



# Three Images of “Good Citizen” during the Transformation of Modern China:

## A Sociological Reflection on Press Modernity

Tsai, Po-Fang Taipei Medical University

In Chinese journalism history, *Shen Bao* was viewed as a crucial research object. This paper attempts to establish a cultural-critical journalism history as framework, which was launched by James W. Carey and realised in the works of Michael Schudson. With the help of this analytical framework, I scrutinise three “citizen” images located in different periods during the publication history of *Shen Bao*: the spectator citizen in the late Qing dynasty, the contributor citizen in the early Republican period, and the knower citizen from the 1920s to the 1930s. Based on the empirical findings of this paper, I provide sociological reflections on the “Press Modernity” theme, an intersection among sociology of journalism, cultural-critical journalism history, and citizenship studies.

**Keywords:** press modernity, *Shen Bao*, good citizen, citizenship studies, cultural-critical journalism history

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

From traditional imperialism to modern republic, the media has always played an indispensable role in China. In particular, the “modern press” from late 19th century to early 20th century is an important source for researchers studying key social changes in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic. Scholars’ knowledge interest can be examined from two aspects: The first is the process of the press replacing traditional scholars in disseminating information to the society from the late Qing Dynasty onwards, after the abolition of the imperial examination system (Lee,

2008, 2013). Second, from the emergence of new media during the late Qing Dynasty, becoming the key channels for various Western political thoughts to be introduced into Chinese culture (Li, 2005). Despite having different foci, these two research aspects are closely related.

This paper is a case study on *Shen Bao*, a press with the longest history in this period. From the perspective of recent history of modern press, *Shen Bao* is typically categorised as a commercial press, among the three categories of press (namely, commercial, professional, and partisan), (Lee, 2008: 18-26). However, many scholars have tried to examine the social significance of modern press and found that *Shen Bao* is more diverse and multifaceted than a typical commercial press. This article will take an interdisciplinary approach, using sociology, citizenship studies, and research on the history of journalism, to understand *Shen Bao* and its social significance.

### Press Modernity

There is an underlying theme in all research on the press and news in the social sciences: modernity. Researchers have tried to sort out how newspapers, as a form of mass media, make a key influence in the process of the emergence of modern society. Taking newspapers as an example, we can find that there is an interesting problem worth delving into: on the one hand, newspapers facilitated the growth of all features of a modern society (e.g. the nation-state, the public

sphere, modern knowledge), and on the other hand, newspapers have also fulfilled all sorts of needs in modern society, such as the dissemination of information, rational discourse, and civilisation and education.

From a sociological perspective, this involves the basic theory that “social action constitutes social order.” Contemporary social theorists distinguish two domains of action: “immediate/ mediated” interactions and “language-communicative/ media-steering” actions (Giddens, 1984; Habermas, 1987; Luhmann, 1995). These two types of interactions or actions each embody different social situations. There is greater authenticity in direct human interactions under co-presence compared to social interactions that take place via various media, which are restricted by routines and systemic rules. This distinction demonstrates the meaning of modern press in terms of social theory. On the one hand, to general readers in modern societies, messages disseminated by newspapers became another systematic and regular social action in addition to “using currency” or “obedience to authority.” On the other hand, public discussions stimulated by newspapers greatly facilitate the communicability and the authenticity of the readers’ social actions.

In his book *The Media and Modernity*, John B. Thomson (1995: 82-87) provides a precise conceptual framework. According to him, there are three categories of interactions: (1) face-to-face interaction, such as interactions under co-presence; (2) mediated interaction, such as correspondence by mail or communication by telephone; and (3) mediated quasi-interaction, such as using media to make “monological” interactions with an unknown potential recipient<sup>2</sup>. According to Thomson’s historical analysis, due to the influence of mass media, face-to-face interactions have decreased in modern society, making them even more precious. On the contrary, mediated interactions and mediated quasi-interactions have become the major forms of interactions. In other words, we are now experiencing a period with “the rise of mediated interaction and mediated publicness” (Thompson 1995: 81-118, 125-134). We can see that the third type of interaction - mediated quasi-interaction - demonstrates precisely this deep influ-

ence of mass media, and modern newspapers, being its first form historically, is important because it possess both the features of having an indefinite range of potential recipients and of being monological.

