

TRAFFIC AND URBAN CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE EASTERN RAILWAY'S IMPACT ON HARBIN CITY (1903-1931)

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Abstract

The development of modern railways has had a profound impact on Chinese cities, especially, in the context of the aggression to modern China. Harbin, once a rural area nearby Songhua River, has been transformed into an international city of modern China, the most significant reason is the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway during 1898-1903. It became the external force that changed Harbin. With the railway's opened, Harbin became the center of commodity trade exchange, while more and more people settled in Harbin. Immigrants who came from different countries and places brought their own culture and customs into Harbin, which impacted Chinese people who lived in Harbin. Therefore, this paper examines the impact of the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway on the cultural diversity of Harbin city from the perspective of railway-induced social change.

Keywords: Modernisation, Harbin, Urban culture, Cultural assimilation.

INTRODUCTION

Modern inventions and invasions changed world politics, geography, and cultural life. Western powers emerged as ruling and hegemonic authorities on several regions and countries and colonized. Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), as a new transport was constructed by Russia in Northeastern China during the late Qing Dynasty (Xiao, 2021). It

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had a huge impact on the region along the railway, from the construction of the railway to the train operation. While the railway system had its own operating way so that its completion and opening initiated the historical process of regional industrialization and early modernization (Qu, 2014).

Even though the Chinese Eastern Railway was an effort to the Harbin's development, it created mass issues at the same time. Especially, the operation and most benefits of railway under Russian control, and the creation of colonial power through Chinese Eastern Railway (He & Yu, 2021). Along with the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway, Russian colonial power penetrated the areas along the railroad and Russian culture began to influence the areas around the railroad deeply at the same time (Guo, 2020).

The Harbin city was founded in northern China to serve as the center of the construction and the main junction and administration center of the Russian-built Chinese Eastern Railway (Olga, 1986). Starting as a colonial railway hub, financed and administered by the Russians, Harbin became not only the most important economic and strategic center in North-East Asia during the first decades of the 20th century but also the object of competing interests opposing a fragmented China, the Russian (and after 1917 the Soviet) empire, Japan and various other colonial powers (Thomas, 1998). Harbin as a "Dependent Territory" (Ma, 2018) of the Chinese Eastern Railway was formed by colonial powers.

Many immigrants, from countries and other provinces of China settled down in Harbin by rail. Therefore, the development of Harbin city showed the complexity during that time.

The CER was opened in 1903, and the Japanese invaded in 1932. Therefore, the period between 1903-31 is the first phase in which the urbanization progress happened in Harbin. It played an important part in the making of Harbin city, as an international city and the key railway hub city in northeast China. This paper aims to trace

comprehensive and objective understanding of the relationship between the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the historical changes and the development of culture in Harbin city after the Chinese Eastern Railway's built.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature on Railway and Urban Culture, the early correlation work is *The Historical Changes of Modern Northeast Cities* (Qu, 2001). written by Qu Xiaofan, which divided the stage of development of northeast cities and showed reasons during the late 19th century. The other relevant works about CER affected Harbin, such as culture, economy (Zhang, 2018), education (Yao, 2019) and so on. Shi Fang summarized Harbin multi-cultural which analyzed CER broke out Harbin's traditional community studies. Therefore, it began its wrenching social transformation in the early 20th century (Shi, 2012). Harbin was an international city during that time, more and more foreign people settled down after the CER opened. Especially, Russian (Shi, Gao, & Liu, 2011), Jewish (Abraham, 2019), Japanese, Korean. It included many immigrants from the other provinces of China (Shi, 2019). These foreign cultures intertwined with the local culture to create the unique urban culture of Harbin in modern times.

