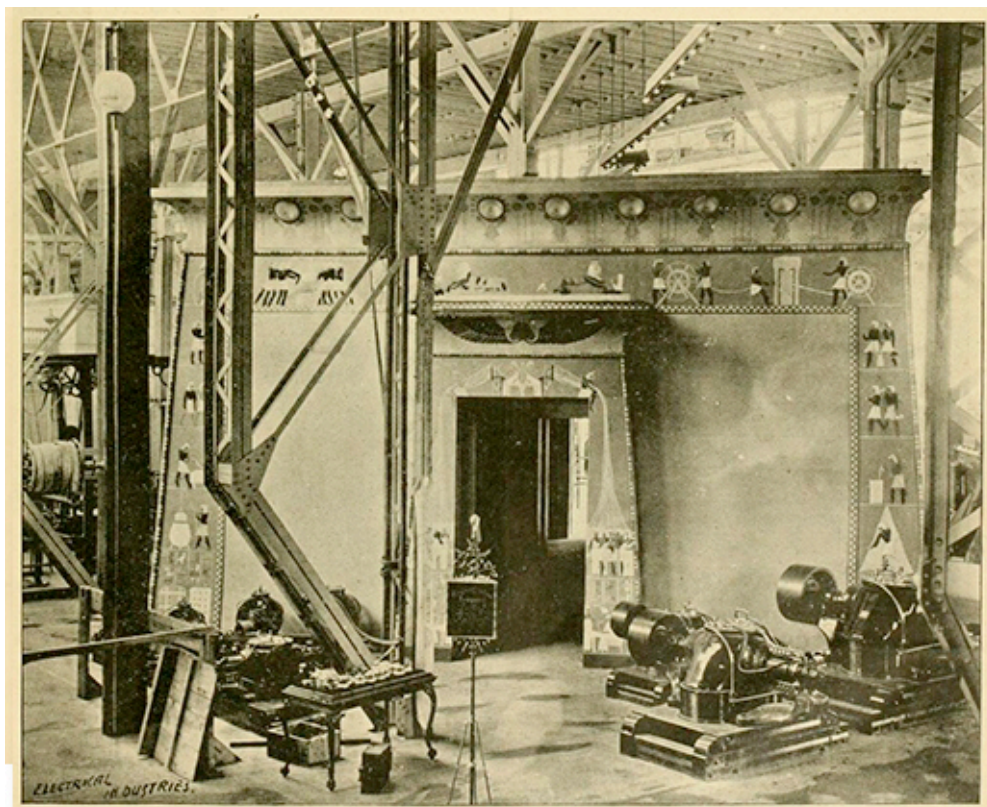
One way was by visiting World's Fairs, such as the great Crystal Palace show of 1851, the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, and the various Parisian Universal Expositions, such as the 1881 one for which the Eiffel Tower was built. These were the most important mass events of the time. They routinely included displays of everything from massive artillery pieces to less martial kinds of inventions, with photography and the first films gaining broad audiences at events of this kind. Millions of people visited the largest of these fairs—and many more went to smaller local version of them. Failing even that, they at least saw line drawings of their displays in newspapers, magazines, or richly illustrated catalogues and guides to the fairs. The latter served the function of virtual visitation of a site now provided by websites and *National Geographic* documentaries. Some of the guidebooks covered entire fairs. Others focused on specific sorts of machines.



Electrical Industries, "Weekly World's Fair Supplement,"
Chicago, June 15, 1893
(detail below)

Source: [OpenLibrary.org \[view\]](https://openlibrary.org/view/72037)

[dz507]



China did not host a World's Fair until 2010, by which time these events were typically called "World Expos" and were generally seen as less important global gatherings than the Olympics. Illustrated guides to European and North American World's Fairs do not seem to have circulated in Shanghai in the era of the *Dianshizhai*. Still, there is an "old Shanghai" side to the World's Fair dissemination story in the form of *A New Account of a Trip Around the Globe*, an 1878 book published in Shanghai that recounts the travels of Li Gui, who began and ended his world tour from that city.

Li's book, [1] which has been ably translated by Charles Desnoyers, is filled with descriptions of the "advances and novelties" he saw in various distant lands. His journey included stops at the then-state-of-the-art London telegraph office and trips on awe-inspiring routes such as the just-opened American transcontinental railroad, but he was most struck by the technologies he observed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. The main goal of his global circuit was to observe the displays of this early World's Fair—the first ever held outside of Europe, and the largest to date. Recounting his response to the Centennial Exhibition, Li was awestruck; its display of "machinery was immense," with "so many" devices that it "was impossible to count" them all.

In ways that presage some writings now about computers, Li wrote of feeling that he was living in a new kind of age, when there "is now probably nothing done without the aid of machines. That which creates the machine is a machine; that which drives the machine is also a machine. To this one must now proclaim the state of the cosmos to be that of one vast machine." (p. 118)

Another way that people in the West learned of this new age of mechanical marvels was by seeing them portrayed in the pages of periodicals such as the *Illustrated London News*. This periodical's influence on the *Dianshizhai* has already been noted, so nothing more will be said about it now. Additionally, information also circulated via fiction—most influentially through the enormously popular novels of Jules Verne.

Perhaps no single individual did more to spread word of novel inventions and to depict their exhilarating and dangerous aspects than Verne. His best known works—such as *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1869), and *A Journey from the Earth to the Moon* (1865)—sold briskly not only in French but also in English and other translations. They dealt with machines already in existence (trains, steamships, etc.) as well as ones that seemed likely to be created soon (rockets, for example). This was true also of many of his lesser known works, such as *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863) and *Tribulations of a Chinese Gentleman* (1879). (Although balloon travel is featured in the film version of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, it does not figure in the original novel.)

Tribulations of a Chinese Gentleman is Verne's Shanghai. The protagonist in this novel, an unusually progressive Chinese man, is an avid early adopter of the latest devices being developed in the West—intensely interested in "boats of great speed," lighting his house with gas, and setting up telephone communication between the different rooms in his home (see especially page 50).

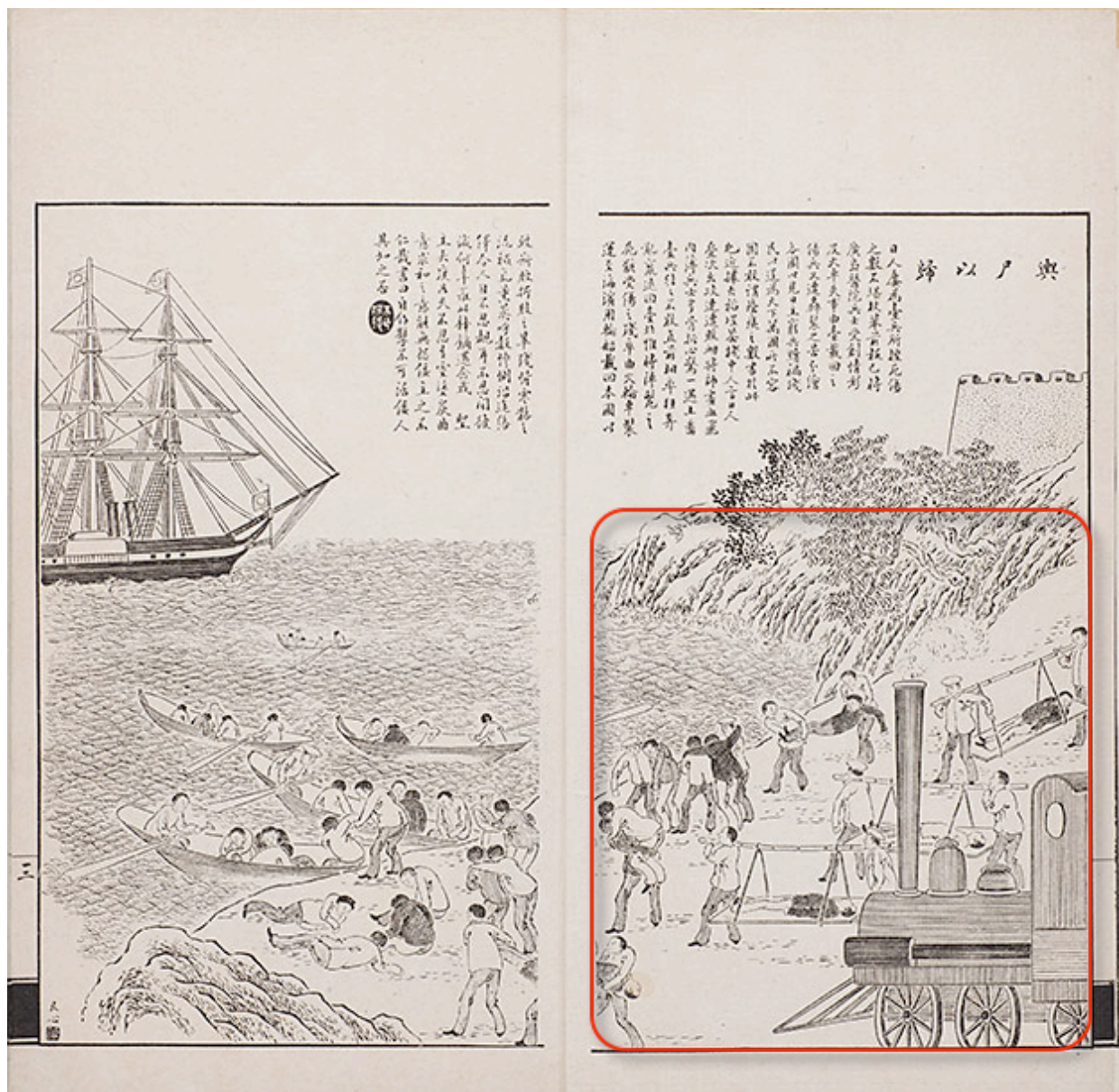
Les Tribulations d'un Chinois en Chine,
published 1879, selected pages from 56
illustrations by Léon Benett

Image source:
The Illustrated Jules Verne website
[view]



By the early 1900s, Verne's works would begin to shape Chinese understandings of the excitement and terrors of modernity. For example, the first major work by China's most influential 20th-century literary figure, Lu Xun, was a translation of *A Journey from the Earth to the Moon*. Though now not as widely read as *Around the World in Eighty Days*, this was a particularly interesting work in terms of already-extant as well as not-yet-created technologies. It reminds us of how connected breakthroughs in travel and in weaponry sometimes were. The author assumes Americans will reach the moon first, since the development of rockets will follow on the heels of the advanced guns that Americans had shown skill in creating during the country's bloody Civil War.

In the late 1800s, though, before Verne's works made their mark on China, the *Dianshizhai* arguably played a role in China comparable to that Verne's novels played in the West. Its illustrations often showed people using new machines to do various things, including get from place to place in novel ways for peaceful or warlike reasons. These images sometimes depicted parts of the world other than China, such as Japan, where many new machines made inroads before reaching the Chinese mainland. One such graphic, for example, depicts a train in Japan waiting to transport soldiers returning from combat in Taiwan, where many were wounded.



"Bringing Back Bodies on Carts"

興屍以歸

1884 jia (Vol. 15, p. 3)

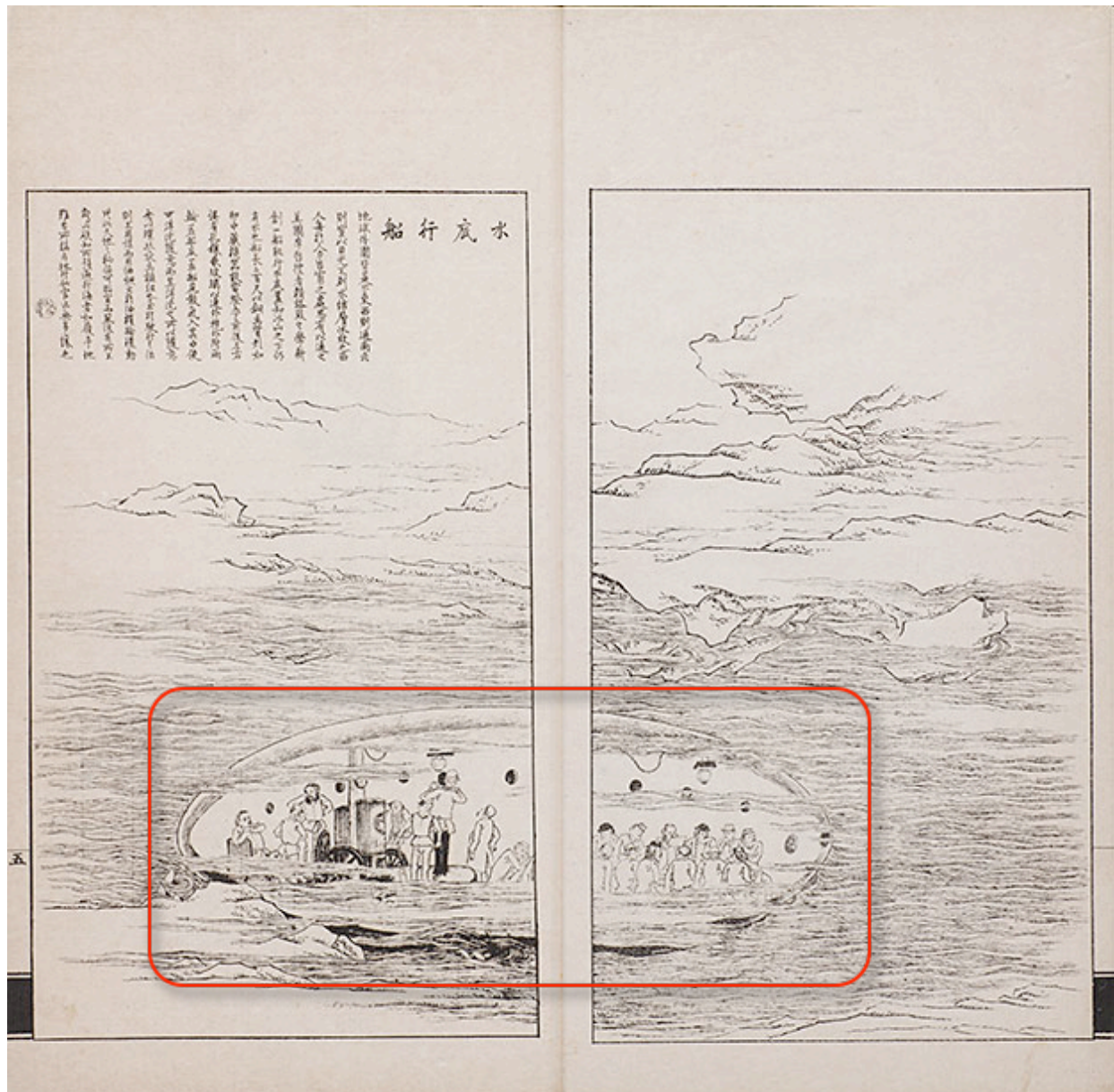
Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 15.004 [dz_v15_004]



More often, though, the *Dianshizhai*'s objects of fascination were already in China, most often Shanghai. This comes through clearly in Ye Xiaoqing's book, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life 1884-1898*, which is filled with discussion of the attention paid to a variety of technological imports that were transforming ordinary life, such as big outdoor clocks (pp. 72-74) and gas and electric lighting (pp. 53-57—portrayed as something that brought both improvements and dangers), or showing up to offer special kinds of adrenalin-boosting diversions (for instance, the roller coaster that is portrayed on page 90).

There are several notable parallels between presentation of new technologies in Verne's novels and the *Dianshizhai*. One is simply that some of the same vehicles and other machines show up in each text, likely providing some readers with the first descriptions and also, perhaps, their first visual representations of them. Trains, balloons, and submarines—all are featured in Verne's works of fiction and in the *Dianshizhai*.