From the perspective of this theory, we can establish the first meaning of “press modernity”: in modern Chinese society after the 19th century, contemporary press not only provided the first opportunity for the public to use mass media, but was also the key interface for the numerous developments of “mediated quasi-interaction.” With this internal definition, we may proceed to ask: how did this feature of modern press (i.e. being the first to feature “mediated quasi-interaction”) influence or change the structure of modern society?

In response to this question, contemporary sociologist of journalism, Michael Schudson, formulated a theory (2003: 63-72, 212; 2008). He suggests that one can start with Jurgen Habermas’s theory on “public sphere” and Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” to redefine the modern press. To Schudson, even though the concepts of “public sphere” and “imagined communities” do not comment on newspapers directly, these concepts and the issues derived from them are very useful for contemporary researchers in thinking about the problem of “press modernity.” Of note, it is not incidental that Schudson considers the concepts of “public sphere” and “imagined communities” together; rather, it is out of “knowledge interest” that he compares and contrasts the two concepts.

In his discussion on the “public sphere” (1989), Habermas points out that the bourgeoisie in Western societies once formed a social space for rational debate and equal communication in specific historical periods. These special social spaces started as artistic spaces, but gradually turned political. However, they eventually deteriorated due to the influence of mass media during the expansion of capitalism. Therefore, newspapers can play different roles, and have both pros and cons. On the one hand, its artistic, political, and commercial values can all stimulate equal exchanges of opinions in the public sphere, forming public opinion. On the other hand, when messages in newspapers are overly commercial, public

communication will be suppressed by private and consumer messages. It can be seen that the modern press is both a neutral medium and a double-edged sword that influences the formation of modern society and its members.

In contrast, Anderson’s concept of “imagined community” (1991) explains that the importance of the press in modern society is that it helps the public that has never had frequent communications or exchanges maintain the traditional imagination of “communities.” Newspapers may be able to stimulate public debates between elite groups or intellectuals, but more importantly, it disseminates a kind of “social imagination” to public readers. In this kind of imagination, people who belong to different areas or groups can build their own “collective identity” by distinguishing between “us” versus “them”. In particular, rational discourse is not more important than sentimental imagination, and the elite minority’s enlightened discourse is also less important than the majority’s nationalism. The education from the top down still needs the construction of identity from the bottom up. Therefore, messages spread by newspapers do not necessarily depend on the readers’ interpretation.

Starting from the discussion topics of the “public sphere” and the “imagined community,” we can establish the second meaning of “press modernity”: the modern press facilitates the formation of public opinion or nationalism in modern society, but it is neither limited to the bourgeois public sphere nor restricted as a tool for print capitalism. On the contrary, news reports and commentaries in modern press are working hard in combating the forces of contemporary economics and politics.

Summarising the discussion so far, we can use the following perspective to reconsider the issue of “press modernity”: As a “mediated quasi-interaction” under Thompson’s definition, how can the modern press establish modern contents step-by-step for the readers under the pressures of party politics and capitalism? For this problem, this paper has chosen to do a case study on *Shen Bao*, a newspaper with a long history that is located in Shanghai, a highly modern city.

## Analytical Frameworks: An Approach from Cultural/Critical Journalism History

Even though cultural/critical journalism history has not yet become a clear path for research, it is still worth delving into and developing in this paper so as to apply it to research on the modern press. In particular, the key is to clarify Carey’s reflections on the research on journalism history, and to sort out the analytical frameworks worth learning from in the research of Carey and his followers.

Carey’s article “The Problem of Journalism History” (1974) carries important weight in research on journalism history. Michael Schudson (1997) thinks that Carey’s contribution was a research approach from “new journalism history” that surpassed “whig history” in the 1970s. In this reflection that focuses on the difficulties faced when writing about journalism history, Carey points out that research on journalism history needs to encompass all cultural aspects of the country and the focus of research should move away from press giants or industry dynamics; it is to understand the complex relation between the media and society through the thoughts of society and the collective mentality that newspapers present. This refers to the viewpoint of “journalism as culture.” On the other hand, Carey also believes that the spread and the making of newspapers are closely related to democratic education and citizenship. Free press is both a prerequisite of democracy as well as the embodiment of democracy. This refers to the viewpoint of “journalism as citizenship.”