RESEARCH METHOD

For this research study, the qualitative method is along with a historical and analytical approach. With the expansion of the research horizon and the change of methodology, while insisting on the premise of the economic plundering and sovereign invasion of China by the Western powers, it emphasizes the basic concept of modern technology and economic and trade development as the fundamental driving force of the two regional societies in modern times. Study focuses on social changes characterized by industrialization, urbanization, modernization of the management system and social changes triggered by the introduction of the modern transportation system into China. It has the academic value of refining the

modernization process of China. A convenient approach is adopted according to the requirement of the research work. Primary data collection was made through autobiographies of relevant personalities and government documents etc. Secondary sources include data collection from books, journals, and magazines. Both the primary and secondary sources were analysed to find out the fact and thoughts of the Chinese Eastern Railway's impact on Harbin's culture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this study, the theory of "colonize and rule" is applied. The majority of colonial policies and reforms were implemented against the will and welfare of the Chinese people. Before the 1990s, Chinese scholars have gradually refined their research on the construction of the CER, but most of the relevant studies have been mainly negative. Currently, more and more Chinese scholars have focused on the perspective of transportation and regional social change and examined the impact of railroads on urban culture in a positive way. Therefore, their paper analyzes the impact of the construction of the CER on the multi-culturalism and cultural diversity in Harbin from an objective perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of Chinese Eastern Railway

The Chinese Eastern Railway was built with the cooperation of the two countries nominally, in reality, it was a railroad with the characteristics of an invasion led by the powers. There is a fact that Harbin's rise as a modern city was accompanied by the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. In the second half of the 19th century, Russia failed in a series of expansions in Europe and the Near East. Shifting eyes to the Far East, including Northeast China and Korean Peninsula, could help Russia to develop the Far East policy. Planned as an extension of the Russian Trans-Siberian Railroad, the Chinese Eastern Railway was Russia's shortest route to the warm-water port

of Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan.

After the Opium War I, many advanced-minded Qing government officials recognized the importance of railroads to national defense and national development. In addition, as foreign aggression intensified, it was necessary to build a railway in northeast China for them. The northeast China region is blessed with an excellent geographical location and abundant natural resources. It could become a barrier between Russia, Japan, and China. At the same time, it was a junction between Asia and Europe. Therefore, the railway for the Qing government was very important.

Even there was an agreement between the Qing government and Tsarist Russia government, Korean as Sino-Russian Secret Treaty in 1896 (Kawakami, 1932). As per secret agreement, Russia was given the right to construct the Chinese Eastern Railway. It should be exploited as a private commercial enterprise (Liang, 1930).

In the survey, the engineers divided the main railroad line into 6 main surveyed areas and 13 road building areas. The trunk line of CER was divided into 3 main lines: the western branch is Harbin-Manzhouli Railway, the eastern branch is Harbin-Suifenhe Railway, the southern branch is Harbin-Lvshun Railway. Harbin was the site that subsequently became the junction of the mainline of the railway with the branch line southward to Port Arthur (John, 1932). In the middle of 1903, the CER was officially opened to traffic and became a major transportation artery in Northeast China (He & Han, 2016). However, the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) was the product of Russian colonial China, which can control northeast China's strength. Russia plundered the resources of Northeast China through CER, exported domestic goods and capital at the same time.

Harbin's Development in 1898-1931

Harbin was born on May 28th, 1898, when the CER administration office moved to Harbin (Qu, 2014). Harbin is located in the heart of

Northeast Asia and is a typical inland transportation city relying on modern railways. (He & Han, 2016). Trade and industry arose, and the town settlements along the line showed an astonishing development, especially Harbin (Vostrotin, 1932). To fulfil CER's construction, Russians merged many villages around the Harbin. Two determinants impacted the birth of Harbin, water transport and geographic location. It played a vital role in the future development of Harbin.

Harbin has its geographical conditions which are located in the Middle parts of the Songhua River and flat terrain. Meanwhile, this place can transport building materials and labour in a convenient way, which can save more time and capital. At the same time, in the process of construction of the railway, the primary district zone was formed in Harbin gradually. The construction of the CER has brought great influence on the urban development of Harbin and accelerated the pace of modern urban construction in Harbin (Fan, 2002). Meanwhile, the railway affected and restricted Harbin's urban form and space to a certain extent, and its influences continued to today. Therefore, it was the first stage of Harbin becoming a city.