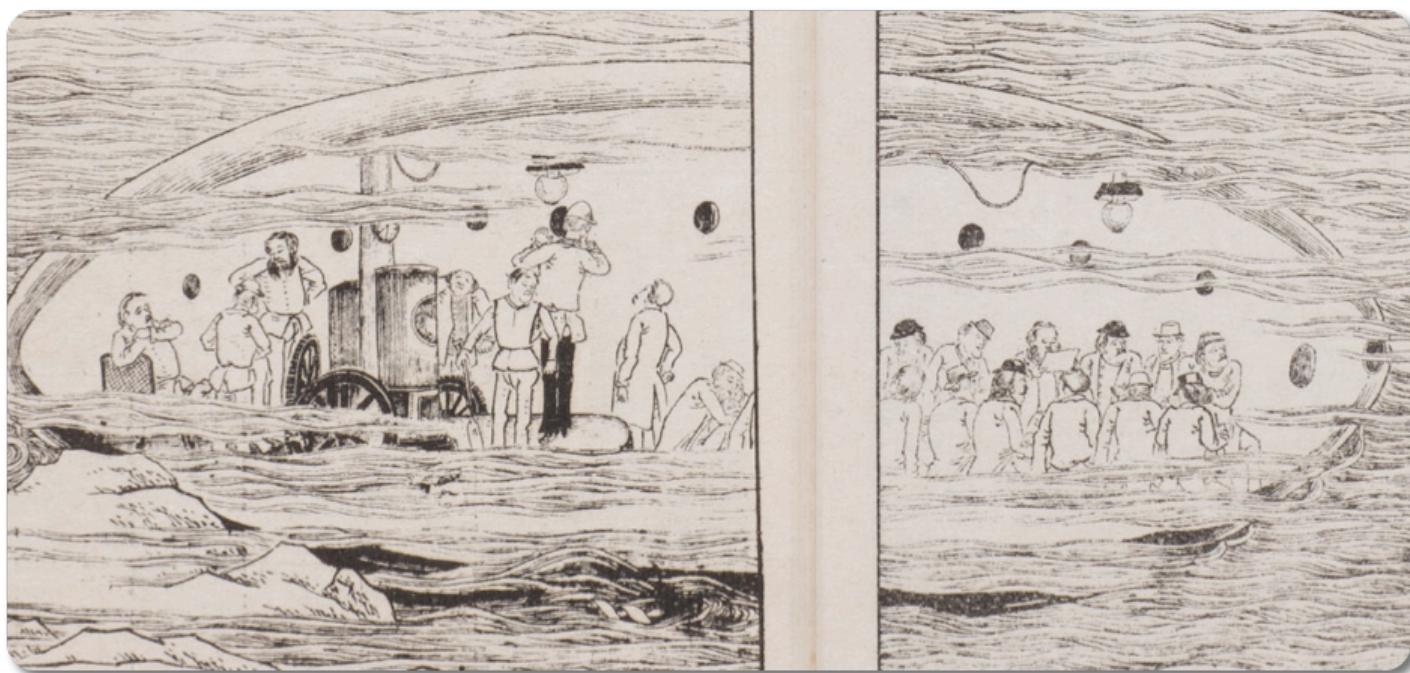


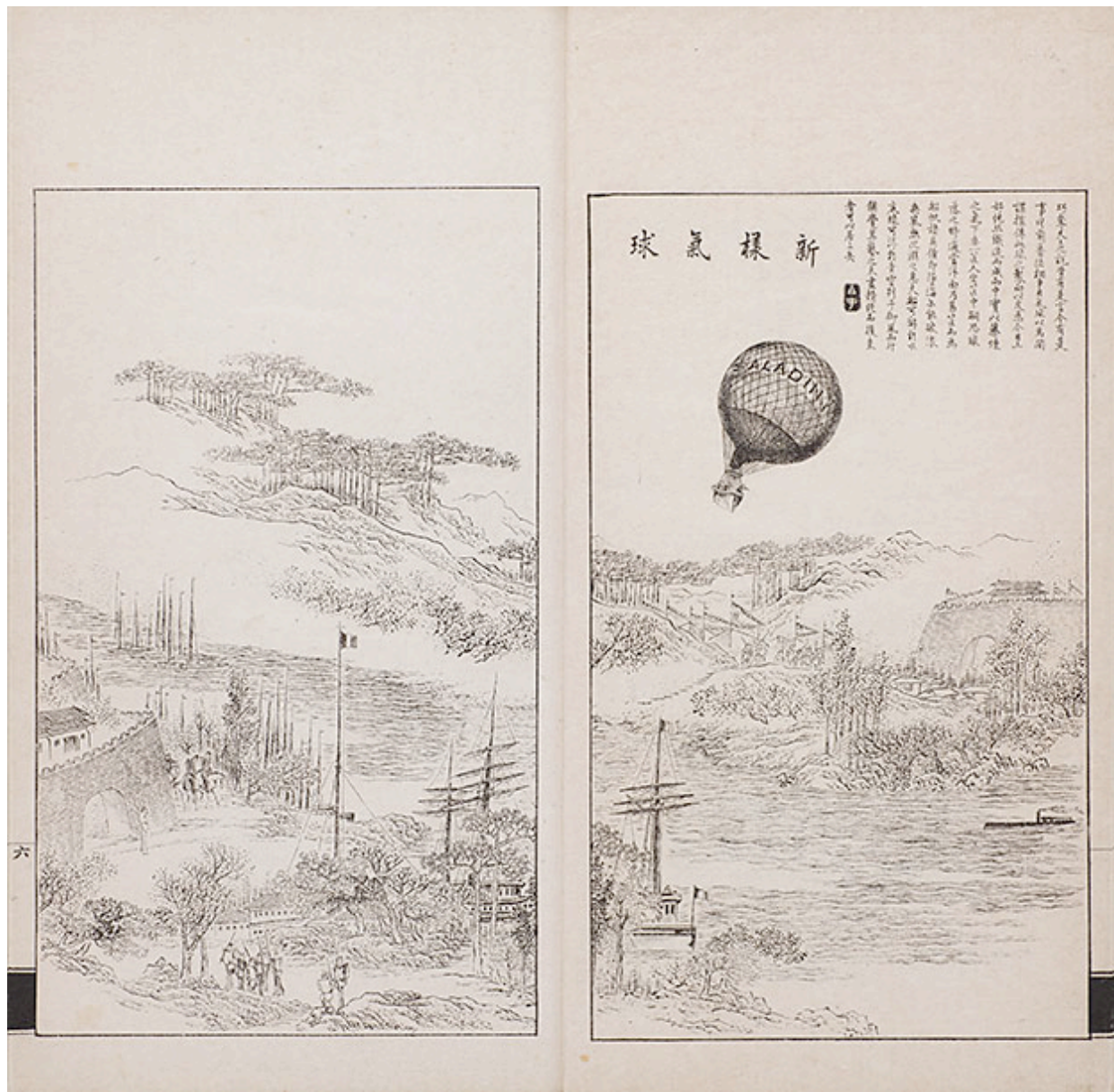
"A Submarine" 水底行船

1884 (Vol 1, p. 5)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 1.007 [dz_v01_007]





"A New Type of Balloon"

新樣氣球

1884 (Vol. 1, p.6)

Roman letters on the balloon read "Saladin," and passengers appear to be surveying Chinese fortifications. Ships and a fort in the foreground display French flags. What looks like a small steam ship or an ironclad steams up the river between the two camps.

Yale 1.008 [dz_v01_008]

Translated caption:

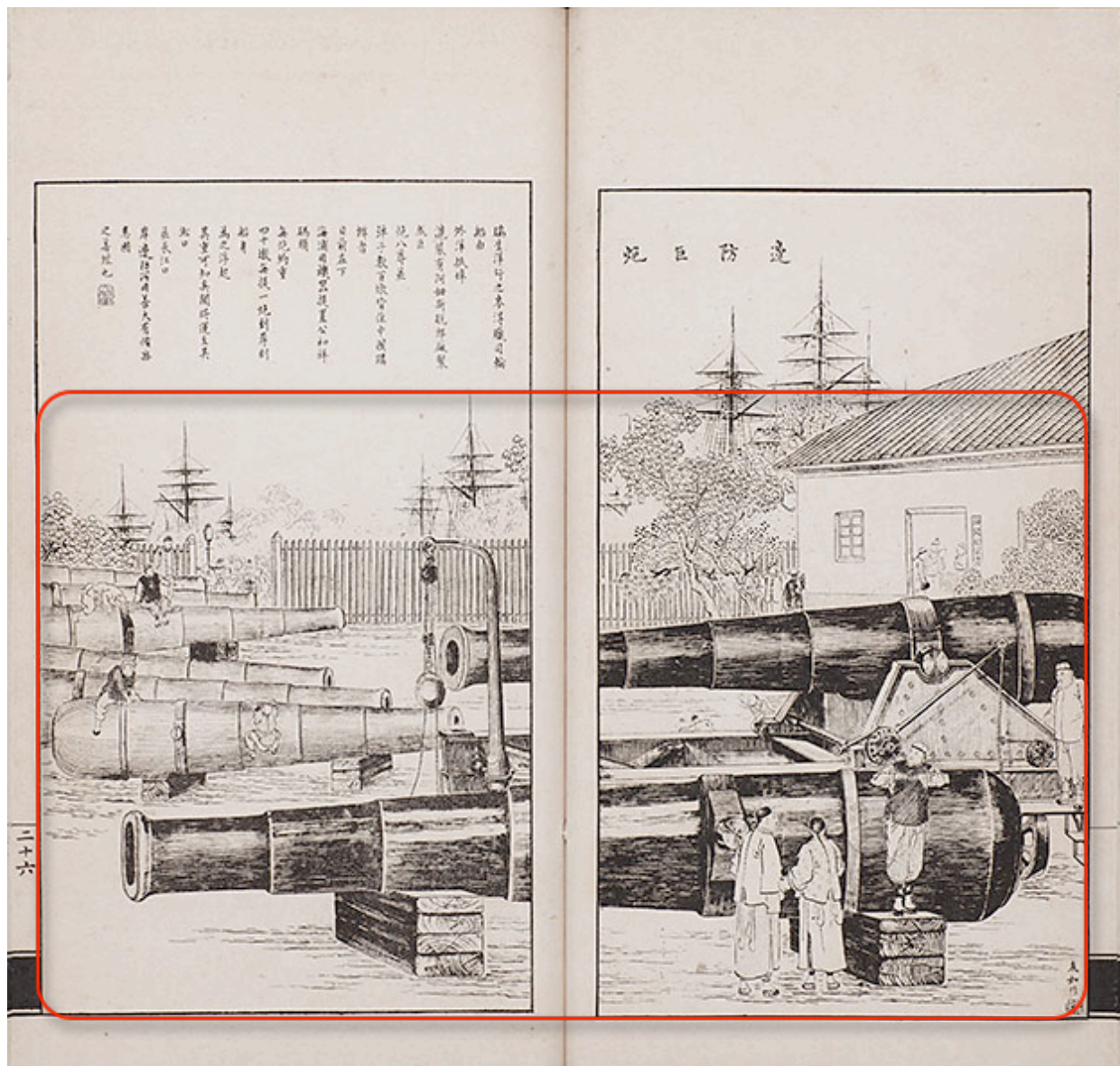
"A new type of balloon.

Although 'superb craftsmanship' remained no more than a proverb in the past, it has been achieved nowadays. During the Franco-Prussian War, balloons were employed for spying. While balloons used to be made of leather, this type of balloon, reportedly, is instead composed of superior woven silk..."

Following page: detail



A second parallel involves the tendency for new machines to be introduced with enthusiasm, but also with nods to the risks that come with them and the connections they often have with warfare or violence of some kind. In the *Dianshizhai* as in some of Verne's work (and in the displays of massive artillery pieces in World's Fairs of the time), the violent side of the era is obvious. Images show weaponry either being deployed or simply being ogled at, as in an illustration depicting large cannons being climbed on as well as looked at by curious Chinese.



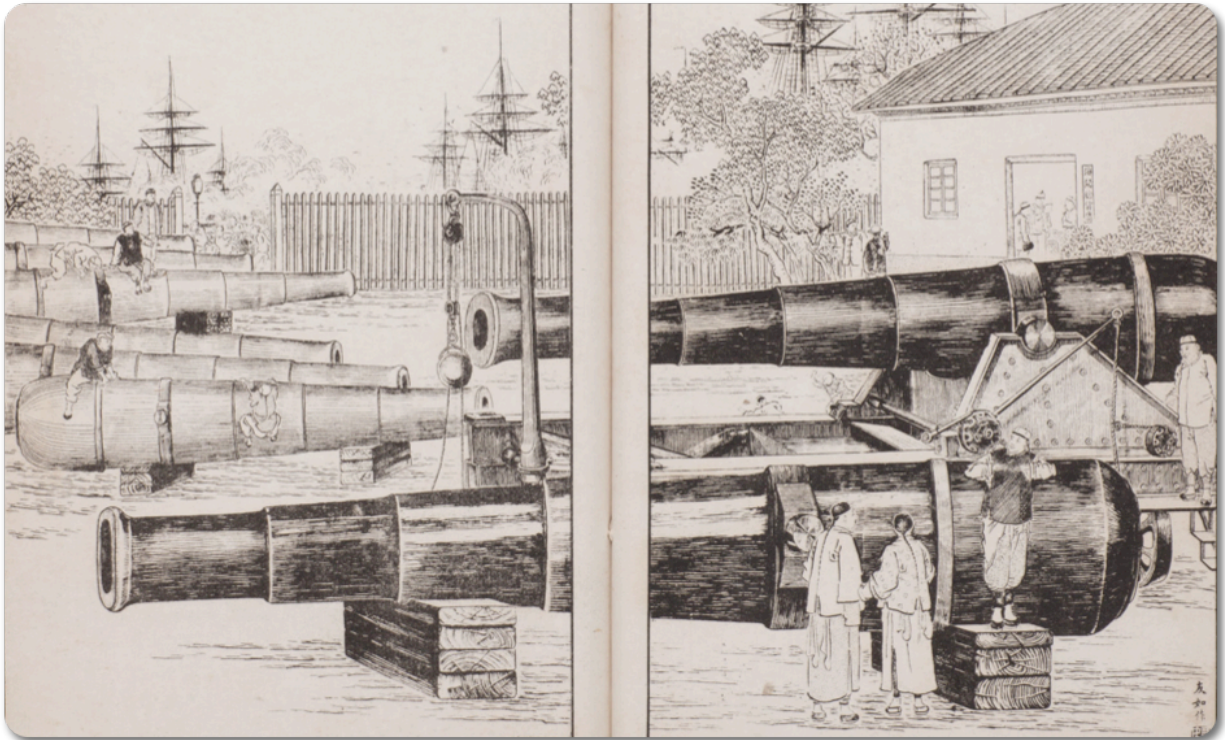
"Enormous Cannons for Frontier Defense"

邊防巨炮

1886 jia (Vol. 7, p. 26)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 7.027 [dz_v07_027]



Translated caption:

“Enormous Cannons for Frontier Defense.

Eight enormous cannons made in Armstrong and several hundred piles of bullets, all purchased by China, are loaded on J. J. Buchheister & Co.'s vessel *Madras*, which has just arrived in Shanghai from abroad. Lately, the weaponry has been unloaded on Xiahai beach and stored on the wharf of Gonghexiang. One cannon weights about 40 tons (?), and one would realize how heavy it is by the fact that the hull rose a little after each cannon was unloaded ashore. It is reported that these cannons will be transported to the Wusong port as well as other ports of the Yangzi River for the purpose of frontier defense. Good work! To prepare beforehand is a sign of effective government.

Translation by Flora Shao

We find the same sort of scenes in Western photos such as the following, depicting visitors to an 1893 exhibition of Krupp artillery.

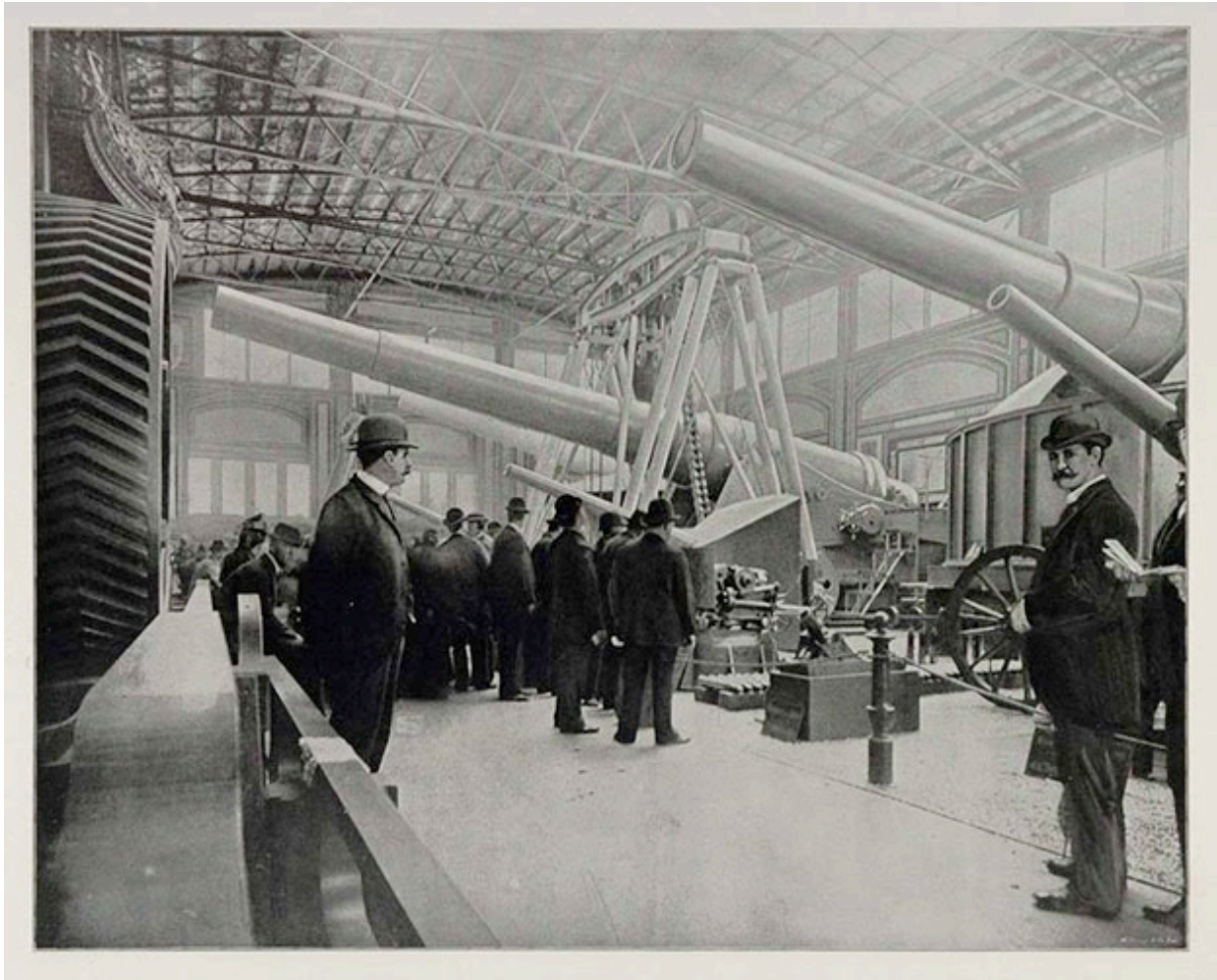


Exhibit of Krupp's Guns at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893

