

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Clash of Food Culture: Integration of Western Cuisine into Chinese Port Cities in Nineteenth and  
Twentieth Centuries

By

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## Abstract

Since its introduction during the late imperial and early republican eras, Western cuisine has played a significant role in major Chinese port cities. Tracing back to their origin, Chinese-owned Western restaurants established by Cantonese entrepreneurs have allowed many Chinese to try Western food since 1880. However, due to their elevated prices, these Western restaurants were almost exclusively visited by those of higher socioeconomic status. By examining Western cuisine's integration into Chinese port cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou through specific case studies, this paper argues that Chinese-owned Western restaurants became an opportunity for Westernized Chinese elites to assert their status. Furthermore, analysis of local newspapers detailing the Chinese's reaction to Western cuisine suggests the appearance of anxieties about globalization and non-adaptation to the West among the Chinese. This study includes visual sources, some depicting the dining experience within Western and Chinese restaurants, while others demonstrate the disparity between the rich and poor in early modern China.

Keywords: Western cuisine, Chinese-owned Western restaurants, Shanghai, Guangzhou, social status.

## Introduction

Since the military conflicts between Britain and China in the 1840s, Western civilizations in China developed a significant influence on current Chinese port cities. For instance, Western powers along with their food culture integrated into Chinese societies and slowly became a part of people's daily lives. From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, how did Western food culture integrate, influence, and affect Chinese societies? This question will be the focus of my thesis. The specific time period between 1880 to 1950 is crucial to understanding Chinese-western relations as it marks the beginning of Western establishments integrating into late-imperial and republican-era Chinese societies. In order to explore this transitional period further, I will focus on some crucial questions. First, what sparked the rise of Chinese-owned Western restaurants and their increasing popularity in Chinese port cities during this period? Which restaurants can exemplify such growth in popularity? How do they compare with traditional Chinese restaurants? How did Western food culture successfully survive in Chinese port cities – what are their methods of adaptation to Chinese societies. Lastly, how did Chinese people react to these restaurants and, more importantly, to Western food culture and their opinions on Western cuisine?

Modern major Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou are hosts of different cuisines from all over the world, with Western cuisine being a significant component. Firstly, my research will explore how Western food culture entered Chinese port cities, namely through Chinese-owned Western restaurants such as Yipinxiang and Taai Pihng Gun and traditional Chinese restaurants such as Jufengyuan.<sup>1</sup> These restaurants were established in Chinese port

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013),

cities in the mid to late nineteenth century, and usually hosted those of high socioeconomic status. By answering my research questions, I will effectively understand the connection between Western presence and the establishment of Chinese-owned Western restaurants in Chinese port cities. I will also understand how restaurants prepared food, presented themselves and attracted customers. Furthermore, by analyzing the Chinese's reactions and opinions on Western cuisine detailed in local newspapers, I will understand their reasons for accepting foreign food cultures, their value of fine dining, and their definition of elegant food.

I argue that Chinese-owned Western restaurants not only gave many Chinese an opportunity to try Western cuisine but also allowed Westernized Chinese elites to assert their status. Furthermore, the appearance of Western cuisine sparked the anxieties of globalization and non-adaptation to the West among the Chinese. Evidence to these claims lie in relevant scholarships.

For example, Mark Swislocki details Western Cuisine's integration into Shanghai in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. In his writing, Swislocki explains that residents of Shanghai have "made Western food culture into a vehicle for shoring up a neo-traditional sense of Chinese culture."<sup>2</sup> In other words, With the arrival of Western cuisine, the Chinese, for the first time, felt the need to develop the idea of a Chinese food culture and compete with other historically significant food cultures such as English and French cuisine. Swislocki hints at the initial appearance of a social awareness among the Chinese, which is

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97-99; Fung-shan, Ma. *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 97.

significant because, with the arrival of Westerners, the Chinese began to think, and eat, on a global scale.

Similarly, in *Trying the Different Yang Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong*, Gang Song examines the “Chinese perception of Western food culture in the late-imperial and republican period.”<sup>3</sup> In his article, Song targets the Chinese people’s opinion and response to the integration of Western and Chinese food cultures. He explains that the development of Western food culture “reveals an intriguing food-identity complex that involves personal experiences.”<sup>4</sup> Further, Song claims, “Chinese consumers took diverse measures to imitate, adapt, appropriate, and re-define the Yang taste.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, personal experiences can drastically affect one’s understanding of foreign concepts such as Western food culture. Those from different statuses and backgrounds will not only have drastically different perceptions of Western food but also opinions on one another regarding Western dining. Song’s article echoes Swislocki’s chapter and can critically engage with the Chinese’s perception of Western cuisine.

Furthermore, Fung-shan Ma details Western cuisine’s adaptability by exemplifying a restaurant in Guangzhou. In her book, Ma explains that economic status was a significant factor

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<sup>3</sup> Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste,” 45.

<sup>5</sup> Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste,” 45; For context, the word “Yang” is a Chinese word to describe the West; it is interchangeable with the words “West/Western” and can even apply to Japan.

that contributes to “the difference between frequent and infrequent customers.”<sup>6</sup> She also mentions that frequent customers visit Western restaurants “to show that they lived a distinctive lifestyle and they consciously knew that not many people were aware of the fact that this kind of Western food was localized.”<sup>7</sup> Ma hints at the exclusiveness of Western restaurants in Guangzhou and they are mostly catered toward those who are financially capable. This phenomenon often allowed room for Westernized Chinese elites a sense of superiority over those who are unfamiliar with, or reject, Western cuisine. Much like Song’s article, Ma’s book can act as a follow-up to Song’s writing as she demonstrates the survival of Western cuisine in twentieth-century China and its methods of adaptation.

This research will draw on newspapers that detail the entrance of Western restaurants into Chinese society and paintings that depict people’s experiences within Western restaurants and their opinions on Western food culture, and consult databases such as Jstor, Late Qing and Republican-Era Chinese Newspapers, CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), and other writings published by scholarly institutions.

This research paper can be divided into three sections. The first will detail the process Western cuisine’s integration into Chinese society and the establishment of Chinese-owned Western restaurants. This section will analyze these restaurants: their decision to establish themselves in Chinese port cities, their efforts in shifting and transforming Western dishes to suit the Chinese palate better, and their methods to maintain their restaurants despite the difference in food culture. In order to provide additional context, this section will also include the challenges

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<sup>6</sup> Fung-shan, Ma. *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 93.

<sup>7</sup> Fung-shan, Ma. *Western Food in China*, 93-94.

they faced, such as aggressive Western presence, negative public relations, and Western cuisine's high pricing.

The second section will present case studies of Chinese-owned Western restaurants and traditional Chinese restaurants in Chinese port cities. By doing so, these real-life examples will serve as reinforcement that solidifies the arguments and analyses from the previous section. To achieve that, this section will reference restaurants such as 一品香 (Yipinxiang), the first Chinese-owned Western restaurant in Shanghai, 聚丰园 (Jufengyuan), a Suzhou-styled traditional Chinese restaurant in Shanghai, and 太平馆 (Taai Pihng Gun), a famous, and the oldest, Western restaurant in Guangzhou.<sup>8</sup> While there are many other Western restaurants that can serve as valuable examples for this section, the three mentioned above effectively exemplify the previous section's contents.

