

The Social Context of Pei-yang Pictorials' Modernism

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Abstract. Pictorial is an important form of mass media in modern society with its unique features. This paper mainly analyzes the social context that contributes to the modernism of city pictorials with thorough introductions of the social and historical environment. The quintessential modernism reflected in media ontology is also delivered because of the development of technology. During the 1930s China's pictorials emerged as an important modern mass media since the first issue of Yinghuan Pictorial in 1877. During the 1920s and 1930s Chinese pictorials progressed to a large extent. "In the latest ten years, it develops rapidly that can keep pace with the world's pictorials." [1] For instance, in July, 1926 The Young Companion was launched in Shanghai and Pei-yang Pictorial appeared in Tianjin. The Young Companion was called "the most perfect pictorial of today" [2] Pei-yang Pictorial was taken as "the most famous copper-plate-pressed pictorial"[3] which was sold very well in north. Both of them were the best pictorials. This paper takes Pei-yang Pictorial as the representative of modern mass media and explores the context where the modern pictorials produced from the modernity of cities and the ontology development of the media to present a real picture of the survival environment for modern pictorials.

Keywords: Pictorial, city pictorials, mass media, modern pictorials.

1. Emergence of Pei-yang Pictorial in Modern Tianjin

Pei-yang Pictorial is both the classical representative of modern pictorials and the derivative of city modernity. It was targeted at "broadcasting current affairs, advocating art, and infusing knowledge" being launched on July, 7th, 1926 and ended on July, 29th, 1937. Totally 1587 issues were published. Generally speaking, the modernity of Pei-yang Pictorial was reflected in the following aspects. At first, its content was vivid and relaxing and showed the codes of modern implication. For example, it introduced the western world that "there are many anecdotes in foreign countries and we'd better do a lot of introduction. We shall try to make Pei-yang Pictorial as both the only pictorial of China and the international beautiful one" [4] Secondly, the aim of Pei-yang Pictorial was to pursue the aesthetics "so we emphasize on artification. And we devote to moving people and guiding them to the bright road for the wonderful art as far as possible." [5] It was a popular expression of "replacing religion with aesthetic education" proposed by Mr. Cai Yuanpei that art was used to move people and save the society. This pursuit of aesthetics was the expression of aesthetic modernity, which actually conveyed information in form of images. "The desire for 'pictures' has become a mood of the times ----- in which reading pictures is important." [6] Picture-reading times was the production and consumption of images. "The society has entered in to an "era" when one of the main social activities is to produce and consume images and they are indispensable for the health of economy, the stability of politics and the pursuit of individual happiness." [7] Reading pictures is the representation of modern society. Pei-yang Pictorial had distinct modernity attribute. The modernity of Tianjin met the inner requirements of Pei-yang Pictorial as a modern pictorial.

1.1 Pei-yang Pictorial Derived from Tianjin Concession with Modern Culture Features

Concessions represented the West and provided the soil for the western politics, economy and culture to grow in Tianjin. Since 1860s, Tianjin was forced to zone concessions for 9 nations, with an area of more than 23000 mu, 9.82 times of Chengxiang district (which is 156.24 hectares). This made Tianjin start modernization process while being humiliated and invaded. "Modernity" was closely related with "the West" and "the new" in China of the period when Pei-yang Pictorial was launched. "Modernity" represented not only the attention to the current but also the pursuit for the

future 'new' things and the West 'novel' ones. [8] The social life in concession decided the development of Tianjin and offered the modern social context for the emergence of Pei-yang Pictorial.

The Completion of Quanyechang was published in the 238th issue of Pei-yang Pictorial on November, 1st, 1928. Pei-yang Pictorial gave a very detailed description of the newly completed Quanyechang. It was the business, catering and entertainment center as well as the transportation hub which belongs to the French concession. The French concession was the most prosperous area in Tianjin, known as "Little Paris". Pei-yang Pictorial was also produced here.