[dz511]

The same exhibition of ominous new weaponry is to be found in a *Dianshizhai* depiction of a machine gun (literally here a "magic quick gun") displayed in a Chinese garden:



"A Magic Quick Gun"

快枪述奇

ca. 1891 jin (Vol. 23, p. 2)

Yale 23.003 [dz_v23_003]

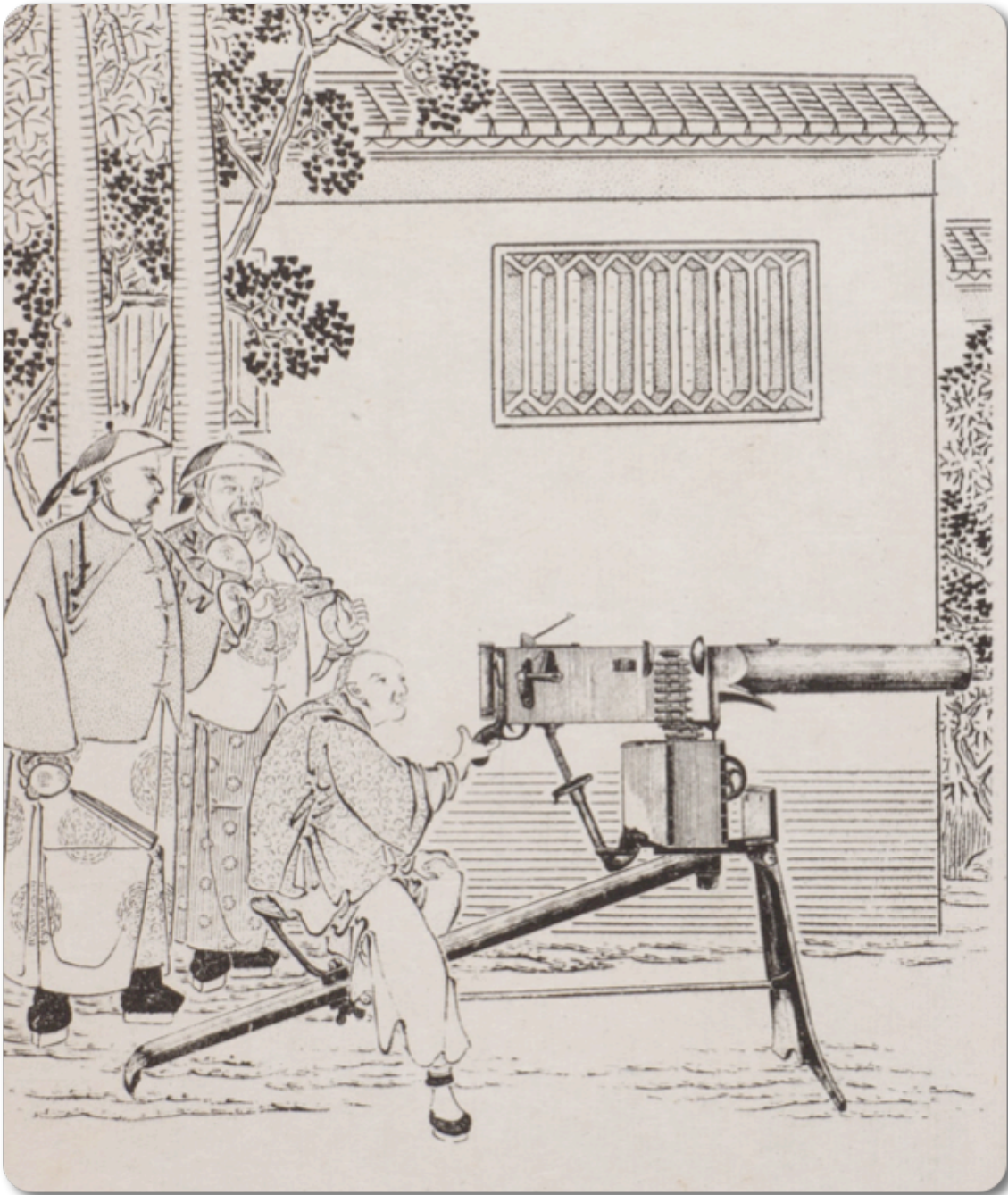
Translated caption:

"A magic quick gun.

The engineering bureau is located outside the south gate of Jinling, and Guo Yuelou, the circuit intendant, serves as its chief and Xu Zhonghu, another circuit intendant, the associate chief. Tang Lütang, the foreman in the bureau, is a man of extreme meticulousness and, with his hair turning grey while not yet in his thirties, is addressed by everyone as 'Mr. Tang the white head.' All the instruments he made are so innovative and convenient that they are beyond comparison. The year before last, he showed his ingenuity again by making a quick gun..."

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Translation by Alex Wang

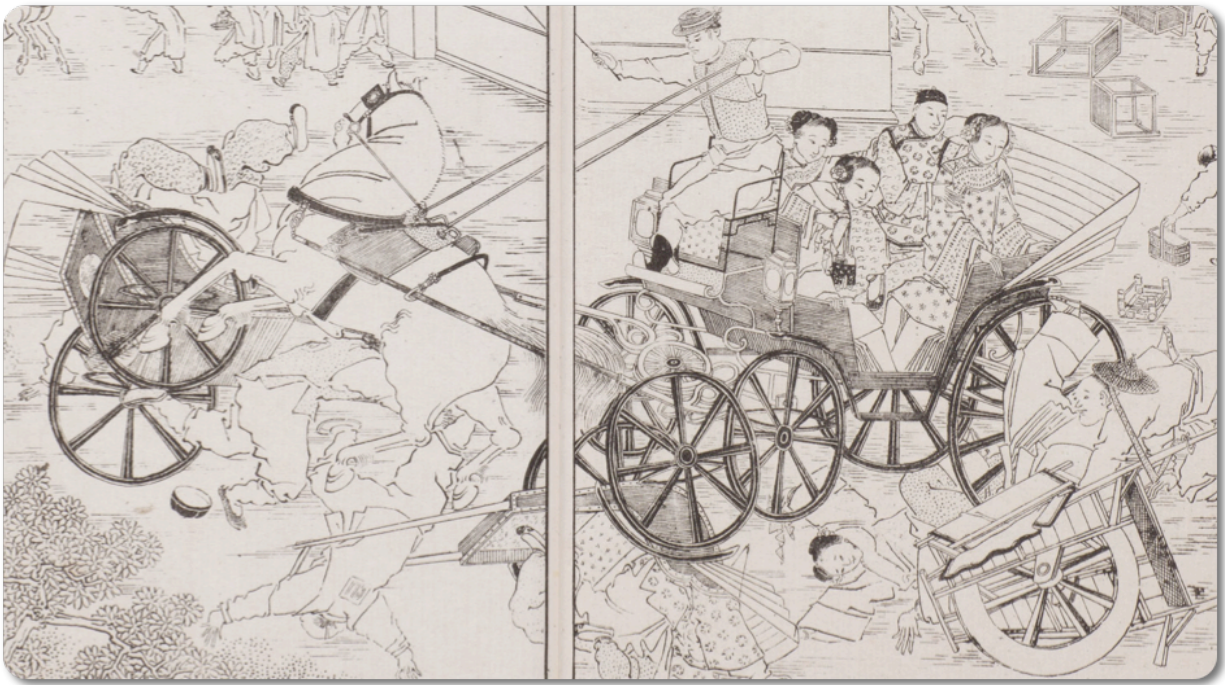


In the case of *Dianshizhai*, the risk factor of modern marvels is also sometimes tied to the uneasy relationship between old and new conveyances, as well as to the dangers of recently imported ones. There are many images of horse-drawn coaches or rikishaws being involved in accidents, for example.



"Inferior Horse Hurts People" 驚馬傷人
1885 ding (Vol. 6, p. 6)

Yale 6.008 [dz_v06_008]



Translated caption:

“Inferior Horse Hurts People

Northwest of Shanghai is Xujiahui, where Temple Jing'an is located. Every year on the eighth day of the fourth month, the temple's monks hold a celebration of the Buddha's Birthday Festival with grandiose platforms for Buddhist preaching. Numberless men and women come to pay their respect to the Buddha by burning incense. ...”

Translation by Alex Wang

Dangers may come with the modern world portrayed by Jules Verne and by the *Dianshizhai*, but excitement often trumps anxiety in both. Sympathy lies with those who are ready to embrace foolishly new technologies, even if cautiously and warily. This is the prevailing message in works by Verne such as *Around the World in Eighty Days* and in texts like that accompanying the graphic of a train (shown previously in chapter 2):



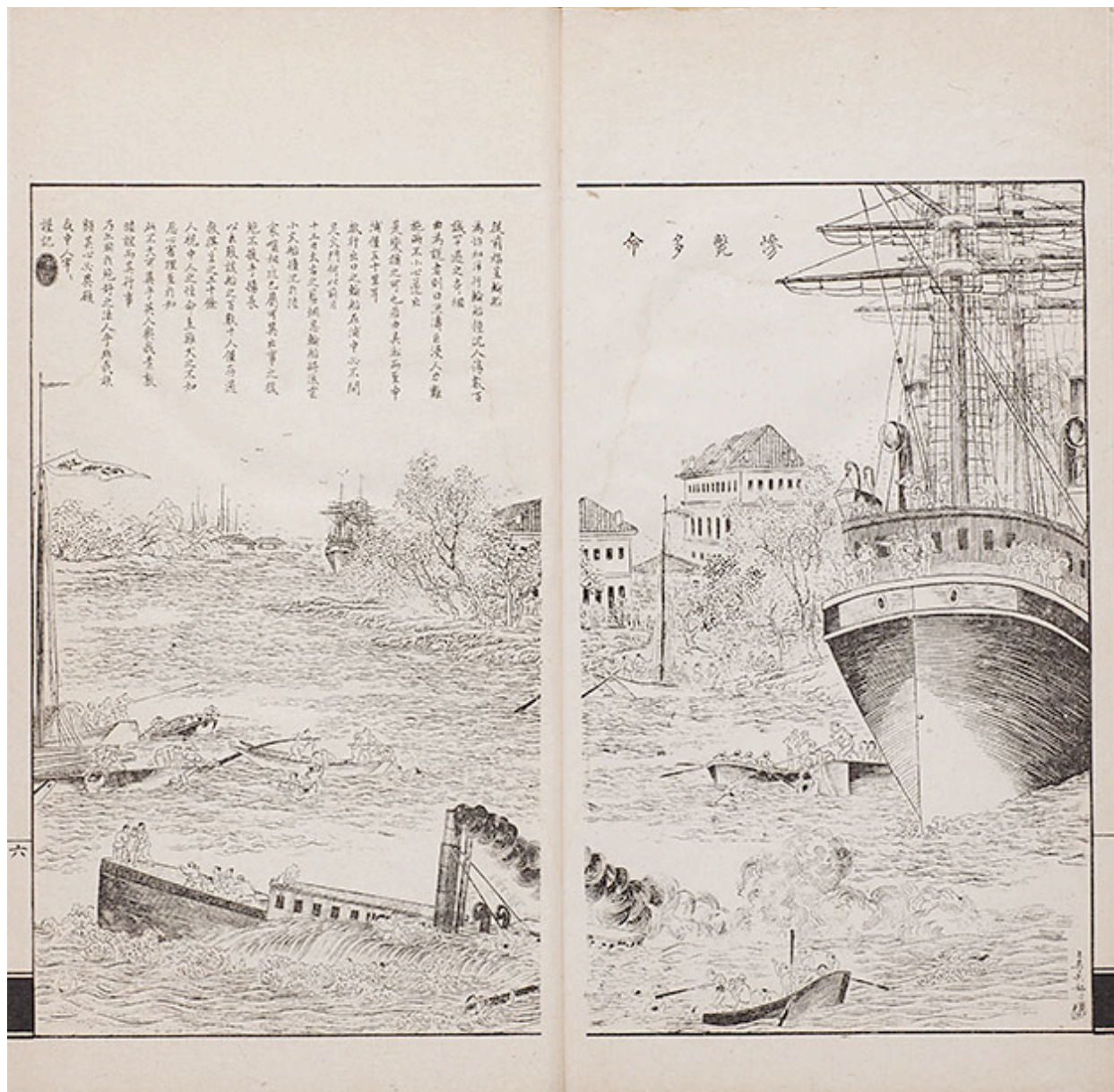
"...With their gradual promotion in other provinces, railways, like electric wires leading everywhere, will eventually run through the whole land without obstacles. I cannot help looking forward to the arrival of that day."

"Launching the Railway"
興辦鐵路
1884 (Vol. 2, p. 46)

[View caption & English translation]

Yale 2.048 [dz_v02_048]

Additional images include two more images of conveyances, a second image linking trains to danger and one linking ships to danger.

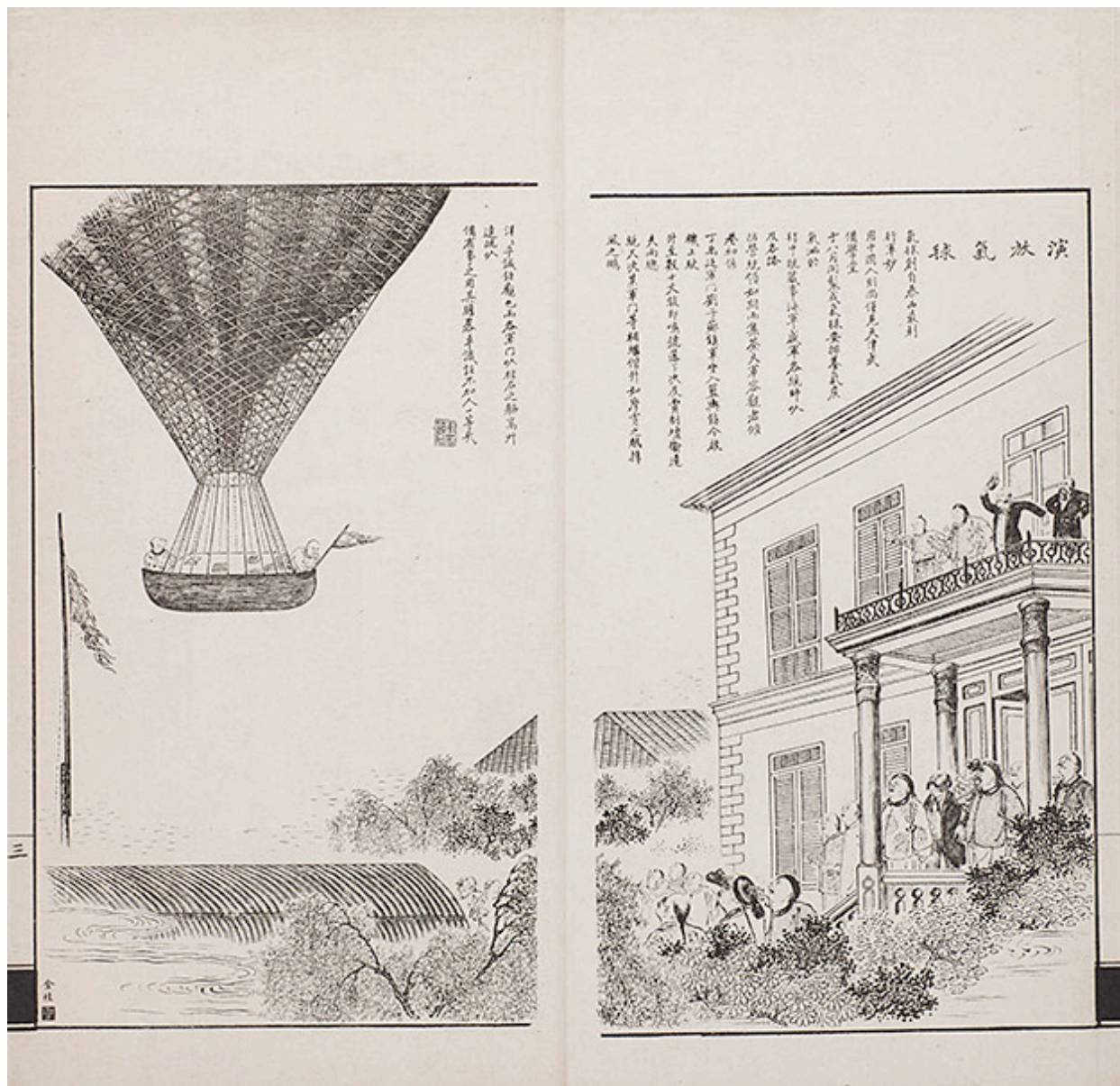


"Many Lives Brutally Lost" 慘斃多命

ca. 1885 ding (Vol 5, p. 6)

Yale 5.007 [dz_v05_007]

Other images remind us that sometimes smooth-working and non-threatening machines do new things, as in the image of the train above, another of scuba diving, and one of a balloon. *Dianshizhai* offers a show of conveyances either mixed with danger or offering some of those 80 ways of getting around and exploring the world via novel means.