The third section of this paper will examine the Chinese experience in Western restaurants: their perception of Western food, reactions to Western dining culture, and opinions of their experience. Despite the fact that Western colonialism was mere decades before the appearance of Western restaurants, many Chinese people held a positive view of Western food culture. This section will include and analyze examples of such reactions and attempt to understand the reasoning behind such an occurrence. To do so, this section will include the rules and etiquette for Western dining, Western food culture and its connection to a healthier lifestyle, and the feeling of superiority from eating Western food among the Chinese.

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 97-99; Fung-shan, Ma. *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 27.

## Western Food and its Integration into Chinese Port Cities

### Western Presence in Chinese Port Cities

Since the Opium Wars between Britain and China, Chinese port cities, namely Shanghai and Guangzhou, have seen a significant increase in Western presence. Chinese treaty ports such as Shanghai and Guangzhou were the first to experience the influx of Western people along with Western food culture. Compared to other parts of China, these port cities have more experience with foreign powers, which means their residents also had the most exposure to Western food culture.

Like Britain, many other global powers decided to invest their wealth in China from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. In Shanghai's Trade, *China's Growth: Continuity, Recovery, and Change since the Opium Wars*, Wolfgang Keller, Ben Li, and Carol H. Shiue explain that “China during the nineteenth and early twentieth century” had opened itself to trade with much of “Europe, North America, and other parts of the world.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Chinese port cities such as Shanghai and Guangdong experienced influences not only from Britain but also from a mixture of foreign, mostly Western, powers within their hometowns.

As a result, the increase in financial investment encouraged Westerners to build establishments in Chinese port cities. According to Song, who references Zhenhuan Zou in his *100 Works that Have Influenced Modern Chinese Society*, “By the mid-19th century, there appeared Western-owned restaurants in Shanghai, featuring French, American, Russian, German,

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<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Keller, Ben Li, and Carol H. Shiue, “Shanghai’s Trade, China’s Growth: Continuity, Recovery, and Change since the Opium Wars.” *IMF Economic Review* 61, no. 2 (2013): 337-338.



and Italian cuisines.”<sup>10</sup> Among them, the two earliest ones were “Richards and Smith’s Bar.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, the influx of Western food culture turned late-imperial Shanghai into a cultural melting pot consisting of aspects from many nations across the world. This also means that Shanghai was likely one of, if not the most, culturally diverse regions in China during that time. According to Song, “due to increasing Western involvement in the political, economic, religious, and cultural domains of Chinese society,” which made Chinese people gain much more new knowledge about Western culture.<sup>12</sup> This shows the degree of Western involvement in Shanghai, in which citizens were exposed to Western elements every day. This likely caused the eventual appearance of Chinese-owned Western restaurants near the end of the nineteenth century.

Swislocki’s notion of an increasingly Westernized Shanghai is often depicted in local newspapers. After significant Western involvement in Shanghai, especially the establishment of Western restaurants, the drastic difference between Western and Chinese food culture became apparent. Yuanpeng Chen, in *The Preliminary Discussion on the Western Restaurants in Shànghǎi during Late Qing to Early New China Period from the Distinction, Identification, Space, and Discourtesy Aspects*, explains that Western food was originally labeled as 番菜

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<sup>10</sup> Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環 *Yingxiang Zhongguo jindai shehui de yibaizhong yizuo* 影響中國近代社會的一百種譯作 (100 works that have influenced modern Chinese society) (Beijing: Zhongguo duiwai fanyu chuban gongsi 中國對外翻譯出版公司, 1996), p. 59, quoted in Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 511.

<sup>11</sup> Hu Yuanjie 胡遠傑 ed., *Fuzhou lu wenhua jie* (The culture street on the Fuzhou Road) (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe Xi ili 2001), p. 318, quoted in Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste,” *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 50.

(fancai), 西菜 (Western food), 大菜 (large food), 大餐 (large meal).<sup>13</sup> One can see that Western foods were mostly named in relation to size. The term fancai was also published in local newspapers during the early twentieth century. For example, 京報 (City News)'s publication on September 15, 1928, wrote that fancai is Western-style food, translated from Cantonese.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the newspaper not only defined Western food for the general public but also linked the history of its translation to Cantonese. This way, the majority of Shanghai residents who actively read the newspapers would be introduced to Western food culture if they had not already encountered it in their daily lives. Newspapers as such likely targeted those of high economic status who have yet to try Western food in order to give them a positive impression.

Along with the emergence of Western restaurants in Chinese port city so came new identities for a foreign food culture. As they encounter Western food culture almost on a daily basis, the residents of Chinese port cities live in diverse societies while the rest of the country remains relatively secluded. According to Swislocki, some Chinese held positive opinions for the sense of diversity and showed much liking towards Western food culture, which he calls “a late Qing craze for Western food.”<sup>15</sup> However, as time progressed, the Chinese who wished to enjoy Western cuisine encountered many challenges in Chinese port cities.

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<sup>13</sup> Yuan-Peng Chen, 清末民初的上海西餐館—以“區分”、“認同”、“空間”及“失禮”爲主的初步討論 / *The Preliminary Discussion on the Western Restaurants in Shànghǎi during Late Qing to Early New China Period from the Distinction, Identification, Space, and Discourtesy Aspects*, 東華人文學報 / Dong Hwa Journal of Humanistic Studies no. 15 (July 1, 2009): p.165-174.

<sup>14</sup> 清商, 番菜, 京報, September 15, 1928, page 8; (西洋式之飲食, 由粵語譯的)

<sup>15</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 98.

## Challenges for Western Cuisine

Western food's most significant challenge in Chinese port cities revolves around the fact that their residents are not familiar with Western-style cooking. In his writing, Song also mentions the translation of Western food into Chinese language. However, he explains that fancai is also a direct translation to "barbarian food," which has a "derogatory undertone associated with the traditional Chinese concept of huayi 華夷 (Chinese-barbarian) distinction.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps it is a way for the Chinese to criticize Western civilizations for their colonialist actions by stating that they have focused too much on militaristic advancements and conquering that their food culture was falling behind. Regardless, this negative translation of Western food in the Chinese language did not help Western food's integration into Chinese harboring societies; if anything, their classification of Western food only drew people away.

Notions of Western food turning away Chinese are detailed in primary writing. Huang Shiqian, in *Records of Shadowy Dreams in Shanghai*, quoted in Song, states that "all Western food is roasted over fire. Items like beef, mutton, chicken, and duck [that they cook] have either sour and spicy flavors or rank and gamy smells," and that he would take no time to hold his nose at such food.<sup>17</sup> Huang's criticisms on Western cuisine's preparation foreshadows the Chinese-owned Western restaurant's decision to modify their menus to allow more Chinese to try Western cuisine.

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<sup>16</sup> Gang Song, "Trying the Different 'Yang' Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 51.

<sup>17</sup> Huang Shiquan, *Songnan mengying lu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), p. 132, quoted in Gang Song, "Trying the Different 'Yang' Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 53.