Schudson’s research results (1978, 1998) are valuable examples for reference. After discussing the concept of “objectivity” in his best-known work *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (Schudson, 1978), Schudson’s important work 20 years later, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (1998), is an important reference for this paper. In this book, he connects the historical studies on modern press to the modes of participation in politics and points out that American society has a fourfold understanding of the meaning of a “good citizen”; namely, based on “elites politics,” “party politics,” “informed citizen,” and “rights-consciousness.”

The first two ideal modes of citizens' involvement in politics were established in America prior to the 19th century. Basing their dependency on particular political figures or political groups, citizens indirectly put their political life into practice. From the 20th century, however, citizens were encouraged to awaken their own political consciousness. The ideal of political life encouraged citizens to understand politics via the mass media and various kinds of press to form their image of the "good citizen" that is rational, informed, and monitorial. Through this kind of historical studies, Schudson attempts to refute the image of citizenship that emerged from the 1960s, which overly emphasised the "rights" of citizens. Schudson points out that this kind of image of "citizens" may be inadequate in having some sort of disregard for responsibility, and is not as beneficial to public life as the "informed citizens" he studies.

Schudson's research (1998) is a key exemplar for this paper. In his studies, we see the intersection between the images of the modern press and citizens. On the one hand, Schudson's theory on "informed citizens" practically demonstrates how researchers can sort out history from press material and then discover the various ways that modern press can affect political life and the ideal of citizens. On the other hand, in his theory on "informed citizens," we can also see how Schudson critically refutes the mainstream theory on contemporary "citizens of rights" and need not return to the various retrospective images of the "good citizen."

In summary, the paper uses Carey's cultural/critical journalism history research approach and Schudson and borrows the framework that Schudson uses for his research on the "good citizen" to analyze the various periods and meanings of the imagination of the "citizen" in *Shen Bao*.

### Analysis: The imagination of the "citizen" in *Shen Bao* during various periods

Starting with Schudson's "good citizen" research framework, this paper analyses *Shen Bao* in three periods: (1) how important legal cases were reported during the late Qing Dynasty; (2) the various constructions of the image of "citizen" in the early Republic; and (3) Yang Yin-Hang's Editorial *Chang Pin* and the four special columns of *Chang Shi* (Ethics, law, the economy, health) in late *Shen Bao*. Schudson claims that he does not organise his research according to the key aspects of the concept of "citizenship" (namely, personal property rights, rights to political associations, rights to social welfare). Rather, he approaches the imagination of the "good citizen" from press articles<sup>3</sup>. This research also attempts to organise various materials about the image of "citizen" in *Shen Bao*, and tries to understand how *Shen Bao* was involved in the construction of "citizenship" in the news and in the commentaries on current affairs.

The following analysis will start from different time periods and focus on using formal analysis/substantive analysis in the study of each time period. Examining the three time periods (i.e. late Qing Dynasty, the early Republic, after the 1920s), there are clear changes in the imagination of "citizen" in *Shen Bao* that occurred through the stages. The early discourse on citizens in *Shen Bao* did not involve "citizen" directly, but started with a "spectator" perspective of that of the reporter or the reader. This shows how the public changed from reading the reports to getting involved in the discourse. In the early years of the Republic of China, *Shen Bao* represented the image of "citizen" as a two-sided complex that included both positive and negative discussions. It both mocked the absurdity of voters and also paid tribute to the important standing of all sorts of national citizens (e.g. the Military Citizen, the Female Citizen, the Four Equal Types of Citizen). It was only from the 1920s that *Shen Bao* talked about the image of the "citizen" in a positive light, discussed the criteria for a citizen directly, or indirectly constructed the image of contemporary "citizen" from common knowledge in daily life (e.g. the economy, health knowledge).

In other words, this paper employs a longer period of both formal and content analysis methods to illustrate the three kinds of image of “citizen” represented by *Shen Bao*: the spectator citizen, the contributor citizen, and the knower citizen.