“Launching the Balloon” 演放气球
1889 wei (Vol. 13, p. 3)

Yale 13.004 [dz_v13_004]

Shanghai's Lens on the New(s)—1

Dianshizhai Pictorial (1884-1898)

by Jeffrey Wasserstrom & Rebecca Nedostup

Picture Windows

Shanghai Myths

Machines in the City

Drama & the City

Sources & Credits

DRAMA AND THE CITY

Rebecca Nedostup

Two iconic artists, two arresting images, two ways of depicting drama for the eyes of the late-19th-century Shanghai public: Wu Youru puts one of his beloved Western sailing ships in the company of a dragon, marrying the marvel of new technology to the spectacle of the numinously powerful; and Jin Chanxiang, artist of social detail and the ladies' quarters, uses the story of a monk misbehaving in the pleasure districts of Shanghai as a prop for a fabulously detailed rendering of one of the mainstays of entertainment and urban life—the opera theater, with its myriad denizens.

One illustration invites the viewer to draw back in wonder, the other to peer in close and pick out every facial expression, gesture, and implied joke. Beyond the surface, though, both strike at the heart of the epistemological battles of their time.

“Westerners Sight a Dragon”

Wu Youru's illustration invites the viewer to witness a witnessing: proof of the meeting of new and old knowledge, teased in the headline “Westerners Sight a Dragon.” The text sets up the opposition—whereas writing on dragons has been so commonplace in China since ancient times that one barely has to cast a glance at any library to find something on the topic, “later people” have put more value in Westerners and their scientific method as a measure of existence and truth. Yet Western-language newspapers have recently told an account of a steamship off the southern coast of Africa whose crew encountered an enormous whirlpool in a storm, which they reckoned could only have been made by an enormous fish. Some caught a glimpse of a tail that was no less than 20 feet long, and others swore that the body under the roiling waters had to be 100 feet at least. But since they were able to collect no physical proof, no one believed them.



"Westerners Sight a Dragon"

西人見龍

1886 ji (Vol. 8, p. 42)

artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 8.044 [dz_v08_044]



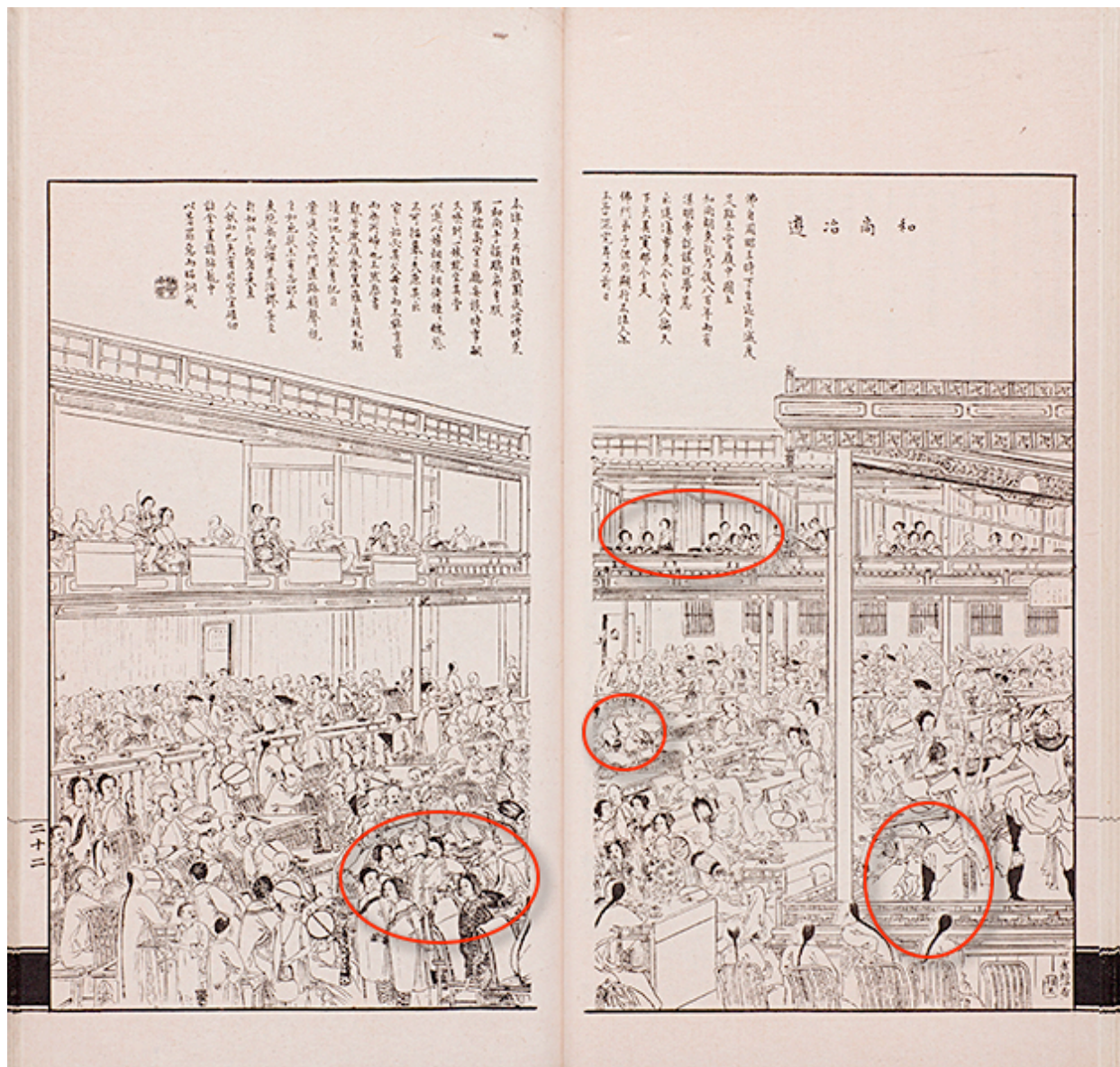
Such a thing would never happen to Chinese people, the *Dianshizhai* writer scoffed, because they would know that such a powerful thing was a dragon, and that a dragon, by its very nature, was shape-shifting and imperceptible in the storm. It is no good to make things out as strange simply because they are unfamiliar, he concluded. In this writing, the encounter was not simply one of man and beast, but of ways of knowing. As Rania Huntington wonderfully writes, it also posits “the seas as a realm of the strange open to both Chinese and Western observers.” [1]

Wu depicts this battle of knowledge systems in visual terms. The powerful dragon in the foreground—so long it cannot be contained in the frame—captures all the drama, and is rendered, along with the waves that surround it, in a style more familiar to those who had visualized dragons through woodblock prints and ink painting. For once one of Wu’s beloved steamships is in the background of the visual story. To this he adds a narrative fillip not in the original account: the Western ship is on the verge of being capsized by this very Chinese-looking dragon in an African sea.

“Monk Engages a Courtesan”

The story that Jin Chanxiang and his writer are telling is quite different, though equally entertaining. The text tells the tale of a monk who made an appearance at the Shanghai's Laodangui Theater and spent the evening playing host to the prostitutes he knew to be found there. While the writer takes this opportunity to launch an attack against the mendacity and untrustworthiness of the country's Buddhist clergy, Jin Chanxiang grabs a chance to provide his audience sheer visual overload.

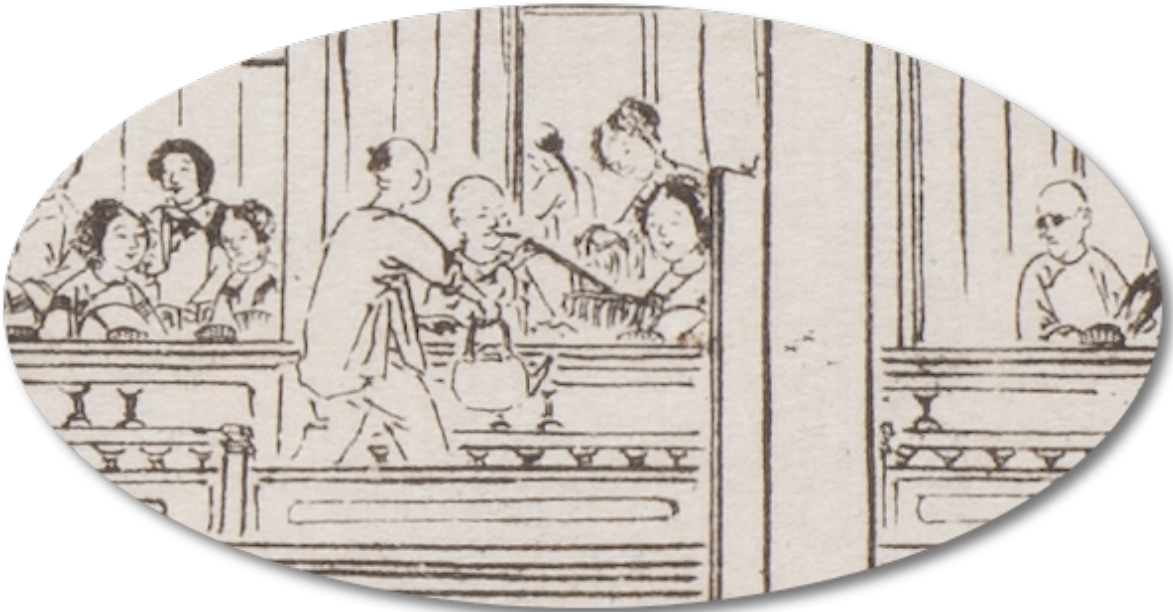
Here near the bottom center, indeed, is the monk surrounded by women, who have in turn attracted another layer of male attention. But we can pick out a wealth of other detail: individualized persons, the relative affluence of the male and female spectators on the second floor gallery, and the onstage action. So although the text reveals a culture war about religion that was being fought partly in the pages of the *Dianshizhai*, audiences unconcerned with this sort of moralizing could revel in the details and drama of the theatergoing urban crowd. [2]



Looking at the rich detail in "Monk Engages a Courtesan" (和尚冶游, 1884 yi, artist Jin Chanxiang), we observe a monk surrounded by women (bottom left); individualized persons such as a man with a beard (middle) and another in the gallery wearing sunglasses (top); the relative affluence of the male and female spectators on the second floor gallery (top); and the onstage action (bottom right).

Following pages: details (highlighted in red)

[dz_v11_023]





The Dramatic and the Strange

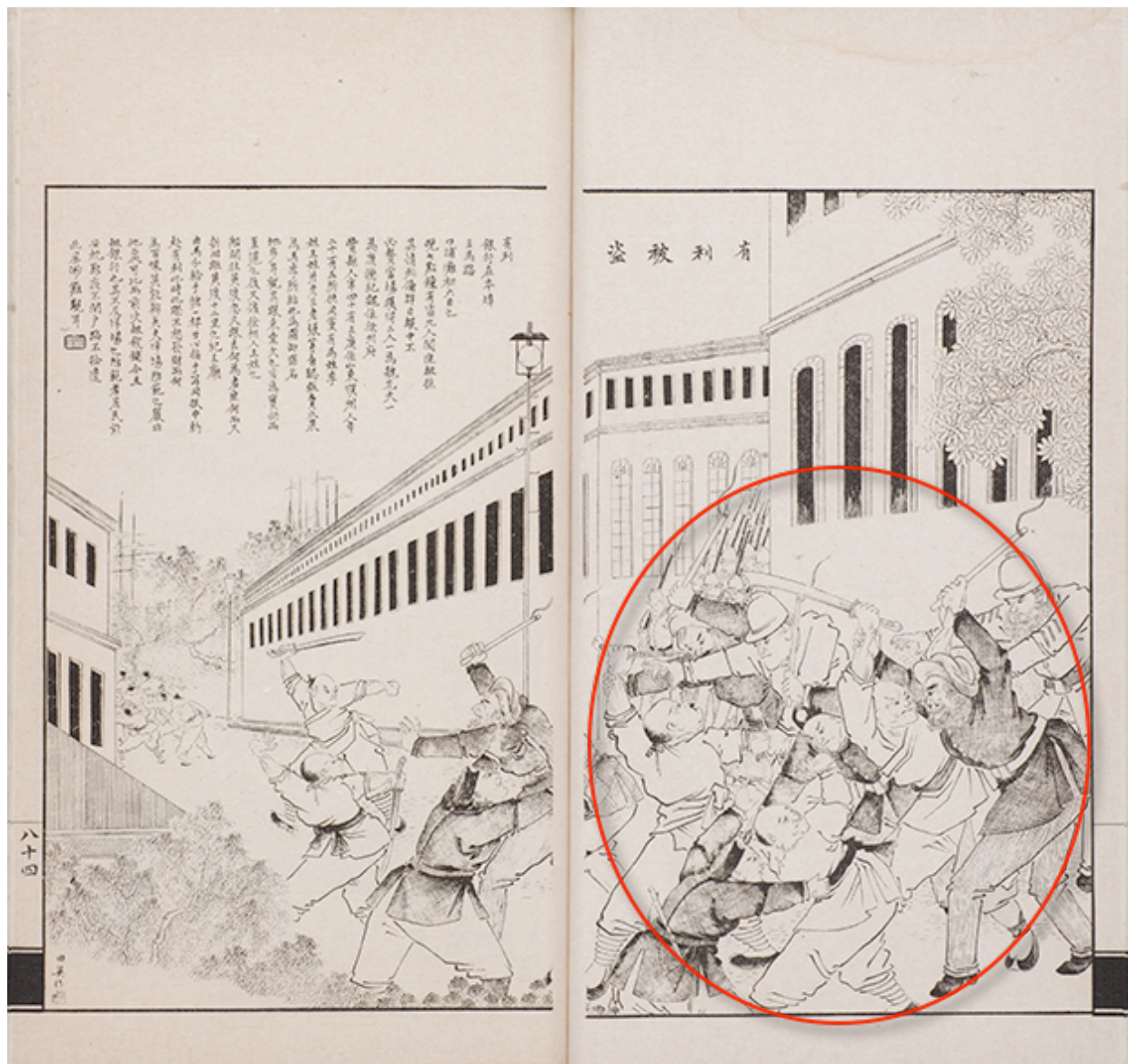
These kind of illustrations built on a narrative genre that would have been familiar to readers and listeners in 19th-century China: the “tale of the strange” (*zhiguai*). Canonized in collectanea like the early Qing writer Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai zhiyi* (*Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*), *zhiguai* tales addressed everything from ghosts, fox spirits, and enlightened beings to the anomalies of the natural world. They remain fertile source material for film, manga, and anime adaptations today.

In a similar fashion, *Dianshizhai* artists and writers saw both how their new medium could depict old stories in a new way, and how they could mold breaking news by melding the sensibility of the *zhiguai* genre with the detailed and shocking visuals of lithography. Rania Huntington notes that as they did in *zhiguai*, stories of the odd and dramatic in the *Dianshizhai* and its parent paper *Shenbao* emerge both to instruct and to give pleasure to the reader. But now these tales encompass the potential strangeness of the entire globe, accompanied by panoramic visualizations on a scale beyond that of the occasional illustrations in *zhiguai* compilations.

Unsurprisingly, strange subjects ranged widely. Artists introduced the curiosities of far-away worlds; not only did they depict the past as well as the present of the West, but they could now render the ancient past of China at a new level of granularity. They pictured and explained oddities from various corners of the Qing empire, and from the coastal networks through which the *Dianshizhai* writers operated. And they used the artistry afforded by the lithograph to depict crimes and other lurid events with great drama and emotion. Thus, like the crowd scenes in previous chapters, the crime scene became a new sub-genre unto itself. It may not have depicted the fantastical on the order of gigantic fish or miniscule humans (both of which appeared in the pages of the *Dianshizhai*), but in sensationalism and entertainment it was their kin. [3]

“Robbery of the Chartered Mercantile Bank”

Thus, in a dramatic story of a robbery of a foreign bank near the Bund, the drawing is all about a vivid battle between the thieves and the multinational police force (British, Sikhs, and Chinese gendarmes). The battle is never mentioned in the text, which concentrates on the motives and guilt of the robbers, and the crime’s implications for the safety of Shanghai’s citizens. The text provides moral arbitration for the benefit of a literati audience. The illustration services those who just want to see a good fight (one in which some of the malefactors even seem to get away).



*"Robbery of the Chartered
Mercantile Bank"*

有利被盜

1886 xin (Vol. 12, p. 36)

artist Tian Yingzuo

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 12.037 [dz_v12_037]

Translated caption:

"The Mercantile Bank is located on Third Road near the Bund. At seven o'clock on the sixth day this month, nine robbers broke into that bank. Our newspaper [i.e. *Shenbao*] has reported the details, which will be omitted here. Two robbers were caught on spot: Wei Huatian and Kang Deji. Wei, forty-three years old, was from Feng county in Xuzhou district, Shandong province; Kang, twenty-five years old, from Pu district, Shandong province. ..."



It was not always the case that the text of *Dianshizhai* stories presented the “facts” and the illustration the “fancy.” Very often the two worked together in a collaboration of imagination and chronicle. Sometimes news items merged with tropes and images from the historical record of China and the world.