However, this negative notion of officially perceiving and calling Western food as barbaric came to a stop. According to Song, who quotes Zou Zhenhuan's *Xican yinru yu jindai Shanghai chengshi wenhua kongjian de kaituo* (*Western Food and the Development of Urban Cultural Space in Modern Shanghai*), claims that in the face of the aggressive presence of Western culture, more Chinese tended to use neutral or positive terms.<sup>18</sup> Zou explains that the reason for the change was not public recognition and acceptance of Western food culture, but instead, it was due to the aggression that came from the Westerners within the city, such as foreign-owned Western restaurants' exclusiveness against the Chinese.

Swislocki mentions the Westerners' actions to separate themselves from the Chinese in his writing. According to Swislocki, there were "Western-run restaurants and hotels that catered large, if not exclusively, to non-Chinese customers. Westerners established these spaces to shore up a sense of their own hometown, or national, culture, and to carve out spheres of material life as boundaries between the city's Western and Chinese populations."<sup>19</sup> In other words, the majority of Chinese people who wished to try Western food did not have the opportunity to do so. This likely caused a sense of anxiety among the Chinese of being unable to participate in the globalization of their hometown, which contributed to the eventual rise of Chinese-owned Western restaurants.

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<sup>18</sup> Zou Zhenhuan, "Xican yinru yu jindai Shanghai chengshi wenhua kongjian de kaituo," p. 138, quoted in Gang Song, "Trying the Different 'Yang' Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 51.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 98.

The negative relationship between Westerners and Chinese residents is exemplified in local news publications. For example, in *游艺画刊* (entertainment illustrated magazine), there exists a small article titled “Xue Fengchi was kicked out of the Western Restaurant.”<sup>20</sup> This article, published in 1942, tells the story of Xue Fengchi, a rather famous opera performer, who “Spitting on the floor, the tall foreign waiter saw him and came to stop him.”<sup>21</sup> Upon his confrontation, Xue gets angry and claims, “I have the problem that I cannot eat without spitting on the floor,” which resulted in Xue getting kicked out without eating his food.<sup>22</sup> Here, one can clearly see that Xue caused the commotion on purpose, as he did not wish to eat in peace but to start a fight instead. Xue’s actions of spitting on the floor would be considered an offensive and delinquent act at almost every restaurant, regardless of whether it is Western or Chinese. Moreover, considering Xue’s profession as an opera performer, he does not have the incentive to damage his public image over a meal. Therefore, one can reasonably assume that Xue’s actions are a way of rebelling and expressing his dissatisfaction towards the Western colonizers who waged war on his country.

Aside from negative public relations, Western food’s pricing also remains a significant issue in spreading its popularity. Scholars have conducted extensive research on the topic of the exclusiveness of Western cuisine in late-imperial and republican-era Shanghai due to its sheer price. For example, in *Western Food in Shanghai in 19th Century*, 裘争平 (Qiu Zhengping)

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<sup>20</sup> 梨園雋聞:薛鳳池被逐西餐廳,《游艺画刊》,第4卷 第8期,(Shanghai, 1942), pp. 12; (薛鳳池被逐西餐廳).

<sup>21</sup> 梨園雋聞:薛鳳池被逐西餐廳,《游艺画刊》,第4卷 第8期,(Shanghai, 1942), pp. 12; (吐痰於地板,被餐廳西嵬所見,走來加以制止).

<sup>22</sup> 梨園雋聞, 12; (我就是這個毛病,不吐痰不能吃飯)

captures the cost of Western food in Shanghai by referencing *上海指南 (Shanghai Guide)*, which was published by the Shanghai Science and Technology Press in 1909. According to Qiu's writing and reference, "top grade would cost four dollars, medium grade would cost three dollars, and a medium grade dish would cost one and a half dollars," while the average monthly income for a Shanghai resident was 3.5 to 7 dollars.<sup>23</sup> This shows that the majority of Shanghai residents will not be able to ever afford a meal at a Western restaurant. Qiu demonstrates the exclusiveness of Western food during late-imperial and republic-era China and hints that only the wealthy upper class and government officials will have the privilege to dine at such places. Comparatively, those who cannot afford to go will likely view Western restaurants as a method of Western globalization that they are unable to partake in while Chinese elites are able to assert their status through their financial capability.

Negative perceptions, public relationships, and financial issues have all contributed to the separation between Western food culture and Chinese port city residents. However, despite the difficulty these challenges provided, Western food still received public recognition and popularity, likely among those of high economic status. This was largely due to the efforts of Cantonese entrepreneurs who decided to join the restaurant business and bring Western cuisine to the Chinese.

### Chinese-owned Western Restaurants

To reach a solution to the negative experiences brought by Westerners without abandoning Western food culture as a whole, many Chinese businessmen decided to run Western

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<sup>23</sup> 上海指南, 上海科学技术出版社, 1909, quoted in 裘争平, "海上风行请大餐". 档案春秋 .11(2009):63; (上等四圆, 中等三圆, 中等大餐一圆五角).

restaurants by themselves. According to Song, “During the last two decades of the 19th century, Western-style restaurants run by Chinese owners, mostly Cantonese entrepreneurs, proliferated in Shanghai.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, for the first time, Chinese people took up the mantle of owning Western restaurants instead of going to those owned by Westerners. One can see this as a disruption in the Chinese port cities as Chinese people no longer needed to interact with Westerners to eat Western food. As a result, this became a solution for those like Xue, who did not like their encounters with Westerners, a proper chance to try and enjoy Western food. Song, in his writing, explains this phenomenon as having the “same purpose to profit by selling the new Yang taste to Chinese customers.”<sup>25</sup> While these Cantonese entrepreneurs’ primary aim was still materialistic profit, they nevertheless opened up a new venue for the Chinese, who would normally be denied entry to foreign-owned Western restaurants.

As Chinese-owned Western restaurants began to emerge, they received much public support. According to Swislocki, the Chinese-owned Western restaurants were publicly known as “fancaiguan,” which “had come to dominate Shanghai’s high-end restaurant scene.”<sup>26</sup> This sudden increase in recognition and popularity of Western food serves as evidence that many Chinese did not dislike Western food but was denied of their opportunity to try. Although the emergence of fancaiguan had directly caused a separation between Westerners and Chinese

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<sup>24</sup> Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 53.

<sup>25</sup> Song, Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste, *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 97.

residents, it did not stop Western food's integration into Chinese port cities, instead, it gave many Chinese a reason to try Western food.

As a result, Chinese port cities such as Shanghai saw a significant infrastructural change near the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Leo Ou-fan Lee, in *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*, quotes Mao Dun's description of Shanghai in his *Midnight*. According to Mao, "Looking east, one could see the warehouses of foreign firms on the waterfront of Pootung like huge monsters crouching in the gloom, their lights twinkling like countless tiny eyes. To the west, one saw with a shock of wonder on the roof of a building a gigantic NEON sign in flaming red a phosphorescent green."<sup>27</sup> In other words, the emergence of fancaiguan directly caused the city of Shanghai to have a brighter image. This also indicates that Shanghai's Westernization had received major public support, perhaps primarily from the Chinese elites, as one can clearly tell that they were extremely successful since they were able to afford such declarations.

