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MINUTES OF THE SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



This collection replicates all the minutes of meetings held by the Board of Directors of the Shanghai Municipal Council from July 1854 to December 1943. A wide range of topics were discussed at these board meetings, such as sanitation, transportation, telecommunication and postal service, taxation, urban planning, gas supply, street lighting, rickshaw operator management, animal protection, and police system. The minutes taken from July 1854 to December 1906 are handwritten while the rest are typewritten.

Date Range: 1854 to 1943

Content: 14,758 images

Source Library: Shanghai Classics Publishing House and Shanghai Municipal Archives

Detailed Description:

The Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) was founded on July 11, 1854 by a group of Western businessmen to govern the daily matters and infrastructure in the Shanghai International Settlement. Boards established under the SMC include the Board of Roads and Wharfs, the Board of Police, the Board of Taxation, the Board of Finance. Among other subsidiary departments are the Public Health Department and the Nuisance Department. Members of each council (including its chairman) were elected annually by the taxpayers' general meeting with a term of one year and they could be re-elected. The British held the largest number of seats on the Council and headed all the Municipal departments. The only department not chaired by a Briton was the Municipal Orchestra, which was controlled by an Italian. No Chinese residing in the International Settlement were permitted to join the council until 1928.

By the mid-1880s, the Council had evolved into a practical monopoly over the city's businesses. It bought up all the local gas suppliers, electricity producers, and water-companies, then-during the 20th century-took control over all non-private rickshaws and the Settlement tramways. It also regulated opium sales and prostitution until their banning in 1918 and 1920 respectively.

The SMC was dissolved on December 17, 1943.

As the policy-making body of the SMC, the Board of Directors made decisions at the board meetings on various aspects of the Shanghai International Settlement, including the appointments and removals within the various boards and departments of the SMC. This collection reproduces all the meeting minutes now stored at the Shanghai Municipal Archives. It presents a detailed, comprehensive record of all the meetings held by the SMC board of directors for a period of 89 years from July 1854 to December 1943. A wide range of topics were discussed at these board meetings, such as sanitation, transportation, telecommunication and postal service, taxation, urban planning, gas supply, street lighting, rickshaw operator management, animal protection, and police system.

During the period covered by these minutes, Shanghai, as a treaty port, transformed from a traditional small coastal town into a trade center of China and eventually an international metropolis that nurtured many of China's and even the world's modern industrial and commercial businesses. It is also a period when China went through tremendous cultural and political transformation from an imperial dynasty toward a modern republic in the midst of constitutional reforms, republican revolution, the first and second Sino-Japanese Wars, and the civil war between the communists and the nationalists. All such events are also reflected one way or another in the minutes of SMC.