“Bronze Figure Bestrides the Strait”

The story is clearly meant to refer to the Statue of Liberty, completed in 1886, indeed after 12 years of labor. But the piece and the illustration were also obviously done in advance of visual evidence of the New York monument, so writer and artist likewise drew upon the Western feat of marine monumentality that was in their reference bank: the Colossus of Rhodes. In order to suit the times, however, artist Jin Gui marries the visual conventions of the Colossus—the figure, standing on plinths, astride a narrows with a ship passing underneath—to indicators that spoke “Western modernity” to Shanghai viewers of the 1880s. The ships are steam vessels; the light resembles an outsize version of the kerosene lamps imported to China in the 19th century; and the Colossus himself sports florid sideburns.



“Bronze Figure Bestrides the Strait”

銅人跨海

ca. 1887 (Vol. 16, p. 2)

artist Jin Gui (Jin Chanxiang)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Translated caption:

“Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty once cast a bronze figure that was higher than the clouds and used a jade plate to hold the dew. Many have doubted the authenticity, or possible exaggerations, of this historical account. Lately, a traveler returning from abroad said that, at the port of Rhodes, there is a bronze figure standing over the strait, and that huge vessels can pass easily between his legs. ...”

Translated by Flora Shao



“‘Intercalary Fish’ Emerges from the Sea”

The fantastical offered an opportunity for oblique comment on politics both local and global. Thus the tale of the “Fish-Bringing Storm” in Tiangang, by the sea near Yancheng, some 200 miles north of Shanghai, conveyed a moral about the *Dianshizhai*’s obsession—marine power. In that place, readers were told, a violent summer storm had churned forth a giant glimmering fish. Artist Tian Ying depicts its fate. The local magistrate has arrived with a retinue in order to ritually mark the occasion (propitiating either the fish itself or the marine deity who produced him amid the storm), while villagers wait with knives and baskets to butcher the beast. One even sharpens his cleaver on a rock.



“‘Intercalary Fish’ Emerges
from the Sea” [4]

閏魚出海

1887 zi (Vol 15, p. 36)

artist Tian Ying

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 15.037 [dz_v15_037]



The text notes that people found the fish to be both tasty and, judging from its bones, very old and coined the localism “fish-bringing storm” to describe the kind of weather that produced it. This was hardly an auspicious development in the author’s eyes. Once was the day, he wrote, when boats would vie with one another to harvest the oceans. Now, he lamented, the dynasty was so weak and power in the seas so reduced that such a kind of monster could grow undisturbed.

Flights of Fancy

Sometimes the curiosities in the pages of *Dianshizhai* were simply wonderful, in all senses of the word. Magical happenings from the past and the present were plucked from the social atmosphere to provide the audience with new marvels along comfortingly familiar lines, and a context in which to place the wonders of new technology. Tales of marvelous animals, for instance, gave *Dianshizhai* illustrators an excuse to spread their wings, showing viewers images of classical creatures they may have only previously encountered in the telling. Flight was an especially evocative way to link the past and the present.

“A Great Beginning (A Flying Roc)”

Here, news of a giant bird sighted in Korea (each single feather so large it took two men to move it) is linked to a tale from the Chinese canon. “Since the bird has no name, [we] will call it Peng,” the author says, referring to the majestic creature whose description so memorably opens the *Zhuangzi*. [5]



“A Great Beginning (A Flying Roc)” 鹏搏

ren 1884 (Vol. 13, p. 45)

artist (Fu) Genxin

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 13.046 [dz_v13_046]

*The headline puns on a well-known phrase, pengtuan, meaning “a great beginning”
but literally deriving from the words “the Peng takes off.”*



“Huge Bird Carries a Man into the Air”

For a story closer to home (this in Zhili province in the north of China), another artist depicts a similar bird in struggle with an intrepid man who dared to investigate the source of strange noises coming from the top of a famous local pagoda.



“Huge Bird Carries a Man
into the Air” 飛鳥牽人

1884 zhen (Vol 6, p. 33)

artist Zhou Muqiao

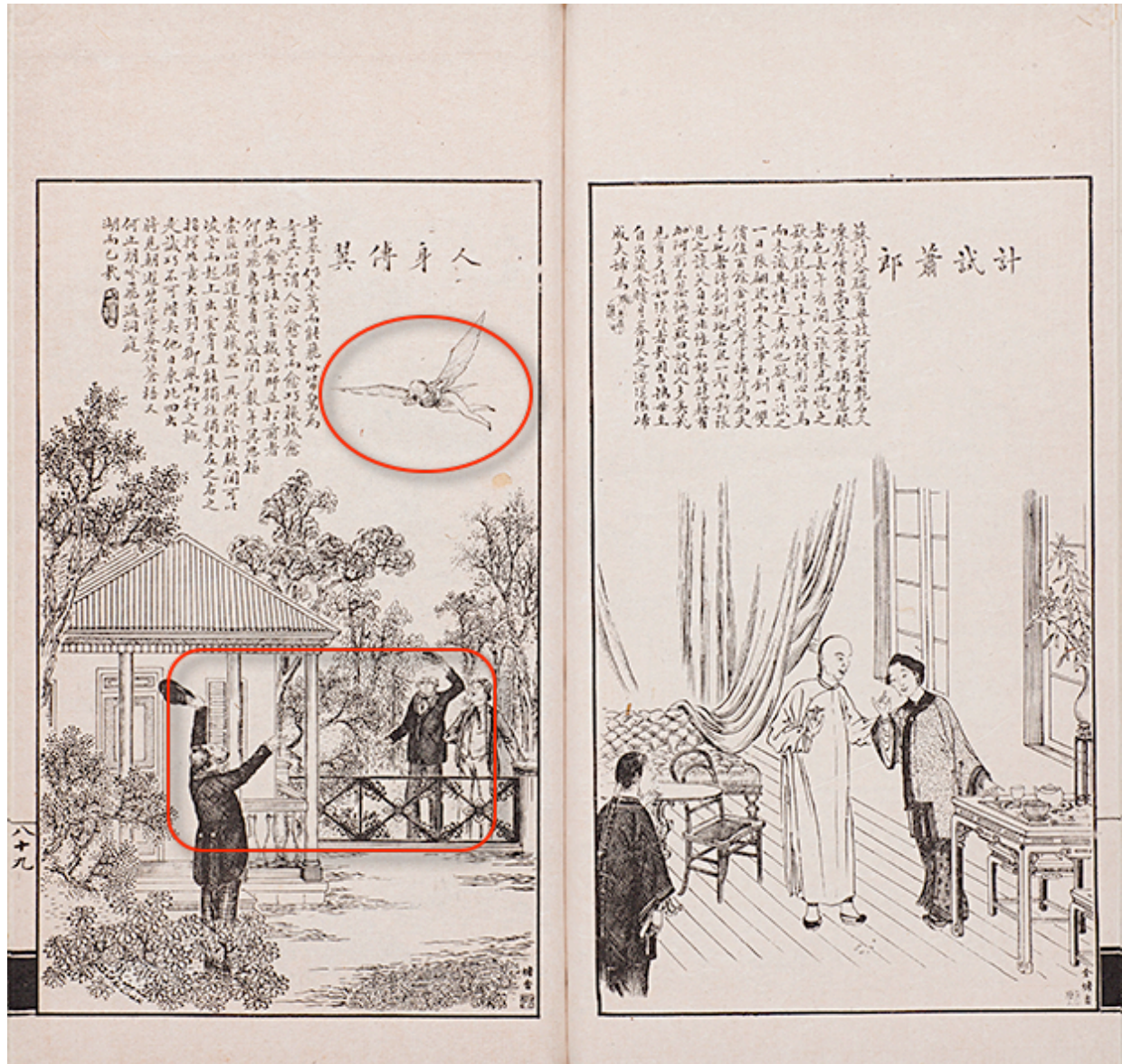
Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 6.034 [dz_v06_034]



“Bird Wings on A Human Body”

Overall, flying was more often wondrous than fearsome in the pages of the *Dianshizhai*, as the image of the transformative Peng attests. In another story, this one about mechanical flight, the writer comments that all the subsequent generations who marveled at Mozi's (ca. 479-381 BCE) reputed invention of an avian automaton and thought it strange “ignored the human spirit,” which would come up with more and more ingenious ways to take to the air.



“Bird Wings on A Human Body”

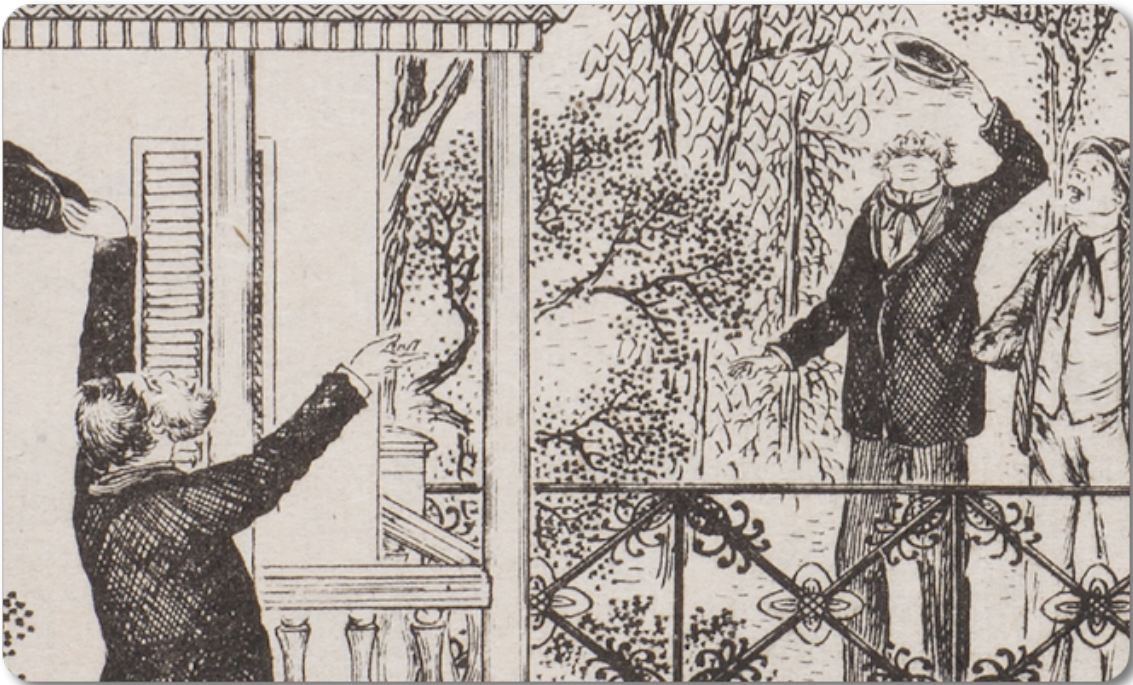
人身傳翼

1891 jin (Vol. 24, p. 41)

artist (Jin) Chanxiang (Jin Gui)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 24.082 [dz_v24_042]

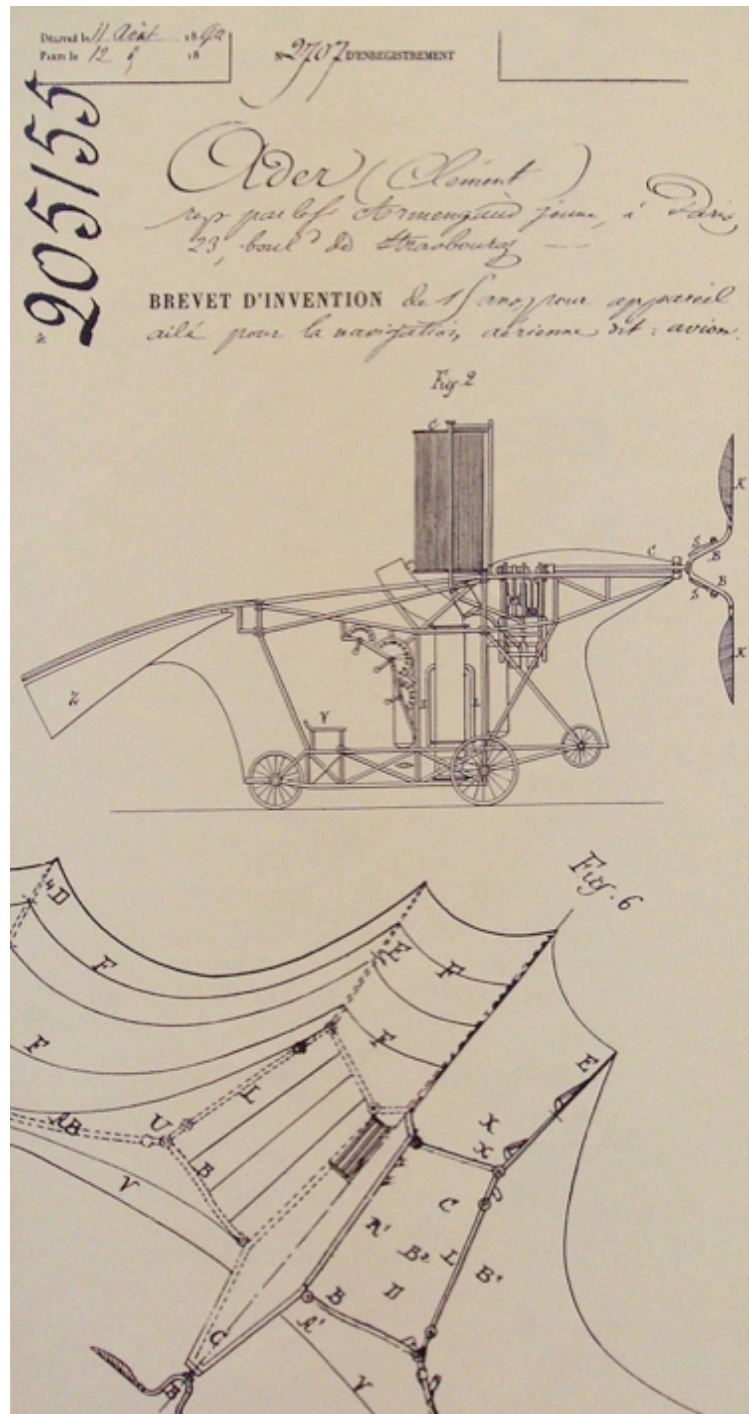


The news item and accompanying illustration describe the exploits of the French inventor Clément Ader (1841-1925). The reference is likely to Ader's 1890 test flight of the "Éole," a steam-driven propeller craft with wings modeled on those of bats. He continued to work on other prototypes, and in 1897 tested the French Navy financed "Avion III," which is today housed in the Musée des Arts et Métiers in Paris.

The thoroughly charming illustration shows the same facility with expressions and emotions that Jin Chanxiang displayed in "Monk Plays the Field," the wonder and excitement of Ader's observers on the ground is met with satisfied calm from the man himself.

Clément Ader
French patent 205155,
Avion (a.k.a. "Éole")
April 19, 1890.

[wikipedia]



Bodily Evidence

"The strange" was a capacious category that permitted worry as well as whimsy; that is what made it such a useful social barometer. The technological and social changes that allowed for the wonders of flight and underwater exploration also demanded dizzying changes in the conception of self all the way down to basic ideas about bodily comportment and the integrity of the human form. *Dianshizhai* authors and artists frequently portrayed cultural shifts in the form of curiosity and caution about the body and bodies in stories about medical innovation, strange humanoids, and the proper treatment of the dead.

Often these expressed the nascent debate between Western biomedicine and Chinese medical theories and treatments. In essence, what we receive through the *Dianshizhai* items on Chinese-Western bodily conflict is a set of Chinese views on a perceived cultural difference that has been much more often portrayed, in words and in images, from the Western perspective (i.e. missionary and foreign observer preoccupation with punishments, queues, footbinding, and infanticide, fixations that have their current descendants in mass media fascination with tales of Chinese suffering). [6]

As in many late-19th-century media outlets around the world, the perspectives in the newspaper on such topics ranged from the learned to the ill-informed. There were many times when body horror in the *Dianshizhai* simply drew on extant tropes from popular culture and tales of the strange, not to dive into a cross-cultural debate, but to give expression to historically specific or generalized anxieties.

“Chinese & Westerners Help the Helpless”

The *Dianshizhai* authors were advocates for gradual medical change in the hands of learned men. Here Jin Chanxiang illustrates the story of a Shanghai doctor who, finding his own son grievously injured and himself mentally incapable of treating him, entrusts the young man's life to the hands of a Western physician, "Shengde." The son recovers, and so impressed is the father by the capabilities of Western treatments and by "Shengde"'s generosity that he knows he can bring him the city's impoverished sick for care.