The increase in public recognition and popularity of fancaiguan is also shown in local newspapers. For example, 時事新報 (Shi Shi Xin Bao, or "The China Times"), a Shanghai local newspaper from republican-era China, details the emergence of Western elements within Shanghai. In its publication on April 16, 1914, a section was dedicated to "a banquet for merchants," which states, "A ceremony for overseas Chinese gentry and businessmen from all over the world gathered at a Chinese and Western restaurant on Huangpu Beach at noon."<sup>28</sup> This

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<sup>27</sup> Dun Mao, *Midnight*, Hong Kong: Foreign Languages Press, 1957, quoted in Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*, United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 1999, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Shi shi xin bao (時事新報), April 16, 1914, Page 10; (僑商舉行團宴會), (僑滬各國紳商各界午一時假座黃浦灘確中西餐館舉行).



can also serve as evidence of fancaiguan's success and the public support that came along with it. In addition, this short article provided an example of the audience and consumers who visit these Chinese-owned Western restaurants.

In addition to separating Westerners and Western food, the Chinese owners of fancaiguan also modified their menus to fit the Chinese palate better. In his chapter, Swislocki makes a reference to a "critique of the Chinese-style Western food sold in Shanghai's fancaiguan," in which the author questions the legitimacy of the food's authenticity and claims, "Although the food is called Western food, it is really just Chinese food, with the only difference being a fork and knife exchanged for chopsticks and a spoon."<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the critic disapproves of their decision and would prefer the fancaiguan to serve authentic Western food. Song, in his writing, counters the critic's argument, in which he believes, "If viewed from a different perspective, however, the 'failure' in reproducing an authentic Yang taste rather reflected Chinese creative adaption to Western cuisine."<sup>30</sup> Here, Song clarifies that the fancaiguan's decision to modify their menus is a way for the Chinese residents to adopt Western food since the difference between the two food cultures is drastic. One can see that this was a Chinese attempt to adapt to the Westernized globalization.

The fancaiguan's modification of Western food is often exemplified through local newspapers. For example, *上海画报* (Shanghai Pictorial News) published an advertisement for a

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<sup>29</sup> "Lun fancaiguan," 1-2, quoted in 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*, Mark Swislocki, (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 129.

<sup>30</sup> Gang Song, "Trying the Different 'Yang' Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 59.

fancaiguan in 1929. The article states, “In one try, you can find out where the difference between French and American food lies: Chinese-style Western food” and claims that some dishes are similar to Cantonese food.<sup>31</sup> From this, one can see that, by 1929, there existed a clear distinction between traditional Western food made by Westerners and Chinese-style Western food made by many fancaiguan. In the advertisement attempts to draw the attention of those who dislike authentic Western food and would prefer a taste closer to Cantonese flavors, which they are more used to.

In addition to modifying their menus to satisfy the Chinese palate, Chinese owners of fancaiguan also made an effort to reduce their prices. In his writing, Song explains that “These Western-style restaurants sold dacan<sup>32</sup> and other food at cheaper prices than the foreign-owned restaurants. Their fast growth in the 1880s and the 1890s was clear evidence for increasing popularity of Western cuisine in Shanghai.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, Song believes that price was a significant factor that stopped many Chinese residents from trying Western food. As the owners of fancaiguan decided to lower their pricing compared to their foreign competitors, they received enormous public support and popularity. Therefore, the lower prices of fancaiguan would have undoubtedly turned people to their restaurants.

In summary, the significant increase in Western presence in Chinese port cities during the nineteenth century brought many Western elements to China, including Western Restaurants.

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<sup>31</sup> 耳食. 《上海画报》, 第497期, (Shanghai, 1929), page 2; (可以一試法式美式之區分焉, 中國式之西餐, 餘則今歲為粵東來勢力所侵占、凝至弗振獎).

<sup>32</sup> Dacan (large meal) is another term used to call Western food.

<sup>33</sup> Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 55.

However, due to many factors, including but not exclusive to foreign aggression, differences in food culture, negative public relations, and high pricing, Western food faced many challenges in spreading its influence and did not receive much public recognition and popularity. Nevertheless, Cantonese entrepreneurs opened Chinese-owned Western restaurants, named fancaiguan, which served Chinese-style Western food at a much cheaper price. This phenomenon successfully drew the attention of Chinese port city residents, which resulted in the fancaiguan's fast growth in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The next section will detail some real-life examples of these fancaiguan, namely 一品香 (Yipinxiang) and 太平馆 (Taai Pihng Gun), and how they differ from traditional Chinese restaurants such as 聚丰园 (Jufengyuan) and demonstrate their success in gaining popularity<sup>34</sup>. The next section will also demonstrate some of the challenges and solutions mentioned in this section by exemplifying those restaurants out of the dozens that existed around the same time.<sup>35</sup>

### Western and Chinese Restaurants: Case Studies and Comparison

#### 一品香 (Yipinxiang)

The emergence of Chinese-owned Western restaurants, or fancaiguan, marked a new beginning of the Chinese's encounter with Western food culture. Although sometimes their way of preparing Western food is not exactly authentic, the fancaiguan business still opened the

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<sup>34</sup> Depending on the source, these restaurants' names are spelled or spaced differently. I will only refer to the spelling from my main sources referenced in the introduction of this paper.

<sup>35</sup> Gang Song, "Trying the Different 'Yang' Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 55.

venue to many Chinese port city residents to try Western food. Among them, Yipinxiang is one of the most significant and publicly recognized restaurants during that time. According to Swislocki, Yipinxiang was “one of the most popular Chinese-run Western restaurants in the city,” which made appearances in the “1884 illustrated guide *Shanghai's Famous Sites, Illustrated and Explained* (Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo).”<sup>36</sup> From this, one can see that Yipinxiang was not only a representative figure in the fancaiguan business but also the sheer speed with which it became one. Comparatively, many fancaiguan, as previously referenced in the newspapers, only began receiving public support in the early twentieth century. Yipinxiang’s early popularity and appearance in official publications and illustrations are not only impressive but also serve as guidance and motivation for other Chinese to start the fancaiguan business.

In his writing, Song also shares insight into Yipinxiang’s early success. According to Song, who makes a reference to *Shenbao* 申報 (*Shanghai News*), Yipinxiang was “founded in 1880, it may likely be the first Chinese-run restaurant that served Western-style food on the Fourth Avenue (late changed to Fuzhou Road) in the British settlement.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, not only was Yipinxiang a figurehead in the fancaiguan business but it was also founded inside the British settlement, thus demonstrating its wish to compete with Westerners directly. Its success eventually led to Western food’s integration into Chinese society.

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<sup>36</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 97.

<sup>37</sup> 申報 (*Shanghai News*), 15 February 1880 (HKU Main Library, Special Collection Microfilm), quoted in Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 55.

In addition, Swislocki provides an illustration of Yipinxiang to demonstrate its history further. As seen in **Figure 1**, Swislocki explains that the “illustration depicts a baffled customer trying to slice a piece of meat. He is holding a knife in one hand and the meat up in the air with the other.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, although the customers chose to dine at a Western restaurant, they have no previous experience in eating Western food. One can argue that this was a case of people attempting Western food and choosing to visit Yipinxiang. Perhaps, as compared to foreign-owned Western restaurants, Yipinxiang appeared to be a better option as everyone in the restaurant was Chinese, and it would be a more friendly experience.