On the one hand, the railroad was built under the forced intervention of outside forces, and therefore had an impact on the urban culture of Harbin. On the other hand, can show the railway's impact on different cities, which the railway did not cross. Despite the railways' construction influencing cities in the region, the Russian was aimed at the occupation of Northeast China.

Population in Harbin

Harbin, built on the site of an insignificant Chinese village, which was a population of 384,585 (Chinese, 309,253; Japanese and Koreans, 5,332; other nationalities, chiefly Russian, 70,000) (Vostrotin, 1932) in 1930. As Harbin developed from a traditional community system dominated by a scattered natural village economy into a modern city (Shi, 2012), it can be said that immigrants constitute the bulk of the

population, in the first 30 years of the 20th century. With the opening of the CER in 1903, the total population of Harbin was 70,000, and it reached over 400,000 in 1932 (Harbin, 2000). Along with the expanding geographical area of Harbin, a considerable number of people were included in the area of Harbin. In the process of the continuous rise of Harbin, a large number of businessmen, entrepreneurs came Harbin. During the rule of Tsarist Russia, the presence and frequent movement of large invading forces, as well as a large transient population, were the main reasons for Harbin's population growth. In 1907, Harbin opened as a city of commerce, merchants and capitalists from all over the world flocked to the city via the agreement.

Two types of immigrants came to Harbin at that time: Chinese immigrants from other places and foreign immigrants. For Chinese immigrants, famine and war in the areas where they lived prompted them to leave their homeland and go to Harbin. According to the statistics, the construction of the railroad requires more labor which came from the other parts of China like Shandong Province and Hebei Province. At the same time, the development and construction of Harbin also made some domestic merchants to see the economic benefits, national capital also came in droves to start factories or business trade. In particular, the opening of Harbin to commerce in 1907 provided opportunities for the development of local and national industry and commerce.

With the construction of the CER an influx of Russians came to north-eastern China, who became the first Russian immigrants to enter the country. Among them were construction workers, technicians, merchants, religious people, and a group of railroad guards. For the sake of long-term interests, Tsarist Russia also made a large number of military migrations to northeast China. The Russian military migration to the northeast of China for long-term interests. At the same time, the CER construction by the attraction of Japanese immigrants, European immigrants, and other countries immigrants

also came to Harbin, where they invested in factories, started all kinds of industries.

Table 1: Total Population of Harbin in 1931 (Harbin, 2000)

Year	Population	Year	Population
1898	3000-5000	1914	170,000
1899	More than 40,000	1922	380,000
1903	70,000	1932	400,000
1907	100,000		

Table 2: Foreign Immigrant Population of Harbin in 1931

British	American	Germany	French	Italian	Polish	Greek
239	86	290	74	59	1090	50
Danish	Austrian	Czechs	Swedish	Japanese	Dutch	
48	34	139	22	4046	38	

NOTE: According to the Immigration History of Heilongjiang, Population change in Harbin.

However, there was a large number of Jewish and Korean in Harbin during that time. Due to the mobility of the population, it is not possible to estimate the accurate number. According to the primary document, there were 12,000-13,000 Jewish in Harbin in 1920 (Xu, 2006). In addition, during that period, Harbin had become the largest center of Jewish activity in East Asia. With the Jewish population reaching a maximum of 25,000 and its influence spreading throughout the world (Shi, 2019). There were 2934 Korean in Harbin in 1928 (Wang, 2008).

Foreigners of many nationalities living in Harbin for their respective needs of life, have established different styles of cultures and formal

immigrant associations and communities. These communities include Russian, White Russian, Polish, Jewish, Korean, Japanese, Czech, Greek, etc. The different structures of the expatriate community have formed a distinctive social group of immigrants from different cultural backgrounds. This allows immigrants to display and promote their national culture to the maximum extent in Harbin, a city of immigration, and allows the integration of different national cultures into Harbin, where they take root and develop, thus jointly creating a multi-source urban culture in Harbin, which the other northeast cities didn't have.