“Chinese & Westerners Help the Helpless” 中西濟美

1890 Shen (Vol. 19, p. 10)

artist Jin Gui (Jin Chanxiang)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

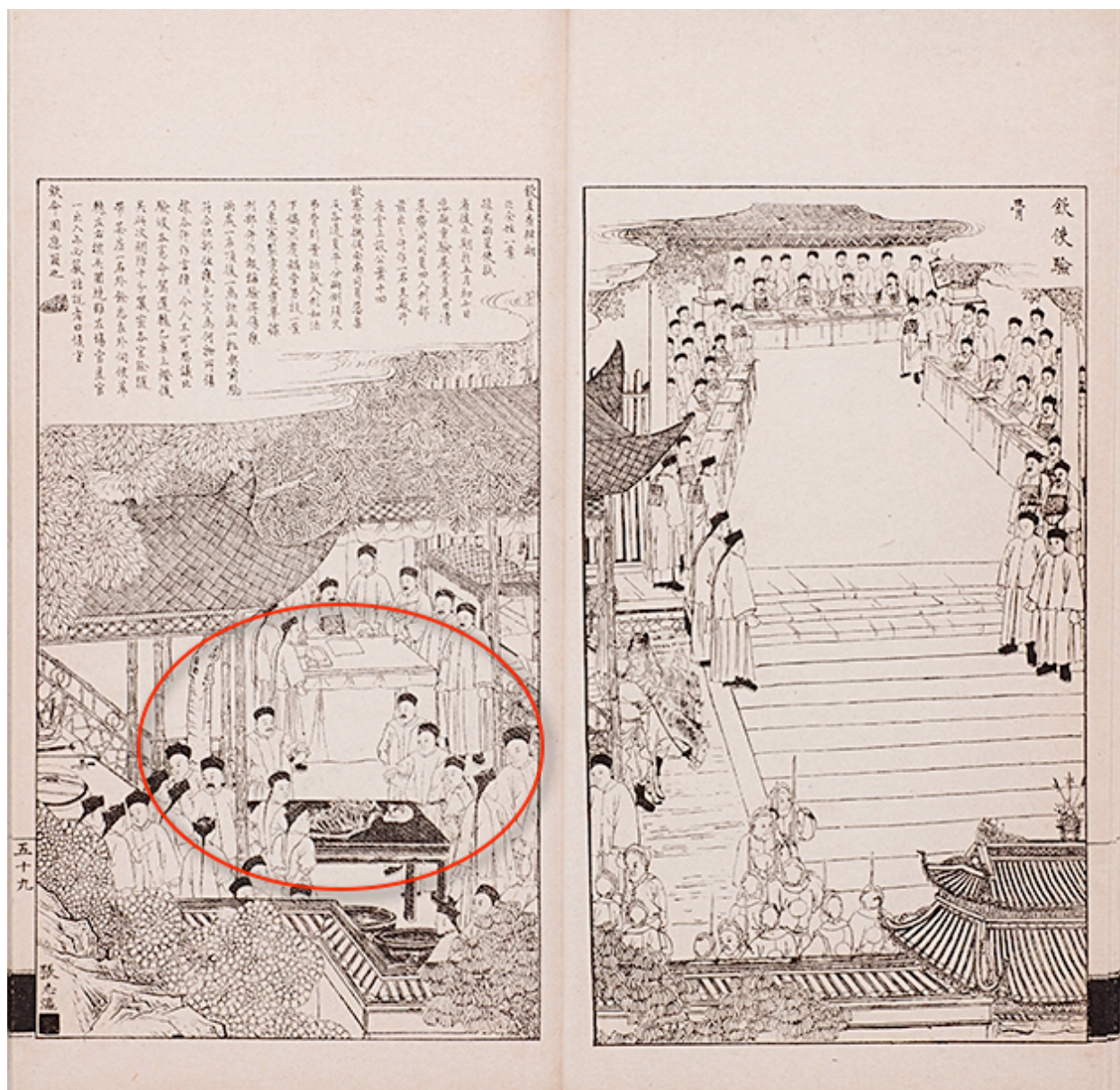
Yale 19.011 [dz_v19_011]



"Imperially Dispatched to Examine Bones"

Dianshizhai artists did not shy away from exciting their viewers by depicting the human body in extremis; the message that accompanied these illustrations could vary. This 1884 rendering of a criminal investigation has in reproduction become one of the pictorial's more famous images.

Though the eye is immediately drawn to the skeleton on the table, the key to the illustration and the text is the forensic examination that surrounds it as a whole. Notably, the bones being examined (exposed by the "steaming method" described briefly in the text) take up a small portion of the legal spectacle of the entire illustration. [7] Similarly, the text describes this forensic method as a means by which the presiding officials discover evidence of two massive blows upon the body of the deceased, one Yu of Hebei. The excitement of the piece is very much that of a detective story: after this early morning discovery, "all was very secretive," and officers were sent to arrest a servant from a local teahouse.



"Imperially Dispatched to Examine Bones"

欽使驗骨

1884 jia (Vol. 2, p. 10)

artist Zhang Zhiyong

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 02.011 [dz_v02_011]

Translated caption:

“Imperially Dispatched to Examine Bones.

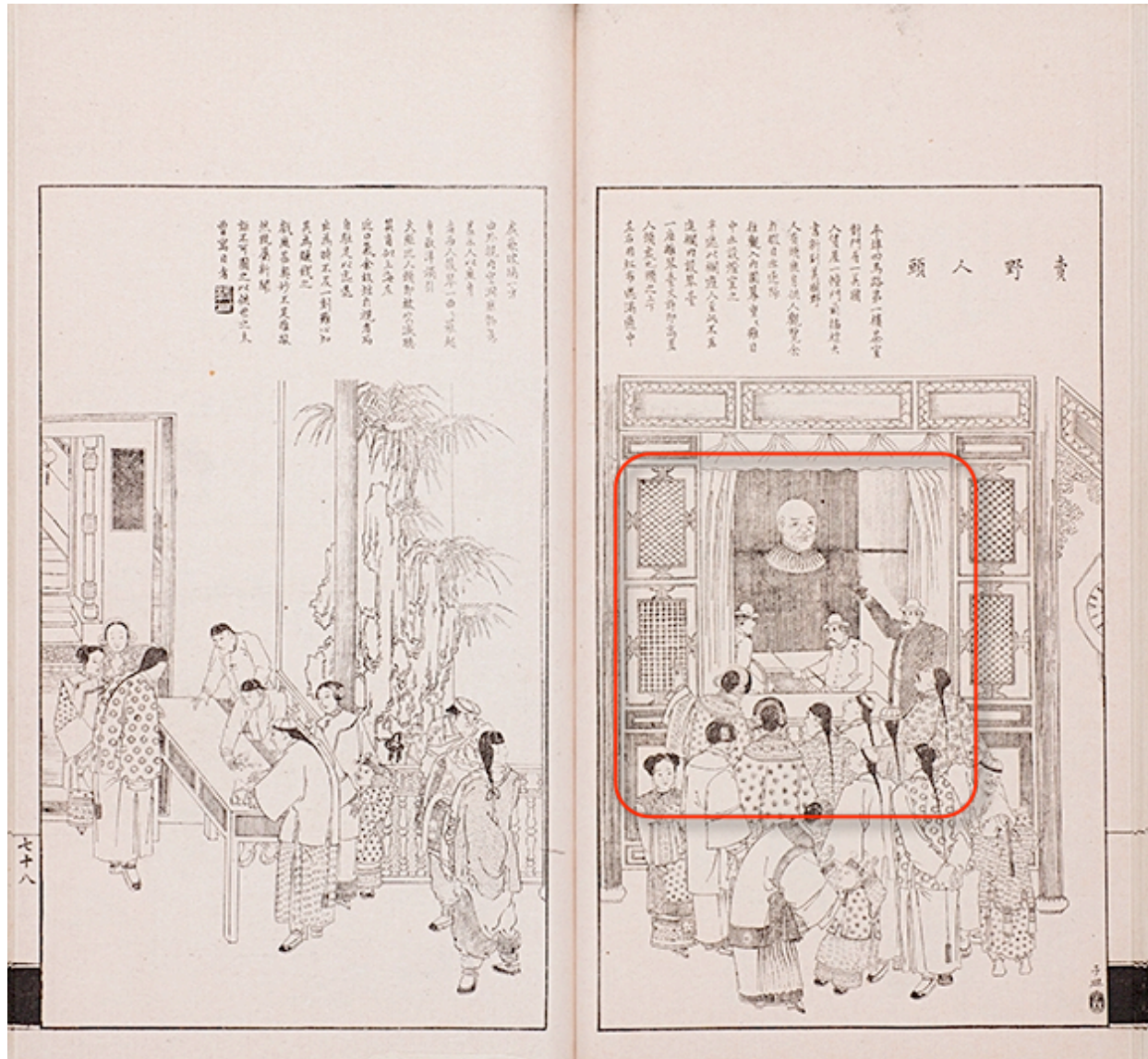
In a recent legal case, imperial envoys investigated the corpse of a Mr. Yu in Hubei province: the two envoys Mr. Sun and Mr. Wu arrived at the province and opened a court session to examine the body and bones on the seventh day of the fifth month. On that morning, together with four bureau officials and a coroner from the ministry of punishments, the envoys arrived at the court and took their seats. ...”



Six years later, the *Pictorial* ran a piece disapproving of a Western-style autopsy that was performed to determine the cause of death of a foreigner whose body was discovered in the Astor Hotel. [8] Especially when put in dialogue with “Imperially dispatched to examine bones,” it is clear that the objection was not to disassembly and examination of the body per se. Rather, the author saw Western techniques as crude, and moreover utilitarian (“so the body of the dead person is made use of, from the crown to the heel, in the interests of others”). [9] The suspicion that Americans and Europeans were eager to exploit the bodies of others for capitalist gain popped up regularly in the *Dianshizhai*, but many stories treated the theme with less outrage than amusement at the hucksterism of the times.

"Viewing a Wild Man's Head"

"Viewing a Wild Man's Head" (mai yeren tou 賣野人頭), the author explains, had quickly become Shanghainese slang for a swindle after an American had opened up a carnival act opposite a locally famous teahouse. [10] The text debunks the premise of the "talking head," while the illustration depicts the accouterments of the act (such as the candle the "body-less" head is commanded to blow out). Though the author scoffs at the trick, he claims that being news, it should "be drawn for those in the world who haven't seen it yet." Artist Tian Zilin renders not just the trick, though, but the whole scene of the mini-carnival, from the oversized head and its barkers, to the varied audience members, and the comperes raking in cash at the door.



"Viewing a Wild Man's Head"

賣野人頭

1884 bing (Vol. 4, p. 29)

artist Zhang Zhiying

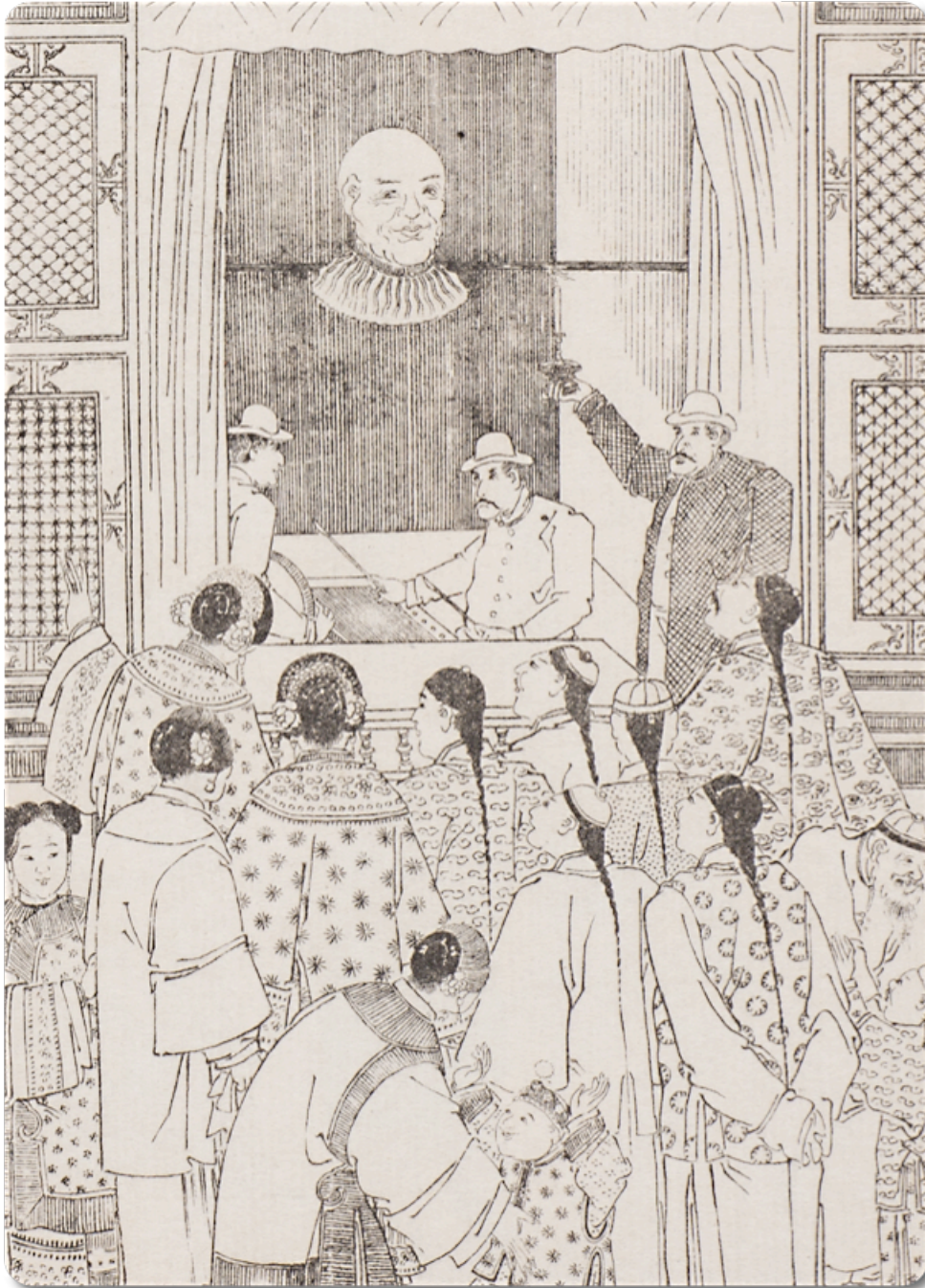
Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 2.011 [dz_v04_031]

Translated caption:

“Viewing a Wild Man's Head.

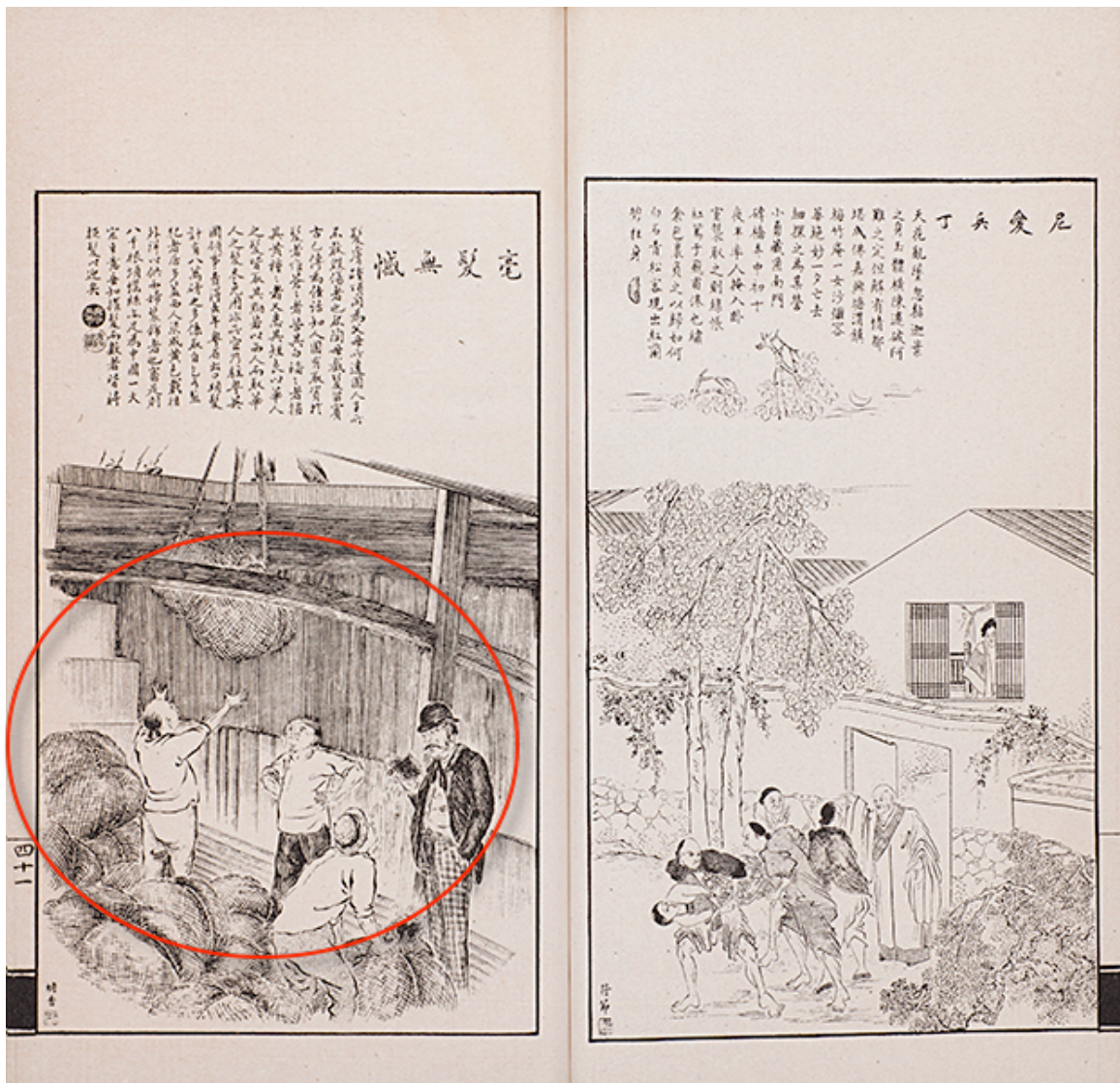
An American gentleman has rented a house standing across the street from the Number One Teahouse on Fourth Avenue in Shanghai. A sign has been put up in front of the house which reads: Exhibited Here for the First Time Anywhere: The Disembodied Head of an American Wildman. ...