Quanyechang was the largest comprehensive mall at that time. It was the symbol of Tianjin's commerce and its prosperity symbolized modern city. "On the first floor are the foreign goods, silk, shoes, garments, foods and other shops,...only on the third floor are jewelries, antique and second-hand clothes," "on the third floor are a western restaurant, Shandong restaurant, tea house and billiard room," "on the fourth, fifth and sixth floors are various theaters." There were foreign goods, silk, shoes, foods and other stores on the first to the third floor, restaurants and billiard room on the third floor, and kinds of recreational places on the fourth to sixth floor. It was not the first comprehensive mall in Tianjin. Once there was Zhongyuan Company in the Japanese concession, Tianxiang mall and Kangtai mall in the French concession. The construction of large shopping malls made coexistence of all sizes shops possible, let comprehensive and specialized ones complement each other, and formed systematic modern commercial pattern. Meanwhile, the development of commerce modernized the commercial concept gradually. A report said "all the shops are different from each other and goods are novel. They are not afraid of competition and suitable for cooperation. Thus they should be gathered together, which is convenient for customers. The limitation is to prevent exclusion and regulate business with a decent purpose." This was the creation of a modern business environment, allowing all shops to operate well under the discipline of competition and cooperation.

The recreational modes originated from concessions with traditional ones constitutes the central part of Tianjin urban culture, which was often concerned by Pei-yang Pictorial. Thus Quanyechang became the symbol of Tianjin's recreational and leisure life. "All current affairs, fine art, science, art, games, various paintings and calligraphy shall be selected and published by Pei-yang Pictorial, and then it can become a perfect newspaper." [9] "Art" and "Games" basically referred to the leisure and entertainment of the city. Pei-yang Pictorial opened drama column and film column to publish the leisure and entertainment contents. The recreational part of Quanyechang included "on the third floor are a western restaurant, Shandong restaurant, tea house and billiard room,...,Tianwei Billiard Room is broad inside and well-equipped. There are ten tables in a hall, which is not only the first one in Tianjin but also rare in Shanghai. On the fourth, fifth and sixth floors are various theaters, totally four, namely Tianhuajing Peking Opera Theatre, Tiangong Cinema, Tianhuixuan Acrobatics Pavilion and Tianxian Jumping Theatre (the names of the four theaters start with Tian which means that owner of Quanyechang is a shareholder of them)." "There are two-layer round rooms and one hall used for art exhibition." Both traditional and western recreational modes converged here, including, western restaurant, billiard room, theater, cinema, folk musical theatre, and exhibition hall. The setting of Quanyechang indicated that the first was the continuous pursuit of the modernity of the west. "It is not only the first one in Tianjin but also rare in Shanghai." Since the Republican period, Shanghai has become the representative of modern city. Thus Quanyechang of Tianjin owned such large billiard room that was not easy to be found in Shanghai, which was indeed a fashion event worth celebrating. It was the frontier of national westernization and new tide. The second was that the city modern entertainment represented by western recreation had been gradually popularized and incorporated into the culture of this city. Tiangong Theatre in Quanyechang, for example, "floors are inclined that the view is wide and unobstructed." It seemed well-equipped from this introduction. But it was fully occupied everyday because the ticket for all seats was 1 jiao (10% of Yuan) each, both upstairs and downstairs and no box. Obviously, movies had become the important entertainment for Tianjin citizens.

Pei-yang Pictorial used the modern perspective to interpret and shape the city --Tianjin-- through its introduction on and attention to Quanyechang. It was the modernity overflowing over the

concessions that gave birth to a modern city pictorial. The construction of Quanyechang highlighted the modernization of Tianjin's urban construction and the city culture represented by the concessions.

1.2 Yugongs Played Essential Roles in the Production and Consumption of Pei-yang Pictorial's Modernity

From the early republican period to 1930s, Yugong in Tianjin was an very influential class in the society, generally referring to "survivals of bygone ages of Qing Dynasty who gradually settled down in the early republican period" at first and then "the Pei-yang politicians and various warlord bigwigs who have been out of office" [10] It was estimated that there were about 500 influential Yugongs in Tianjin. They promoted the development of Tianjin. Especially, their lifestyle represented the modern life of Tianjin.