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<sup>38</sup> Swislocki, *From Modernity to Tradition*, 110.

### Figure 1 - “Taking a Friend to Eat Western Food at Yipinxiang”<sup>39</sup>

Yipinxiang’s success also revolves around its decision to lower the price of food to make it more available to more people. Song quotes Xu Ke, whose work is featured in the Qingbai leichao (Assorted collection of Qing anecdotal records, 1916).<sup>40</sup> According to Xu, “Dacan was one dollar per person, seventy cents for tea, and fifty cents for snacks, plus tips and charges for cigarettes and wine. Few would visit Yipinxiang at that time, but later more and more people went there.”<sup>41</sup> Here, one can see that Yipinxiang’s prices are cheaper than foreign-owned Western restaurants. While some may say that the prices are still much higher than the average Chinese can afford, it is undeniable that, by lowering their prices, Yipinxiang allows for more people to have a chance at enjoying Western food. Still, one can see that the main consumers of most fancaiguan, such as Yipinxiang, are those from wealthy backgrounds, as the average Chinese will not be able to afford to go very often.

Scholars have also demonstrated examples of those who are wealthy enough to visit Yipinxiang. For example, Chen Jitong, a famous Chinese diplomat and “the first bilingual Chinese francophone writer,” is an example of someone who can regularly visit Yipinxiang.<sup>42</sup> In

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<sup>39</sup> Xiangguotoutuo, *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* (Shanghai: Guankeshouzhai, 1884). Courtesy of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University. In *From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai, Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*. Mark Swislocki. (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 110.

<sup>40</sup> Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 55.

<sup>41</sup> Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), vol. 13, p. 6271, quoted in “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐,” Gang Song, *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 55.

<sup>42</sup> Thornber, Karen. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 72, no. 1 (2012): 195–202.

The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai, Catherine Vance Yeh explains that, after funding “China’s first women’s school,” Chen Jitong and his wife held the “first preparatory meeting” at “Shanghai’s most famous Western restaurant, the Yipinxiang,” which was the only place “large enough to accommodate that gathering.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, fancaiguan, such as Yipinxiang, are visited by those with high social status, political ties, or wealthy backgrounds. Moreover, Yeh’s description also shows that Yipinxiang was one of, if not the biggest, Chinese-owned Western restaurants, which portrays its representative status and success among the other fancaiguan.

Further, Yipinxiang’s enormous success in the late nineteenth century became the foundation for its expansion in the decades that followed. In *The Rise of Chinese taxi-dancers: glamorous careers, romantic fantasies, and sexual dreams on the dance floors of Shanghai, 1919–37*, Andrew David Field explains Yipinxiang’s expansion and influence in Twentieth century Shanghai. According to Field, “as Chinese people began to step on to the dance floor of the city’s foreign settlements,” a number of new dance halls were catered to Chinese patrons in 1928, which includes the “Peach Blossom Palace (taohua gong) in the Y. P. S. (Yipinxiang) Hotel.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, not only did Yipinxiang have enough space to host grand meetings for those of high political, social, and economic status, but it was also able to spare space for dance halls, which became another reason for the elites to attend. Furthermore, one can see that Yipinxiang is also the name of a hotel. Therefore, by 1928, merely decades after its foundation

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<sup>43</sup> Catherine Vance Yeh, “The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57, no. 2 (1997): 446.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew David Field, “The Rise of Chinese Taxi-Dancers: Glamorous Careers, Romantic Fantasies, and Sexual Dreams on the Dance Floors of Shanghai, 1919–37,” In *Worlds of Social Dancing: Dance Floor Encounters and the Global Rise of Couple Dancing, c. 1910–40*, edited by Klaus Nathaus and James Nott, Manchester University Press, 2022, 183.

as a Western restaurant, Yipinxiang was able to gather enough wealth, recognition, and popularity to expand to such a monumental degree in republican Shanghai.

The social status of Yipinxiang was also portrayed in local newspapers. Shi Shi Xin Bao's publication on August 13, 1922, details an anecdote about visiting Yipinxiang. According to the newspaper, the author was invited by their "wealthy colleague" to visit the hotel they stayed at; however, the author wrote, "Since my Western clothes were too dirty, if I went to the brightly lit Yipinxiang, I fear I would damage my colleague's reputation," and refused his offer.<sup>45</sup> Here, it is clear that those who normally visit Yipinxiang for dining or staying are dressed elegantly. The author's description of Yipinxiang as "brightly lit" also portrays its enormous success during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Comparatively, traditional Chinese restaurants create an apparent contrast between Chinese-owned Western restaurants. Among them, Jufengyuan was one of the most popular traditional Chinese restaurants that existed in the same time frame as Chinese-owned Western restaurants such as Yipinxiang. Through comparison, one can see how fanciguan gained more fame over its traditional counterparts.

#### 聚丰园 (Jufengyuan)

Unlike Yipinxiang, Jufengyuan was an iconic traditional Chinese restaurant. According to Swislocki, who quotes an "article in the tabloid *Entertainment* (Youxi bao)," published in 1899, Jufengyuan was labeled as a "Suzhou restaurant" in the late nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Judging

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<sup>45</sup> Shi shi xin bao (時事新報), August 13, 1922, page 15; (富有的同僚), (我因為我的洋服太髒，到燈火輝煌的一品香去，怕要損失我同僚的名聲)。

<sup>46</sup> "Huoshen chi dacai" [Fire god eats Western food], Youxi bao, No. 705 (1899), 3, quoted in From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai, *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*. Mark



by the time of publication, one can see that the Jufengyuan and Yipinxiang existed at the same time. One can also assume that Jufengyuan is likely the older establishment between the two due to the fact that Yipinxiang was only founded in 1880. In his writing, Swislocki also demonstrates an illustration of Jufengyuan to demonstrate the difference between a fancaiguan and a traditional Chinese restaurant. As seen in **Figure 2**, Swislocki explains, “In the Jufengyuan illustration, three male restaurant customers are being entertained by two courtesans, one playing a musical instrument, the other holding an opium pipe. These two articles of refined leisure and pleasure stand in stark contrast to the knife in the Yipinxiang image.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, one can see that those who choose to visit Jufengyuan are there to enjoy themselves within traditional elements, while those who visit Yipinxiang are often adventurous in discovering new food cultures. One can also see that Jufengyuan contains much more traditional elements compared to Chinese-owned Western-restaurants, such as its Chinese-style decoration and the employment of courtesans to entertain its guests.

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Swislocki. (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 98-99.

<sup>47</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 110.



**Figure 2: “Drinking with Famous Courtesans at Jufengyuan.”<sup>48</sup>**

Moreover, Swislocki also details the difference in food that the two restaurants serve. While the illustration on Yipinxiang depicts it serving its customers large chunks of meat, Jufengyuan was known for serving “duck broth, mutton stew, monkey lips, and elephant brain.”<sup>49</sup> As one can see, there exists a sharp contrast between the two restaurants’ menus. This

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<sup>48</sup> “Drinking with Famous Courtesans at Jufengyuan,” 1884. In *From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai*, *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*. Mark Swislocki. (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 110.