Since the CER was built for aggressive purposes by Tsarist Russia, more and more Russians came to work and settled in Harbin after the completion of the railroad. In addition, between 1898 and 1914, the Russian people in Harbin increased from about 8,000 to over 40,000 (Heilongjiang, 1996). In 1912, the number of Russians in Harbin reached 43,091, which is only a count of Russians living in Harbin (Shi, 2003). In 1922, the Russian people in Harbin reached 150,000. But the number of Russians along the entire CER was much larger than this. Compared with other countries, majority of the immigrants were Russians and Harbin's culture was impacted by Russian mostly.

Trade and Industry in Harbin

When the CER opened, Harbin became a distribution center for commodity cargo transportation, which connected Europe and Asia (Wang, 1996). Every year just through the CER more than 500,000 tons of soybean exported to Europe and the United States (Li & Shi, 1987). In 1931, the Soviet Union shipped 370,000 tons of soybeans and wheat from Heilongjiang through the Liaodong Export Company established in Harbin (Li & Shi, 1987). According to the Chinese Eastern Railway Stations Survey Book, which was published in 1930 recorded, Harbin exports more than 1,456,000 tons of grain, 60 percent of which is sold to Europe and Japan.

In addition, many industry factories were built during that period. By the end of 1905, there were 8 Russian-invested flour mills in Harbin (Xin, Zhang & Gao, 1999). After World War I, there were 23 flour mills, most of them invested by the Chinese. In 1929, Harbin had 37 Oil production plants (Li & Shi, 1987). With the continuous development of the economy, Harbin's commercial system had been gradually improved. Chambers of commerce were established in different fields, such as Harbin Chamber of Commerce, Oil Industry Association, Banking Association, etc. (Chinese Eastern Railway Special Region Road Police Division, 1930).

The railroad became the medium of transmission of Western industrial civilization into Harbin. Since 1898, Western civilization impacted Harbin in many aspects includes economics, Industry, communication, teaching, and so on. In particular, Harbin's economy and trade have grown significantly.

The Multi-Cultural Social Life in Harbin

During the period 1898-1931, the city of Harbin was characterized by openness and inclusiveness, rapid modernization of the city, and great changes in the lives of its citizens. The combined effect of the external forces of the CER and the internal forces of the Chinese nationalists propelled Harbin from a village to the first metropolis in the Far East (Sheng & Liu, 2019). In the process of transnational migration, immigrants inevitably bring their own national cultures to the countries they migrate to, resulting in profoundly different cultural encounters (Zheng, 2017). What's more, the multi-source expatriate culture has profoundly influenced the overall cultural and economic life of the city of Harbin and the surrounding areas. The international culture had affected Harbin's religion, food, and leisure life, which people who lived in Harbin. Especially the new leisure life emerged in Harbin, such as cinemas, opera houses, and clubs.

Countless expatriates entered the city via this railroad and brought their own unique culture with them. Likewise, multinational cultures

and traditional Chinese culture collide in Harbin. In addition, it created Harbin's unique urban culture. Compared with others, the city of Harbin is full of European-style architecture, especially the lifestyle is influenced by Russian styles.

Orthodox in Harbin

There were 6 main religions in Harbin during the period 1901-1931 included: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, and Orthodox Christianity. The first Orthodox Christianity church was built in 1898 by Zhuravsky, it has 49 Orthodox Christian churches in Heilongjiang Province till in 1931. During 30 years, an Orthodox Church network system was formed with Harbin as the axis of the radiation Binzhou line, Binsui line, Binchang line, and more than 20 railway stations points along the line, which of them, there were 27 Orthodox Churches in Harbin (Heilongjiang, 1996).