Yugongs were the leaders and makers of urban fashion, which makes them important consumers of urban modernization. No matter whether they accepted the western lifestyle or stuck to the traditional lifestyle, they were pioneers in leading the modern lifestyles. They travelled by cars, and sometimes accompanied their wives or lovers to theaters or cinemas. Some of them set up drama stage at home to invite famous opera stars of Tianjin to perform. They sent their children to accept western-style education in Nankai School or Nankai University. They even built their own tennis courts and play tennis at home for pleasure. No matter Mr. XuShichang who used to be a Jinshi (a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations) of Qing Dynasty or Mr. Li Yuanhong who had accepted the western-style education, or Cao Kun who used to sell cloth, all loved paintings and calligraphy. As Yugongs, they had joyful and refined interests in paintings and calligraphy. Of course, they had abilities to contact famous artists to collect calligraphy, paintings, and antique treasures. "Qi Baishi and Cao Kun were very close friends. Cao's seals were mostly carved by Qi Baishi, with words, 'Commoner Qi Huang', on one side." [11] Yugong class used such modern lifestyle directly participated in the construction of Tianjin, as a modern city. At the same time, they were the focus of urban modern media like Pei-yang Pictorial. Even the artworks like Mr. XuShichang's "fan surface and vertical shaft sometimes appeared on famous Pei-yang Pictorial". [12] Yugongs were the important readers of Pei-yang Pictorial. "Pei-yang Pictorial were always called nobles' newspaper,... because pictorials couldn't be too common in modern China and its own environment and must be read by the intellectuals." [13]

There were also a group of spiritual nobles in Yugong class who were the wealthiest with highest social position. Even their noble status had been deprived of, they still maintained the pursuit of spiritual nobles. For example, Yuan Kewen, the second son of Yuan Shikai, and Han Shenxian, the grandson of Han Lingewhos was the official of Ministry of Personnel in Qing Dynasty, are both proficient in paintings and calligraphy and had a keen interest in treasures and Beijing Opera. They had a persistent pursuit of beauty. "This kind of person only cultivate ideas of beauty in their own mind to satisfy lust, feel and reflect." [14] They naturally involved themselves in Pei-yang Pictorial because they could exhibit a beautiful universe together and realize the lead of beauty. Mr. FengWuyue, the founder of Pei-yang Pictorial, was not Yugong but a blue blood, also called spiritual noble. "It was a small editing room and also a meeting room full of friends...and contact with the celebrities at a higher ranking like Yuan Hanyun, Fang Dishan, Tong Manqiu and others." [15] "At that time, Han Shenxian, also called Xia Shan Lou Zhu who was a famous amateur performer of Tan Genre and connoisseur, was also the honored guest of Pei-yang Pictorial". [16] It can be seen that the noble pursuers of spirit like Yuan Hanyun and Han Shenxian not only published their works in the pictorial but also participated in it.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Tianjin experienced rapid development. From urban construction to cultural production and consumption then to the citizens active in the city, they all shaped Tianjin's urban modernity. It was such environment that made Pei-yang Pictorial appear and develop in Tianjin.

2. Emergence of Pei-yang Pictorial with the Modernization of Media Ontology

As mentioned above, Yinghuan Pictorial was founded since 1877 and it was more than 50 years when Pei-yang Pictorial emerged. Its content types had been changed from focusing on news to interests, techniques changed from lithography to photocopy. The modernization of the media ontology of pictorials provided plentiful professional background for Pei-yang Pictorial.

2.1 The "Pictorial Style" of Comprehensive Modern Pictorials Represented by Dianshizhai Pictorial

Dianshizhai Pictorial was the representative of China's early pictorial, and it started the "pictorial style" in Chen Ping's words. Indeed, its "pictorial style" had deep influences on the later pictorials. The pictures in Dianshizhai Pictorial were more for news. Rudolf • G • Wagner said, "We are able to feel the topicality just by glancing at the first article in Dianshizhai Pictorial published in April, 1884." [17] Dianshizhai Pictorial emphasized both current news and interesting affairs. In fact, the image itself has more vivid and interesting aesthetic features than texts. In addition, the positioning of Dianshizhai Pictorial itself was a relaxing reading materia, which could be directly found in The Creation of Dianshizhai Pictorial, the first article in Dianshizhai Pictorial. "Select novel and enjoyable affairs", which showed that the materials were selected according to interests.