“Not a Hair’s Breadth of Regret”

Dianshizhai writers wryly observed that transnational commerce altered bodies in a number of startling and humorous ways. Citing a British consular report that English merchants had exported 80,000 pounds of human hair from Guangdong in the previous year, the text below observes that ancient taboos on preserving one’s hair as a parental legacy were contradicted by the knowledge that one could also make money off it.

What was the destination of the bundles of hair shown being lifted from the hold of a ship? Bleached and dyed blonde for European ladies’ ornaments—and, the author notes with some amusement, “most of [the hair] comes from beggars and criminals” (a claim made in horror in the original consular report). Here indeed was “a big piece of business for China.” [11]



“Not a Hair’s Breadth of Regret” 毫髮無憾

1892 zhu (Vol. 15, p. 41)

artist Jin Chanxiang (Jin Gui)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 15.042 [dz_v15_042]

The headline plays on a number of similar expressions such as “not the least bit (a hair’s breadth) of difference” (haofa wucha 毫髮無差).



“The Shocking Sighting of a Sasquatch”

Finally, there were times when the *Pictorial* writers and artists simply gave their viewers a good old-fashioned tale of the strange—only now they were illustrated with finesse and drama. Wu Youru’s lithograph for the account of a human-appearing animal that was desecrating graves in the Guangdong county of Kaiping is starkly beautiful and horrifying. Despite the headline, what would truly have been shocking to viewers would be the sight of an opened coffin, its occupant on display, however languidly.



“the Shocking Sighting of a Sasquatch”

毛人駭見

1886 geng (Vol. 9, p. 35) artist Wu Youru

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 9.036 [dz_v09_036]

Translated caption:

“The Shocking Sighting of a Sasquatch.

The existence of a strange wild beast was recently reported in Kaiping county of Zhaoqing prefecture, Guangdong province. The creature is described as vaguely resembling a human being though some nine feet tall, with a massive oddly-shaped head and claws on its hands and feet as sharp as knives. ...



“Female Ghost Demands a Life”

More conventional in its visual narrative but hardly less thrilling is Jin Chanxiang’s depiction of the revenge of a wronged dead servant girl, who toppled her lascivious former master into a vat of boiling sugar syrup. Some viewers might have been thrilled; some might have quickly flipped the page and stashed the issue out of view.



“Female Ghost Demands a Life”

女鬼索命

1890 shen (Vol. 20, p. 24)

artist Jin Chanxiang

(Jin Gui)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 20.025 [dz_v20_025]



Dangerous Women and Undue Devotions

An urban milieu that encouraged social mixing across gender and class lines, against an increasingly transnational economic backdrop that encouraged entrepreneurialism verging on charlatanism, brought worry as well as excitement to the largely Confucian-educated men who wrote the *Dianshizhai*. Some of the things they saw around them had long concerned men of their station, such as women increasing their public presence outside of the household, or the increased influence and power of religious institutions or the underclass. In a place such as Shanghai such phenomena were concentrated and their proliferation accelerated, however; furthermore the editors, writers, and artists of the pictorial always saw the paper as a platform to express their opinions. Viewers, on the other hand, may have derived alternate interpretations from some of the frankly humorous or titillating stories and illustrations. [12]

“Prostitute Tumbles from Building”

If Wu Youru was the master of the naval battle, Jin Chanxiang (Jin Gui)—after Wu, the second most prolific *Dianshizhai* artist—flourished amid the courtesans and the uncanny. [13] His rendering of the accidental tumble of a courtesan and her companion from a Shanghai teahouse balcony uses motion to suggest perspective, thrusting the unfortunate pair towards the viewer. Thus he transforms what in the text is a tale of urban change and decay into a comical scene. [14]



“Prostitute Tumbles from Building”

妓女墜樓

1886 geng (Vol. 9, p. 40)

artist Jin Gui (Jin Chanxiang)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 9.041 [dz_v09_041]

Translated caption:

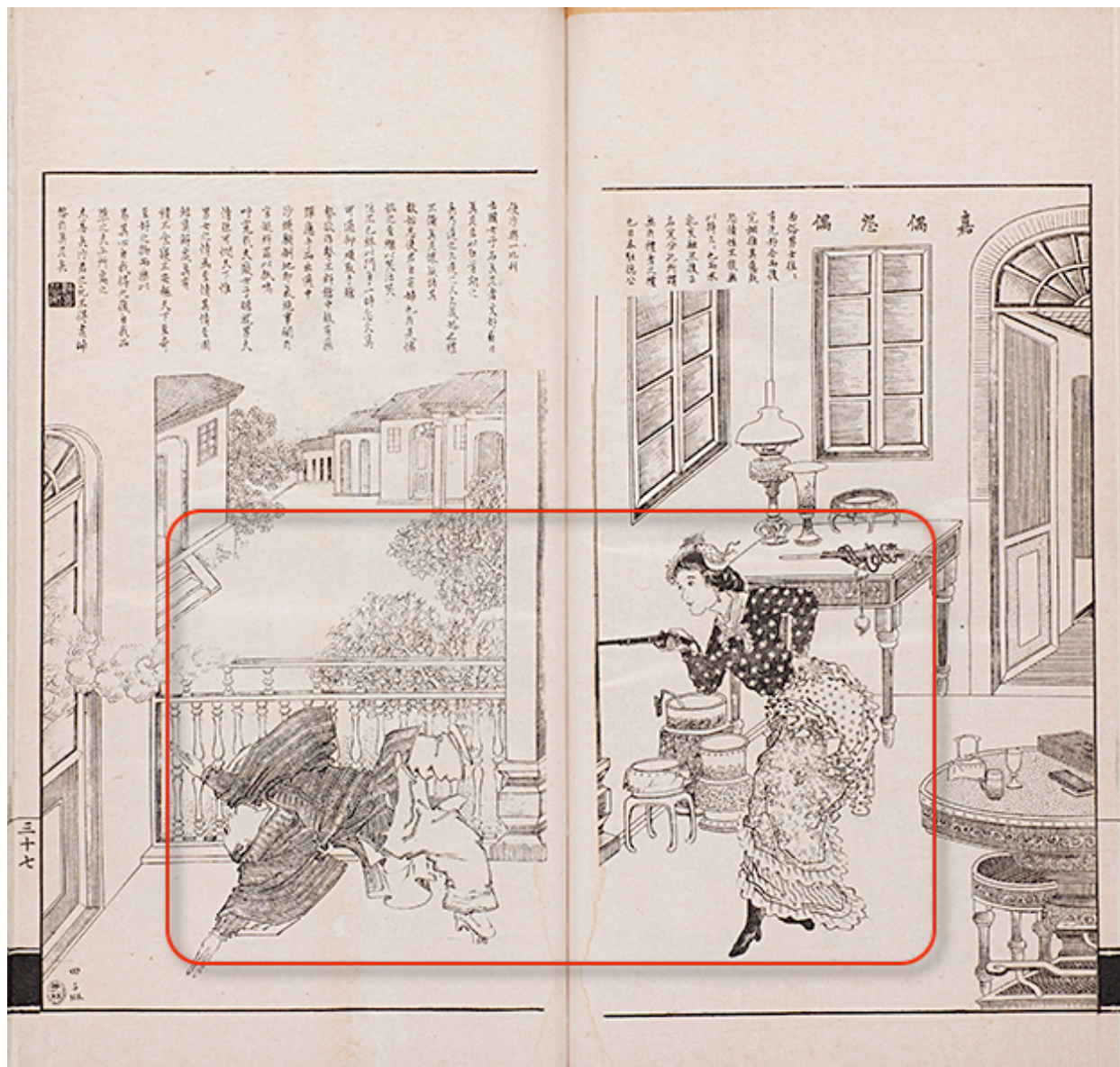
“During the early Tongzhi reign, Lishui Tai started the trend of grandiose teahouses in the northern district Hubei section of Shanghai. The three-floor teahouse faces the river, the spacious building allowing people to enjoy the sunshine in winter and to escape heat in summer. The alley to the west was occupied by brothels, where people could converse with customers at the teahouse’s balustrade. ...

Translated by Alec Wang



“Soul Mate? Sore Mate?”

Tian Zilin also employs the drama of bodies captured in violent motion to excellent effect in depicting the shooting of a Japanese consular official in Germany by his Belgian lover, “Jenny”, upon her discovery that he was already married. Tian’s imagination of the German surroundings of a Meiji official speak more to Shanghai: the European-style buildings are filled with a mixture of Chinese and Western furnishings. The riot of pattern on Jenny’s clothing is a magnificent display of the merging of woodblock technique and the possibilities of the lithograph. But the shooting itself is the tour de force: the detail of the weapon (and the spare on the table), the billow of the discharge, and the flying body of the consul.



"Soul Mate? Sore Mate?" 嘉偶怨偶

1885 ding (Vol. 5, p. 37)

artist Tian Zilin

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 5.038 [dz_v05_038]



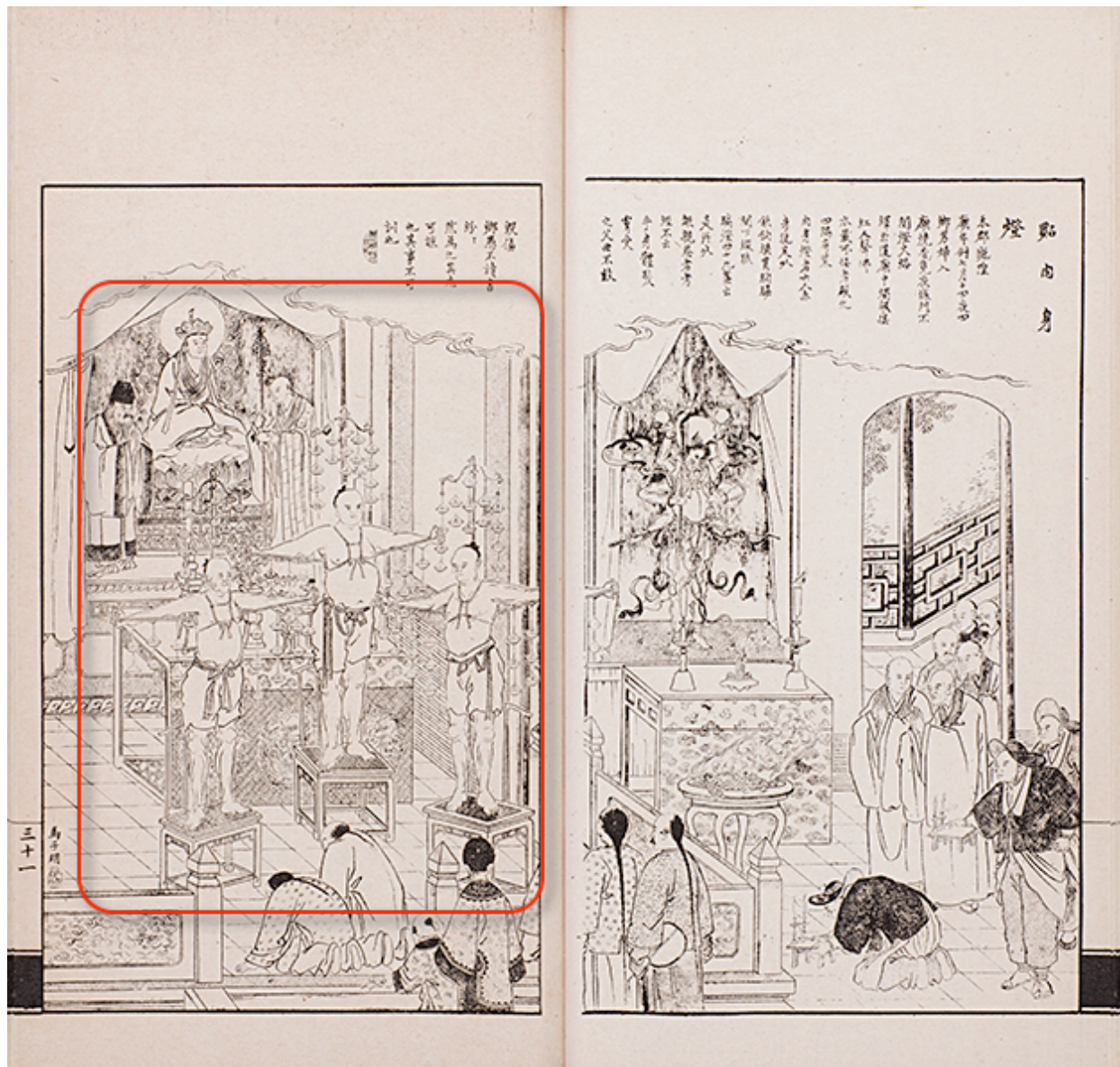
Along with science, gender, and the body, religion constituted a flash point in the pages of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and its parent publication *Shenbao*. Perhaps even more so than those other topics, with religion the conflict was subtle, as the 1880s and 1890s were a period of gradual shifts in concepts and attitudes. Critiques of aspects of the Chinese religious landscape launched from a perspective that might be termed Confucian moralist—suspicion, skepticism, or competitive attitudes towards Buddhist and Daoist clergy, disdain for popular healers, and concern over wastefulness in ritual expenditures—began to merge with the very new concept that religion in general might be condemned wholesale as unscientific and therefore “superstitious.” [15]

Yet Shanghai—along with the Jiangnan region as well as other treaty ports and large cities—was at the same time the center of renewed vigor in religious and philanthropic activity in the wake of the cataclysmic destruction of the Taiping Rebellion and China’s numerous other midcentury domestic and foreign conflicts, as well as natural disasters such as the massive 1876–79 North China Famine. The “merchant literati” writing, illustrating, reading, and viewing the *Dianshizhai* were enmeshed in all elements of this matrix. Critique of the social dangers of religious excess appears alongside expressions of devotion, as well as an emerging sense of China on the world religious stage. [16]

“Lighting Human Flesh Lamps”

Thus “Lighting Flesh Lamps” voices a longstanding literati complaint about the unseemly spectacle of temple festivals—especially “hot and noisy” and potentially heterodox festivals such as those surrounding Zhongyuan (Yulanpen or Yulanbang), the central point of the seventh lunar month, or the “ghost festival.” Rites for the care and management of wandering ghosts mixed the sexes and classes and involved ritual specialists and temples of a variety of backgrounds—Buddhist, Daoist, local religion, and more. As with a great range of Chinese religious activity, it was not so much that literati eschewed the Ghost Festival completely as they objected to certain aspects of it while wholly participating in others (such as supporting the performance of devotional operas centered around the tale of the filial son Mulian).

Here the objection is to the transformation of bodies into penitential offerings by hanging lights or incense burners from the extremities: the creation of so-called “human flesh lamps.” In Ma Ziming’s illustration the penitents stand inside a City God temple, and in front and in reverence of the bodhisattva Dizang (Kṣitigarbha), who delivers the dead from the punishments of hell. Though the text condescends to the “unread village ignoramuses” who could be forgiven for believing fallacies such as the imperviousness of the flesh of the devoted, as with the case of the head of the Wild Man, the lithograph serves to demonstrate—and thus in a way disseminate—the very practice being condemned. Graphic details such as the pilgrims in the lower right corner, with their mobile altars stocked with candles and offerings, offer rare and intriguing visual records. [17]



"Lighting Human Flesh Lamps"

點肉身燈

1886 (Vol. 11, p. 30)

artist Ma Ziming

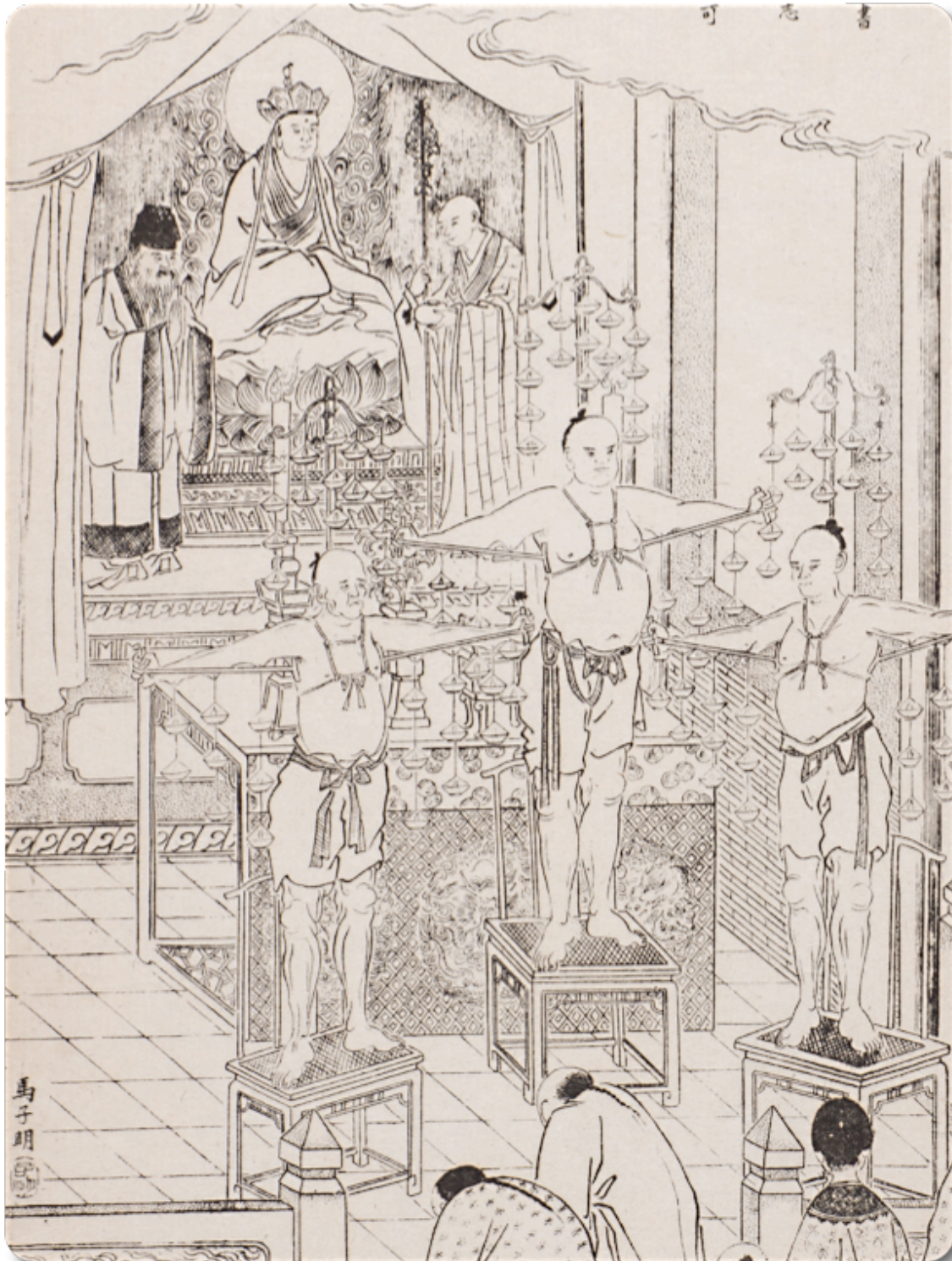
Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 11.032 [dz_v11_032]

Translated caption:

“Lighting Human Flesh Lamps.”