The construction of the Harbin Orthodox Church is inextricably linked to the CER. The Orthodox Church was a necessity for the life of the CER staff. Most Russians were of the Orthodox faith and the church was a necessary spiritual anchor in life. At the time of the construction of the CER, Harbin was a foreign land for many Russians, so the church had the role of maintaining the cohesion of the employees and soldiers of the CER. Therefore, the church and the construction of the railroad were carried out simultaneously. The establishment and maintenance of the Orthodox Church were financed by the CER.

As the 19th century progressed, Tsarist Russia, in response to the need to expand its aggression against China, began to use the Orthodox secular role of the Church. The missionary society was no longer a mere missionary organization in the early days but evolved into an organization for the Tsarist government to collect information on China's economy, culture, and politics.

According to statistics, from 1898 to 1956, there were 97 Orthodox churches in the entire northeast region, of which 22 were in Harbin. On June 2, 1922, the Diocese of Harbin was established to oversee religious affairs along with the CER, as well as in Vladivostok and Australia. In 1922, there were 150,000 Orthodox CER is trained in Harbin, more than the number of Chinese residents (Heilongjiang, 1996).

Church culture is an important part of Harbin's urban culture, as well. These churches brought Western architecture, Western music, painting, and other arts to Harbin. These churches also started Harbin's modern charity such as orphanages, hospitals, and soup kitchens.

Leisure life in Harbin

The development of the modern transportation industry, especially the railroad, has greatly impacted the traditional regional economic pattern, which not only promotes the rise of new cities along the railroad line but also changes the traditional urban and rural economic pattern and development mode. It affects people's daily life habits, as well. The leisure life of people in Harbin has gradually become more enriching.

Firstly, food culture has spread over the people who lived in Harbin.

After the arrival of the Russians, farmers along the railroad line began to sow tomatoes and sugar cane. These two crops were soon accepted by the Chinese in Harbin. Russian food, such as bread, sausages, beer, sweets, pastries, etc. became popular among the Chinese in Harbin. For example, Modern Hotel, Hua Mei Russian Restaurant. On the other way, language became a bridge between Russians and Chinese people in Harbin. In the course of interaction with the Russians, Chinese who lived in Harbin absorbed many words from the Russian language as a national regional language, some of them are still in vogue today. Like: 列巴 (Russian bread), 伏特加 (Vodka).

In addition to Russian food a large number of Korean and Japanese settled down in Harbin and made a great contribution to the food culture of Harbin. Because Korean and Japanese have familiar city with Chinese food, included: rice, soup, and vegetables, but they cook differently. There were many Korean and Japanese restaurants in Harbin at that time.

Secondly, movies became a popular way to enrich entertainment of life.

Harbin owned the first professional cinema of China in 1902, which was opened by Russian. There were 64 cinemas in Harbin during 1902-1931, Russian 15, Japanese 8, American 2, French 1, Italian 1, Chinese 37 (Jiang, 2003). The different themes of the film were released in Harbin, including war, love, education. Compared with foreign films, the Chinese films were very few.

Thirdly, western opera and music appeared in Harbin.

Harbin had become the most influential inland city of Western culture in modern China, with many outstanding expatriate musicians bringing Western symphonic music, jazz, opera, and ballet to Harbin in the early 20th century (Xiao, 2021). The Russian people love music, and in 1899, the Tsarist army band was stationed in Harbin's Xiangfang district, which was the first Western band in the history of Harbin. In 1903, with the support of CER Management, the first music school was established in Harbin. Many other Orthodox churches also had choirs. There were also choirs in many Orthodox churches, which produced many famous singers. Harbin is always called "Music City", Harbin Music Festival is held every year until now.

CONCLUSION

Harbin is a city of immigrants, and the CER became an important factor in its rise, so Harbin's transformation from a fishing village to a cosmopolitan city is inseparable from the operation of the CER. The collision and fusion of Eastern and Western cultures is the most charming part of Harbin in history. This openness, innovation, and tolerance as a characteristic of the diverse culture is a city heritage worth cherishing.

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