<sup>49</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 110.

echoes back to the critic's comments on Yipinxiang's modified Western food, which they describe as "unworthy" of being considered Western food.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, Yipinxiang's food, at least judging from the illustration, is not Chinese food served with Western utensils since traditional Chinese restaurants, such as Jufengyuan, normally serve dishes that would be considered outlandish in a Western restaurant.

Like that of Yipinxiang, scholars have also conducted research on the history of Jufengyuan as many fancaiguan began to receive enormous public support. In *Ephemeral Households, Marvelous Things: Business, Gender, and Material Culture in "Flowers of Shanghai,"* Samuel Y. Liang talks about Jufengyuan near the end of the nineteenth century. According to Liang, when courtesan houses decide to host banquets, "Traditional food and Western food (dakai) for this banquet were usually ordered from some nearby fine restaurants (for example, *Jufengyuan*, mentioned in the novel and in guidebooks)."<sup>51</sup> In other words, not only did Jufengyuan maintain its fame in the face of fierce competition provided by the success of Chinese-owned Western restaurants, but it seems to have also begun serving Western food. Perhaps observing the achievements of fancaiguan made traditional Chinese restaurants, such as Jufengyuan, also serve Western food.

While comparing traditional Chinese restaurants and Chinese-owned Western restaurants can provide valuable information on the integration of Western food into Chinese port cities, a different perspective is crucial to the completeness of the research. This is because, while both

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<sup>50</sup> "Lun fancaiguan," 1-2, quoted in 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*, Mark Swislocki, (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 129.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Y. Liang, "Ephemeral Households, Marvelous Things: Business, Gender, and Material Culture in 'Flowers of Shanghai.'" *Modern China* 33, no. 3 (2007): 409.

are port cities, the fancaiguan in Shanghai and Guangzhou may differ in their exclusiveness to the elites, popularity, and public perception regarding issues of globalization.

### 太平馆 (Taai Pihng Gun)

While it is also a fancaiguan like Yipinxiang, Taai Pihng Gun was located in Guangzhou, a different port city that's a distance away from Shanghai. Studying the foreign presence and the fancaiguan's success in a city like Guangzhou will provide a comparison between different Chinese port cities. In *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*, Fung-shan Ma shares insight on Taai Pihng Gun and its experience in republic-era China. According to Jakob Klein in *That's Guangzhou*, who is quoted in Ma, Taai Pihng Gun was "established around 1885."<sup>52</sup> This indicates that Taai Pihng Gun was established not much later than Yipinxiang, which means Western presence likely appeared around the same time across Chinese port cities with the most significant ones being Shanghai and Guangzhou. Further, Ma explains that alongside Taai Pihng Gun was another well-received Western restaurant named "Daaih Gung Sai Chaan Ting (大公西餐廳), which ended up closing its doors due to, according to what people believed, financial problems."<sup>53</sup> In other words, although Daaih Gung Sai Chaan Ting was as famous as Taai Pihng Gun, it still closed down due to financial reasons. One can assume that while fancaiguan began opening across China, some parts, such as Shanghai, had an easier time integrating Western food into Chinese society. Perhaps the

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<sup>52</sup> Jakob Klein, *Fit for a Premier? That's Guangzhou*, August 2000, quoted in *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. Fung-shan Ma, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 27.

<sup>53</sup> Fung-shan, Ma. *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 27.

difference in regional food preferences in China could also play a role in the people's reception of Western food.

In addition, Ma also talks about Chinese-owned Western restaurants in Guangzhou and their exclusiveness. According to Ma, who references Klein, "Taai Pihng Gun and other Western restaurants were fashionable places for the elite, especially young couples. Zhou Enlai (M) and his wife Deng Yingchao's (M) wedding banquet was even held there in 1925."<sup>54</sup> In other words, not only were Chinese-owned Western restaurants in Guangzhou attended by those of wealthy backgrounds, but it was also a place of visit for political officials. Ma then continues, saying that the fancaiguan was restricted to only the elites of the society.<sup>55</sup> Compared to the fancaiguan in Shanghai, such as Yipinxiang, the ones in Guangzhou seem more secluded and exclusive to those with a higher social, political, and economic status. While the two restaurants are both categorized as fancaiguan, Taai Pihng Gun proves much more difficult for the average Guangzhou resident to visit than that of Yipinxiang of Shanghai.

Although all three restaurants are owned by the Chinese, they have shown drastic differences in their features, menus, and exclusiveness. While fine dining, no matter whether Western or traditional Chinese, in Shanghai and Guangzhou is more catered towards those in wealth and power, those who have tried Western food have still contributed to its integration into Chinese society. Also, those who have tried Western food have shared their opinions on it, ranging from the rules of Western dining, Western food's relation to a healthy lifestyle, and a sense of superiority from eating Western food.

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<sup>54</sup> Jakob Klein, *Fit for a Premier? That's Guangzhou*, August 2000, quoted in *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. Fung-shan Ma, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Fung-shan, Ma. *Western Food in China: Globalization and Consumption in a Restaurant in Guangzhou*. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001, 27.

## Western Dining Experience: The Chinese's Opinion on Western Cuisine

### Western Dining Etiquette

Western and Chinese food cultures are drastically different in their preparation, presentation, and ways of consumption. When focusing on the topic of Western dining etiquette, one will notice that Western food culture employs many rules in the process of consumption. Scholars have analyzed these rules and how they affected Chinese port city residents in the late-imperial and republican-era period. In his writing, Swislocki makes a reference to Chi Chizheng's experience eating Western food. According to Chi, "detailed explanations of how to wield a fork, knife, and spoon also indicate that eating Western food was not necessarily a casual, or easy affair."<sup>56</sup> In other words, not only were the Chinese unfamiliar with Western utensils, they were shown a strict way of how one must utilize them to eat their food. Compared to traditional Chinese food culture, while it also employs strict rules, Chinese-style dining usually involves fewer utensils than its Western counterpart. Chi's stressful experience not only demonstrates the difference between the two food cultures, but also hints at anxieties of adaptation to Western dining etiquette.

Further, Swislocki also mentions the consequences of disregarding Western dining etiquette. In his writing, Swislocki makes a reference to Chen Bohai's *Shanghai wenhua tongshi*, in which Chen states, "Those who learned and followed these rules successfully earned a badge

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<sup>56</sup> Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), vol. 13, p. 6271, quoted in 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*, Mark Swislocki, (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 124.

of social respectability, but those who failed were subject to humiliation.”<sup>57</sup> Here, one can see that people who are able to follow Western dining etiquette are treated with respect, while those who were unable to follow will be shamed, presumably through the reactions of others in the restaurant. It seems that many Westerners wished for the Chinese to respect their food culture as Western restaurants can symbolize their history, which they are obviously proud of.

Similar to Chi and Chen’s commentary on Western dining etiquette, local newspapers also detail the rules of eating Western food. Shi Shi Xin Bao’s publication on February 14, 1947, contains an article titled “Telling You How to Eat,” which is immediately followed by the statement, “There are too many etiquettes in Western dining, pay attention to other people’s actions.”<sup>58</sup> It is not surprising to see that the Chinese would find Western food culture complicated and stressful to adapt to. Not only that, the fact that one needs to pay attention to the actions of those around them while eating undoubtedly adds another layer of unwillingness to their already discouraged mindsets.