Such concept directly influenced the development of later pictorials. As mentioned above, the principle of Pei-yang Pictorial was first to select current affairs, and it further interpreted that "the materials are drawn from all the current affairs, such as mass movement, national ceremony, national humiliation, real war, various inventions, society and recreation, gatherings,... publish at any time "[18] It also paid attention to the interesting affairs and its positioning was leisure reading, so the pictorial "will publish more interesting pictures and articles" [19]. Certainly, Pei-yang Pictorial which appeared nearly 30 years later than Dianshizhai Pictorial did not only emphasize these two aspects but also had its own characteristics, such as advocating to enlighten people through artistic beautiful life.

2.2 The Development of Pictorials with Modern Technology

The modernization of technology plays a key role in the development of pictorials, since technology innovation always marks the period division of pictorials. The printing technology used for pictorials has experienced three stages, namely, lithography, copperplate printing, and photocopy. Thus, Pei-yang Pictorial came into being in the period of copperplate printing. The photo-copper plate printing replaced the lithography to make materials more abundant and printing more artistic. It focused more on artification based on the "pictorial style" that concerned about current and interesting affairs. Picture Weekly, the founder of copperplate printed pictorial, had mentioned in its introduction that "try to advocate art and improve interests in reading". This was perhaps why the pictorial style itself could not separate from art. In particular, the photo-copperplate printing increased the richness and precision to reproduce the world and tried to arouse the interests of readers in appreciating art by pictures. It had deep influences on Pei-yang Pictorial. Artistry was always pursued by Pei-yang Pictorial. "Our pictorial has a slogan ---- advocating art"[20], that is, the artistic beauty, "So endeavor to elaborately select materials and beautify the surface and avoid to use the pictures that cannot arouse aesthetic feeling"[21]. And as for introduction of art, "both Chinese and foreign arts will be widely introduced to advocate the principle of art." [22]

Facing the super technology innovation, Pei-yang Pictorial stressed the exquisite layout. As a copperplate printed pictorial it emphasized the refined layout and photocopy printed ones bragging its quality, which improved the whole industry. While Pei-yang Pictorial and other copperplate printed pictorials developed, the new photocopy printing technology prevailed in China. The first one using it was The Young Companion. Its 45th issue in March, 1930 was printed by photocopy. Though the contents were similar with the copperplate printed pictorials, all revealing news, interesting affairs and arts, the printing was very sophisticated. The followers like Times and Wen Hua had done a good job. Faced with the technology innovation, the copperplate printed pictorials like Pei-yang Pictorial

had a strong sense of crisis. “Though the printing technology updates everyday and some publishers already use the rubber board, we lack funds and regret for being boring. However, we still believe that the pictorial can be pleasant to the eye not only because of the fine printing. There is a factor that has been neglected by everyone, namely, the appropriate layout. Our editors decide layout by themselves to accord with the principles of fine arts. Thus, it makes readers suspect that we use the unique printing technology.” [23]

Besides the aforementioned two social modernity of Pei-yang Pictorial there are still many details that have not been mentioned in the process of modernization of pictorial media. For example, a large number of revolutionary pictorials made them no longer an entertainment. And *The World*, the first Chinese copperplate printed pictorial that was produced in France, played a demonstration role for the domestic copperplate printed pictorials. All these showed that the emergence and development, content and style of Pei-yang Pictorial were closely related with the accumulation and revolution of the whole pictorial industry .

The comprehensive pictorials like Pei-yang Pictorial appear and develop right with the progress of Tianjin’s urban modern development and modernization of pictorial media. The case analysis offers us a glimpse of the social modernity. It is safe to draw a conclusion that pictorial is the inevitable choice of media form in the process of urban modernization .

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