In the evening of the fourteenth day of the seventh moon, the traditional Ghost Festival, worshippers flock from far and wide to the Temple of the City God in He prefecture to pray and make offerings of incense. The gates of the city, left open throughout the night, accommodate a seemingly endless stream of worshippers. The entire temple is aglow, as countless oil lamps flicker, and the voices of the faithful bubble up like the sound of water. Most extraordinarily, however, six human lamp stands stand in corners of the temple ...



"Inviting Courtesans to the Underworld"

News about religion could also comfortably fit into the category of the weird, allowing for more diversion than anxiety. Best of all was when these themes overlapped with other favorite genres for entertainment, such as in this perfect storm of a story, in which the talented and beautiful courtesans Fengbao and Fengzhu of the Jiangxi brothel Caifeng Tang were summoned to a mysterious location, only to find themselves in a temple graveyard, engaged to perform for a deceased audience. [18]



"Inviting Courtesans to the Underworld"

地下徵歌

1885 ding (Vol. 5, p. 36)

artist Jin Gui (Jin Chanxiang)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

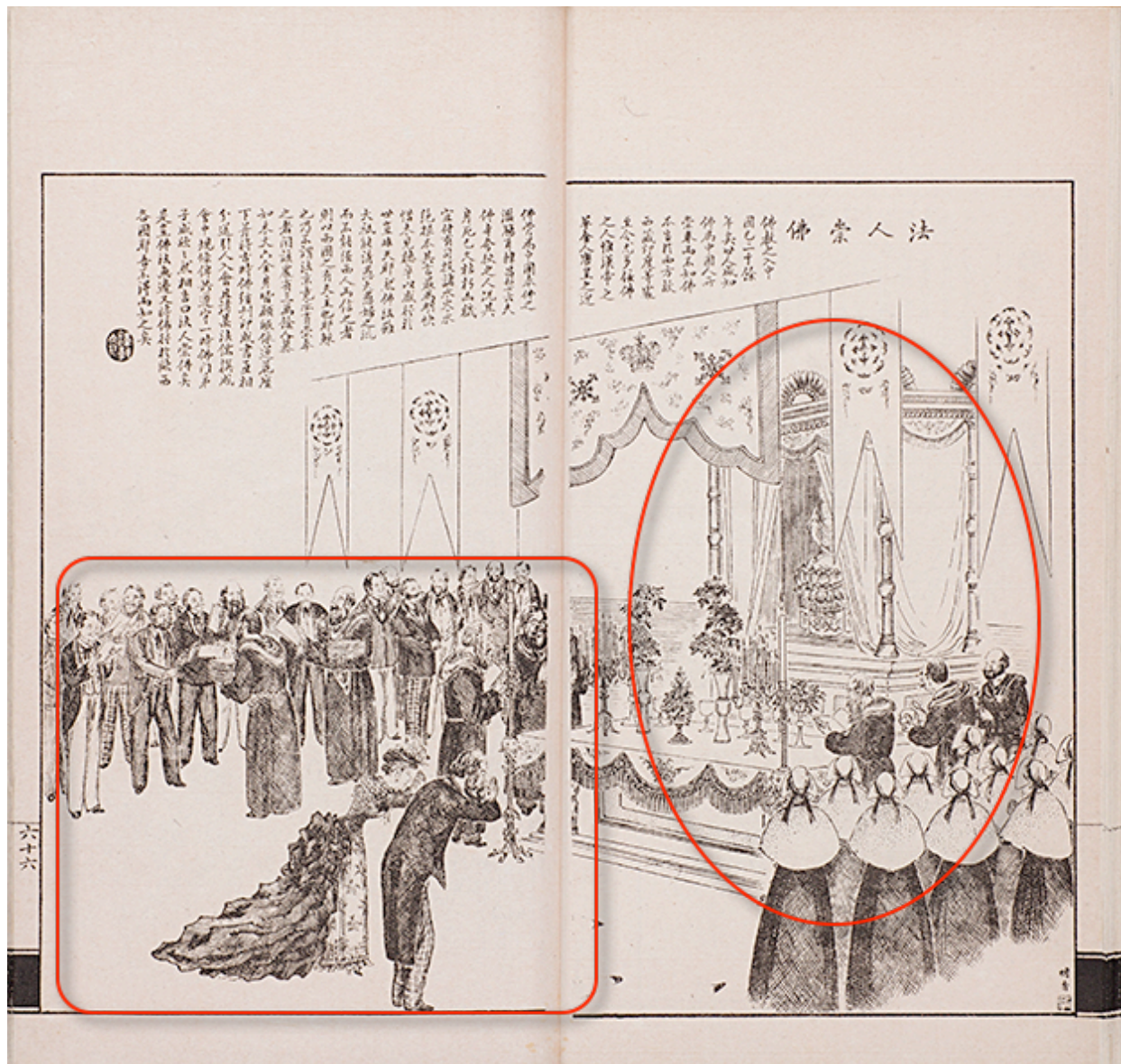
Yale 5.037 [dz_v05_037]



This period was precisely the one in which Chinese religion—and religion as a marker of civilization and national culture more generally—was placed on a world stage. In fact, this was the very major source of the growing elite anxiety about the nature of Chinese religious practice. In 1893 representatives of select Chinese “faiths” would be invited to attend the World’s Parliament of Religions that followed upon the Columbian Exposition in Chicago; for people like Peng Guangyu, the “Confucian” representative, the urgency to lay claim to civilizational values and national characteristics was keen, and this mission was shared by Indian Hindus, Japanese and Sri Lankan Buddhists, and other delegates of the colonized and semi-colonized world allowed a place at the table.

“French People Worship Buddha”

The opportunity to present Chinese religion to the world meant not only a chance to argue for its legitimacy (in the face of competing claims from Christianity in particular), but to extend its viability. In this piece describing the recent spread of Buddhism to France, the author laments the decline of deep understanding of Buddhism in China and concomitant rise of popular ritualism—a common literati refrain. China really had no special claim on Buddhism, which came from the West in any case (India and Tibet). Thus it was refreshing that, reportedly, 30,000 Parisians had contributed towards a statue of the Maitreya Buddha, and many were poised to take Buddhist vows. In Jin Chanxiang’s visual imagination, such European Buddhist worship would naturally take place in a superficially converted church, with the attendance of monks and nuns who would adhere to the clerical garb of local custom: French Catholic.



"French People Worship Buddha"

法人崇佛

1894 li (Vol. 10, p. 18)

artist Jin Chanxiang (Jin Gui)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)

Yale 10.019 [dz_v10_019]





“Processing the Deity into the Temple”

We conclude with a story and an illustration that show that the *Dianshizhai* also appreciated religion for its place in the city—for the spectacle it offered, for its role in knitting together social networks, and, simply, for the merit and fortune it bestowed upon the city’s inhabitants. In a grand, two-page image that can be compared to the Tianhou procession with the brass band shown in Chapter Two [\[view\]](#), Wu Youru illustrated the full procession dedicating a new Tianhou temple erected at the old site of the Hongkou Railway Station. Along with the musicians, attendants, adults and children in costume, Chinese and foreign policemen, and deities in their palanquins, the image and text point out the presence of representatives of the Cantonese and Fujianese communities in Shanghai. “It really was a most magnificent procession,” the text concludes, “a vast panorama of Great Peace.” [19]



“Processing the Deity into the Temple”

迎神入廟

1884 (Vol 2, p.s 4 & 5)

artist Wu Youru

Yale 2.005, 006 [dz_v02_006] [dz_v02_005]

Translated caption:

“Processing the Deity into the Temple

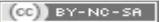
The new temple of the Queen of Heaven has been built on the site of the previous Hongkou Railway station. On the twenty-fourth day of the fifth month, the statue was carried in procession from the Imperial Quarters and the East gate to the new temple. As it passed through the International Settlement and the French concession, crowds lined the streets, standing still in rapt attention. ...”

(Translation by Peter Perdue, revised from Ye, pp. 199-200)

Following page: detail (highlighted in red)



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Shanghai's Lens on the New(s)—1

Dianshizhai Pictorial (1884-1898)

by Jeffrey Wasserstrom & Rebecca Nedostup

Picture Windows

Shanghai Myths

Machines in the City

Drama & the City

Sources & Credits

SOURCES & CREDITS

Sources

The images in this unit unless otherwise noted are illustrations from the 1898 edition of the *Dianshizhai huabao*, generously provided by the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University. We are grateful to Ellen Hammond and the Yale Visual Resources Collection for digitization of the text.

NOTES

Chapter 1: Picture Windows

1

This and much of the information that follows is drawn from Rudolf G. Wagner, "Joining The Global Imaginaire: the Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai huabao*" in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910*, ed. by Wagner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), pp. 105-174; and Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884–1898* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

2

Cynthia Brokaw, "Commercial Woodblock Printing in the Qing (1644–1911) and the Transition to Modern Print Technology" in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, Circa 1800 to 2008*, ed. by Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 39-58.

3

Translation adapted from Wagner, p. 134.

4

The edition we reproduce here is not the original run, but a later reprint that excises the supplementary material described here, as well as the dates (see Wagner, p. 131.) The Introduction to Part II of this unit gives the background of our version of the *Dianshizhai*.

Chapter 2: Shanghai Myths

1

Michael Sorkin, "See You in Disneyland" in idem., ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), pp. 205-232.

2

Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, 1990). For more on Shanghai-L.A. parallels, see my "Comparing 'Incomparable' Cities: Postmodern Los Angeles and Old Shanghai," *Contention: Debates in Culture, Society and Science*, Spring 1996, pp. 69-90.

3

See Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 4-6 and passim, for a fuller explanation of this version of the city's past and relevant citations. For a recent reiteration of the "fishing village" idea, see the following statement in ["A Short History of Shanghai" \(2006, attributed to Fodor's Travel\)](#) that appears in the *New York Times*: "Until 1842 Shanghai's location made it merely a small fishing village."

4

For the history of the Bund, as evidenced through images, see ["The Shanghai Bund: A History through Visual Sources"](#); on Fonteyn quote, see Barbara Baker, ed., *Shanghai: Electric and Lurid City: An Anthology* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1998).

5

For examples, see the illustrations scattered through Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life 1884-1898* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 2003), such as the images of Chinese convict laborers laying down a macadamized road (p. 43), Chinese using Western-style horse-drawn coaches (p. 45), Chinese standing before the Big Ben-style Customs House clock installed in 1893 (p. 74), and a Western customer being waited on by Chinese shop workers in a store selling imported goods (p. 75).

6

[A postcard showing a Sikh policeman in the Public Garden](#). There were also police from Indochina in the French Concession police force, [two of whom are portrayed in this photograph](#), but they are not as iconical as the Sikh, who were frequently featured in International Settlement postcards.

7

Ye, p. 72, shows Sikh and Chinese police, rather than Sikh and Western ones who maintain order; in that *Dianshizhai* image, the China-meets-the-West dimensions of the visual comes from the main object shown: a roller coaster.

8

For more on the concept of "reglobalization," see my *Global Shanghai*.

Chapter 3: Machines in the City

1

LI Gui, *A Journey to the East: Li Gui's A New Account of a Trip Around the Globe*, translated by Charles A. Desnoyers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004)

Chapter 4: Drama and the City

1

Rania Huntington, "The Weird in the Newspaper" in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, ed. by Judith T. Zeitlin and Lydia He Liu with Ellen Widmer (Harvard University Asia Center for Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2003), p. 369.

2

See also Catherine Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), p. 76.

3

Rania Huntington, "The Weird in the Newspaper," pp. 348-9, pp. 355-60, p. 372.

4

The term "intercalary fish" (runyu 閏魚) comes from *Kongtongzi* (空同子), a work by the Ming poet Li Mengyang (1472-1529), in which he describes hearing of an odd kind of fish that can only be seen in the East China Sea during an intercalary year (a year in which an extra month is inserted in the calendar to compensate for the gradual deviation of calendrical time from astronomical time).

5

The headline puns on a well-known phrase, *pengtuan*, meaning "a great beginning" but literally deriving from the words "the Peng takes off."

6

Such issues are explored in, for example, Larissa (Ari) Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West* (Duke University Press, 2008); Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005); Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Michael Berry, *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

7

For more on this forensic method and its significance, see Daniel Asen, *Dead Bodies and Forensic Science: Cultures of Expertise in China, 1800–1949* (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2012) pp. 89-104.

8

The article is translated and quoted at length in Xiaoqing Ye, p. 135.

9

Ibid.

10

Huntington, p. 373. See also Ye, p. 171.

11

The headline plays on a number of similar expressions such as “not the least bit (a hair’s breadth) of difference” (haofa wucha 毫髮無差). As early as 1875 the British periodical *All the Year Round* had taken note of the presence of hair of Chinese origin (or “Asiatic hair,” in the term of trade that came to be) for sale in great amounts in London, though it earned less than European blonde locks by a factor of at least ten to one—a story the *New York Times* thought colorful enough to reprint (“The London Human Hair Market,” *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 1875, p. 3). Much thanks to Jason Petrulis for providing the American and British sources and background on the human hair trade.

12

See, for example, Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); William Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Erik Zürcher, “Middle-Class Ambivalence: Religious Attitudes in the *Dianshizhai huabao*,” *Études chinoises* 13:1-2 (spring 1994), pp. 109-143. Vincent Goossaert, “Anatomie d’un discours anticlérical: le *Shenbao*, 1872–1878,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, 24, 2002, pp. 113-131. Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 34-36, has a particularly good analysis of the differences between the emerging anti-religious discourses of the very late Qing (postdating the *Dianshizhai*’s run) and the “Confucian fundamentalist” and anti-clerical critiques of someone like Rowe’s subject, Chen Hongmou.

13

Wagner provides overall counts for illustrators in “Joining the Global Imaginaire,” p. 142.

14

The joke references a tale of the Western Jin (265-313 CE), in which Lu Zhu, a concubine of the general Shi Jilun (Shi Chong), committed suicide by leaping from a high floor rather than be seized by his rival.

15

Zürcher; Goossaert; Goossaert and Palmer. See also [Rebecca Nedostup](#), “The Temple Bell that Wouldn’t Ring,” in “Envisioning Chinese Society in the Late Nineteenth Century: Words and Images from the *Dianshizhai* Pictorial,” [The China Gateway \(Boston College\)](#), from which this text is partly adapted.

16

Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, *Tears from Iron: Cultural Responses to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), and ["Pictures to Draw Tears from Iron," published in Visualizing Cultures](#); Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Goossaert and Palmer chapters 1 and 4.

17

Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Robert P. Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Qitao Guo, *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage: The Confucian Transformation of Popular Culture in Late Imperial Huizhou* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005)

18

One wonders if this is an early version of the 20th-century funeral stripper phenomenon in Taiwan, [documented by Marc L. Moscovitz in "Dancing for the Dead."](#)

19

Translation from Ye, pp. 199-200.

CREDITS

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SUPPORT

MIT Visualizing Cultures received generous funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation, the Getty Foundation, Japan Foundation's Council for Global Partnership, National Endowment for the Humanities, and MIT's d'Arbeloff Fund for Innovation in Undergraduate Education and MIT Microsoft-funded iCampus project.

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