In contrast, some Chinese respect Western dining etiquette and its barrier of entry and have taken a liking to it. In his writing, Song references Zhang Deyi, who “quickly adjusted himself to Western food and turned to a positive view on orderliness and elegance of Western dining.”<sup>59</sup> Song’s emphasis on the “orderliness” and “elegance” of Western food culture

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<sup>57</sup> Chen Bohai, *Shanghai wenhua tongshi*, Vol. 1, 157–58, quoted in 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*, Mark Swislocki, (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 124.

<sup>58</sup> Shi shi xin bao (時事新報), February 14, 1947, page 4; (告訴你怎樣吃), (西餐禮節太多, 留心別人動作).

<sup>59</sup> Gang Song, “Trying the Different ‘Yang’ Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 56.

demonstrates that the main differences between Western and Chinese dining are in its organization and cleanliness. One can argue that the Westerners who are able to dine at their restaurants are from rather high statuses; therefore, the example they set and the expectations they have for Chinese customers are inherently higher than usual. Song also quotes Zhang's recollection of Western dining in his records, "dishes are put on large silver plates, and passed from one person to another. After each course, the knife, fork and plate are replaced with new ones."<sup>60</sup> Here, one can see that Zhang is explaining the process of Western dining in extreme detail. Also, through Zhang's tone and wording, it is apparent that Zhang is fond of the organization and cleanliness of his Western dining experience.

Many Chinese encountered Western food culture during the late-imperial and republican-era China, and people held mixed opinions about their experience with Western dining etiquette. While some only shared their reaction to Western food culture, others have conducted critical research on Western food and its relationship to a healthier lifestyle when compared to Chinese food.

### Western Food and Health

Regardless of the timeframe, many have shared their insight and research on whether Western food culture can lead to a healthier lifestyle. In his chapter, Swislocki makes a reference to the Women's Times (Funu shibao), which states that "eating was not for entertainment, but for health: People who write about eating have always attended to that which tastes good, without

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<sup>60</sup> Zhang Deyi, *Hanghai shuqi* (Records of the marvelous things in my overseas voyages) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985), pp. 449-450, quoted in "Trying the Different 'Yang' Taste: Western Cuisine in Late-Qing Shanghai and Hong Kong / 洋味競嘗：晚清上海與香港之西餐," Gang Song, *Journal of Oriental Studies* 45, no. 1/2 (2012), 55.



taking into consideration its potential benefit or harm to the body.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, the Chinese have realized that Western food culture differs from their own in regards to their consideration for health over taste. This is also precisely Swislocki’s argument at the beginning of his chapter, in which he claims the Chinese “made Western food culture into a vehicle for shoring up a neo-traditional sense of Chinese culture.”<sup>62</sup> Some Chinese had become anxious of their own food culture and its need to adapt to the Westernized globalization of prioritizing health when one eats.

Local newspapers also show the effects of Western food culture on Chinese residents. For example, Jian Kang Dao Bao (Health Herald News), published on June 16, 1947, raises a discussion about Westerners’ eating habits. According to the article titled “Milk and Bread,” the author states, “In short, when they eat, they value nutrients rather than taste.”<sup>63</sup> One can see that the author is surprised to find out that Westerners tend to eat for nutritional value over their own enjoyment of their food.

As a result, some Chinese scholars wished to reveal the reason why Western food culture can be healthier than their own and shared their findings. For example, in *A Brief Analysis of the Influence of Western Cooking on Chinese Cooking*, author Liwen Ji summarizes on Western

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<sup>61</sup> Yi Han, “Xishi weisheng pengtiaofa,” 25, quoted in 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*, Mark Swislocki, (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 138.

<sup>62</sup> Mark Swislocki, 'From Modernity to Tradition: Western Food in Late Qing and Early Republican Shanghai', *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Redwood City, CA, 2008; online edn, Stanford Scholarship Online, 20 June 2013), 97.

<sup>63</sup> Jian kang dao bao (健康導報), June 16, 1947, page 2; (牛奶麵包), (總之，他們吃飯重養料不重味道).

cooking's healthiness. According to Ji, the selection of ingredients in Western cuisine is more delicate. They differentiate separate parts of the same ingredient, and the ingredients used need to be as fresh and tender as possible.”<sup>64</sup> As one can see, Ji attempts to understand the link between Western food culture and one's health through its processes of preparation. She believes that the main difference between Western and Chinese food culture in relation to health is that Chinese cuisine does not put much effort into selecting precise ingredients and keeping them fresh when compared to its Western counterpart. While she is not labeling all Chinese cuisine as unclean, her point is to raise awareness among the Chinese to take more care of their ingredients.

Similarly, other scholars have pointed out other advantages of Western food culture. For example, in *The Improvement of Western Cuisine and the Evolution of Dietary Concepts in Modern Shanghai*, author Baixin Wu references Xiaotian Xu in his article on Western food.<sup>65</sup> According to Xu, “The advantage of Western food is that it is clean and physiologically appropriate; meat, vegetables, soups, and water are included in each meal, making it very suitable for fruit, coffee, and other arrangements.”<sup>66</sup> Here, Xu is saying that the combination of different kinds of food is the reason why Western cuisine can be beneficial for one's health. Wu then comments on Xu's claim, “In comparison, Chinese food and its history of combination

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<sup>64</sup> 季丽雯, "浅析西餐烹饪对中式菜系烹调的影响," 现代职业教育 .21(2018):171; (西餐的食材选择较为精细, 他们将同一种食材中不同部位进行差异化的区分, 并且所用到的食材需要尽可能地保证其质地鲜嫩).

<sup>65</sup> (近代上海西菜改良与饮食观念演变).

<sup>66</sup> 许啸天:《夫妻顾问》, 家庭书店, 1936年版, 第267-268页, quoted in 近代上海西菜改良与饮食观念演变.2020, 吴百欣, 上海师范大学, page 4; (西菜的长处, 是在清洁, 合于生理; 每餐肉类、菜类、汤类、水果、咖啡等支配十分相称).

methods became questioned.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, Western food culture caused Chinese people to question their own food culture, despite it having a long history. One can assume the reason behind such a phenomenon must be a catalyst that made the Chinese question the legitimacy of their traditions. One possibility of such a catalyst could be the fact that many Westerners are generally taller than the Chinese residents. This occurrence could easily cause the Chinese to think of a reason for the difference in body stature, which many would come to the conclusion of food.

While the Chinese may share different opinions on Western food culture, there are those who exclusively support Western food. One can argue that their opinion of Western food had become egotistical and that they felt a sense of superiority from eating Western food. This is due to the fact that Western Restaurants are largely catered towards Chinese elites since their pricing are only affordable to those who are financially capable. From this, the elites were able to assert their status to those who were unable to dine at Western restaurants.

### The Feeling of Superiority from Eating Western Food

The notions of feeling superior after eating Western food are shown in local newspapers. For example, Shi Bao 實報 (Reality News)’s publication on March 15, 1930, includes an anecdote of someone’s conversation with her friend. Titled Eating “Western Food,” the anecdote details the author’s response to her friend’s negative opinion of Western food.<sup>68</sup> According to the author, “If you don't know how to eat Western food, then you have fallen behind and are going

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<sup>67</sup> 吴百欣, 近代上海西菜改良与饮食观念演变.2020.上海师范大学, page 4; (相比之下, 长久以来中餐的食物和搭配方法便受到了一些质疑).

<sup>68</sup> Shi bao (實報), March 15, 1930, page 2; (吃西餐).

to be outdated.<sup>69</sup> Here, the author believes that one's knowledge of how to eat Western food is a necessity in one's natural progression. Instead of accepting her friend for not taking a liking to Western food, the author enforces her ideology onto her friend and claims she will be outdated if she does not eat Western food. Later in the article, the author calls her friend "face is too thick,<sup>70</sup> doesn't even feel shame."<sup>71</sup> The author's harsh criticism of her friend over eating Western food indicates that she placed herself in a space of superiority and feels the need to correct others for their "wrongdoings."

A potential analysis of such attitudes and behaviors towards Western food can be found in relevant scholarships. For example, in his writing, Yuan-Peng Chen includes an illustration of Shanghai society in the early twentieth century from Shanghai's Picture Daily, published in 1909. As seen in **Figure 3**, Chen explains the different people within the illustration are "The beggar on the upper left, the poor below, the official in front of the meal, and the man wearing glasses," while Chen was unable to depict his identity, he says, "He is clearly eating Western food."<sup>72</sup> The illustration clearly shows that the wealth one possesses equates to the number of dishes one can afford to eat, and those at the top of society tend to eat Western food. One can assume that eating Western food had become a symbol of wealth and status for most people in Shanghai during the late-imperial and republican-era.

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<sup>69</sup> Shi bao (實報), March 15, 1930, page 2; (你不會吃西餐，你便是個時代落伍者).

<sup>70</sup> In Chinese, this is a way of calling someone ignorant or shameless.

<sup>71</sup> Shi bao (實報), March 15, 1930, page 2; (臉皮未免太厚了，羞也不羞).

<sup>72</sup> Yuan-Peng Chen. 清末民初的上海西餐館—以“區分”、“認同”、“空間”及“失禮”爲主的初步討論 / The Preliminary Discussion on the Western Restaurants in Shànghǎi during Late Qing to Early New China Period from the Distinction, Identification, Space, and Discourtesy Aspects. 東華人文學報 / Dong Hwa Journal of Humanistic Studies no. 15 (July 1, 2009): p.172-173; (左上的乞丐，下方的貧民，食前方丈的官員，和戴眼鏡的男性)，(他明顯吃的是西餐).



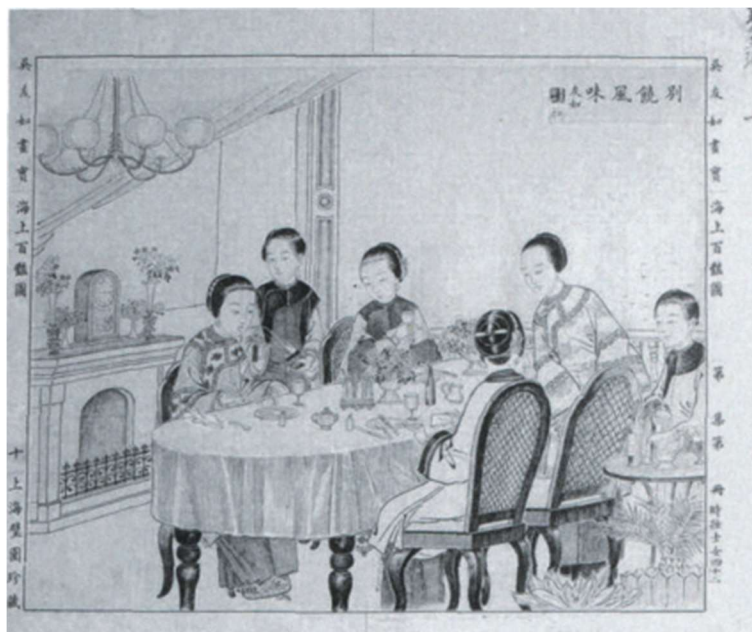
**Figure 3: “吃飯之不平 (Inequality in Eating)”<sup>73</sup>**

Similarly, Qiu’s writing also demonstrates an illustration of the connection between wealth and Western food. In his work, Qiu references Youru Wu’s painting. As seen in Figure 4, Qiu explains that “Several women wearing Qing-style clothes, their feet are bound as the three-inch golden lotus, they have horizontal S-shaped buns on their hair, sitting at the dining table eating dacan.”<sup>74</sup> Every sentence of Qiu’s description indicates their wealth and status. Just like the illustration provided by Chen in his work, Qiu’s reference also demonstrates the strong connection between one’s status and their likelihood of eating Western food. From these examples, one can clearly see that those who regularly attend Western restaurants are mostly upper class elites. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that people held an egotistical opinion

<sup>73</sup> 圖畫日報，第一冊，頁57, cited in 清末民初的上海西餐館—以“區分”、“認同”、“空間”及“失禮”爲主的初步討論 / The Preliminary Discussion on the Western Restaurants in Shanghai during Late Qing to Early New China Period from the Distinction, Identification, Space, and Discourtesy Aspects, Yuan-Peng Chen, 東華人文學報 / Dong Hwa Journal of Humanistic Studies no. 15 (July 1, 2009): p.172.

<sup>74</sup> 裘爭平, 海上風行請大餐”, 檔案春秋 .11(2009):62; (几位身穿清代大襟服、脚为三寸金莲、头梳横S发髻的女子, 正端坐在餐台前吃大餐).

about eating Western food because they felt that it would improve their own status by doing so. This is also why they are often seen to criticize those who are unfamiliar with Western food since it is a way for them to demonstrate their status.



**Figure 4: “别饶风味 (Unique Flavor)”<sup>75</sup>**

### Conclusion

In summary, the increase of Western presence near the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century resulted in the Westernization of Chinese port cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. As a result, these cities’ residents encountered Western elements, such as Western food culture, on a daily basis. However, due to the aggressive Western presence, negative public relations, and Western cuisine’s high pricing, Western food did not efficiently integrate into Chinese society. To solve these issues, Cantonese entrepreneurs established

<sup>75</sup> 别饶风味, 吴友如画宝. In “海上风行请大餐”, 裘争平, 档案春秋 .11(2009):62.

Chinese-owned Western restaurants called fancaiguan, which created incentives for the Chinese to try Western food that they would normally choose otherwise. The Chinese were able to separate their opinions on Westerners and Western food culture, thus granting the success of Western food's integration into Chinese society. Many of these fancaiguan were also extremely successful in their business, which they expanded in the following decade into the likes of dance halls and hotels.

Through case studies of two successful fancaiguan, namely Yipinxiang and Taai Pihng Gun, and the comparison with a traditional Chinese restaurant, Jufengyuan, this paper provided evidence for its claims with real-life examples. Moreover, this paper also covered the Chinese people's opinions on Western food culture through its utilization of primary sources such as newspapers and illustrations. In the end, this paper was able to prove its argument that Chinese-owned Western restaurants not only gave many Chinese an opportunity to try Western cuisine but also allowed Westernized Chinese elites to assert their status. Furthermore, the appearance of Western cuisine sparked the anxieties of globalization and non-adaptation to the West among the Chinese.

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