### *Early “Spectator Citizen” in Shen Bao: Distinguishing Identities in Legal Case Disputes*

#### **(I) Formal Changes: Addition of Columns**

In recent years, *Shen Bao* researchers have been increasingly interested in the changes in the columns, in addition to content analysis and the analysis of the article types. We can find obvious changes when examining *Shen Bao*’s various columns on different aspects of legal cases. News on litigation cases in early *Shen Bao* mainly appeared under the three columns: “Editorial”, “Advertisements” and “Shanghai Local News”, which took up half of the six columns in *Shen Bao* (i.e. “Editorial”, “International News”, “Local Provincial and City News”, “Shanghai Local News”, “Peking Gazette” and “Advertisements”). The Editorial section made continuous reports and included commentaries on major cases such as the cases of Yang Yue-Lou and Yang Nai-Wu; while “Shanghai Local News” was gradually split into three separate columns, “Special Column for Collective Investigations”, “Cases of British Public Courts,” and “Cases of French Public Courses.” It can be seen that starting from the late Qing Dynasty (1870-1895), the theme of legal cases appeared fairly frequently among *Shen Bao* news.

In the years prior to the period of the Republic of China (1906-1911), in 1905 another major change was introduced in the *Shen Bao* columns for news related to law. From 1905, there were obvious and large increases in both the number of columns and the word count for each news report related to law in *Shen Bao*. In the “Editorial” column, not only did each month see an increase of at least one related report, the contents also changed, adding reports on the passing of new laws or on legal concepts following changes in the legal system. In the “Advertisements” column, introductions to books on law and politics were added to what was previously filled with advertisements on

lawyers soliciting customers and legal and political courses recruiting students. In the “Fiction” column, various sorts of series on crime fiction and modernist fiction began to appear. Moreover, various news related to the law emerged one by one in *Shen Bao*’s columns that had existed since the late Qing Dynasty, such as “Special Topic,” “Important Briefs,” “Submissions,” “Regulations,” “Urgent News,” “Local News,” “Chatroom,” “Commentary,” “Law News,” “Law-suits,” “Beijing News.” In this period, there were nearly 20 reports related to litigation or legal cases every day in *Shen Bao*.

The increase in the number of columns and reports reflects the cultural consensus that the reporters and readers had: legal case reports gradually became a kind of narrative framework for news reporting that allow us to understand the various issues that were occurring in society at that time.

#### **(2) Substantive Changes: Reports on Key Legal Cases (Yang Yue-Lou Case, Yang Nai-Wu Case)**

Other than the changes in the number of columns, the two major cases (Yang Yue-Lou Case, Yang Nai-Wu Case) were also closely related to *Shen Bao*. Examining the reports on the famous “Yang Yue-Lou” case, most past researches focused on such problems as unjustified tortures in traditional Chinese laws and judicial protection (Lu, 2012). In contrast, this paper focuses on the different images of “citizen” represented by the reports. On the one hand, in Yang Yue-Luo’s case, “ling ren” (actor or actress) was traditionally considered a menial caste, and the issue of “intermarriage between the noble and the menial castes” became the basic starting point. In the controversies surrounding the Yang Yue-Luo’s case, Shanghai people and Guangdong people took sides and opposed each other because of their affiliation to their hometowns. There were even arguments arising from the conflict between “modern” and “traditional” concepts. On the other hand, this problem also involved the difference between the Chinese and Western concept of “citizen,” making the special legal system for businesses in Shanghai International Settlement, the “Mixed Court,” a new focus of *Shen Bao*’s news reports: the writings in *Shen Bao* represented the



reporters' and the readers' mutual recognition of the difference between citizens and foreigners (Yang, 2006: 127-144, 180-192).

The series of reports on Yang Yue-Lou's case in 1873 demonstrates how *Shen Bao* intervened in public discourse. The style of *Shen Bao*'s reports on this event switched from reports on rumours to reports seeking public comments (Lu, 2012: 43). Earlier reports included many conjectures on kidnapping, adultery, incest, and drugging. Later, *Shen Bao* focused on two issues in the development of the case: the question of whether or not traditional distinctions between identities were too old-fashioned (i.e. intermarriage between the noble and the menial castes) and the cultural clashes between people of various regions (Guangdong people, Shanghai people, and foreigners). From the titles of the reports, we can see that the *Shen Bao*'s commentator time and again used the pseudonyms "Justice Advocate", "Father for the Unjust", "Justice Senior" and "The Senior for All People's Joy" as attempts to argue that the "prohibition of the intermarriage between the noble and the menial castes" under the Great Qing Legal Code had already lost touch with the society. Based on this argument, *Shen Bao* further criticised the family of Ms. Wei, who was born in Guangdong, pointing out that their values and actions were conservative and patriarchal; it even quoted Western people's ideas on the freedom of marriage between male and female adults to attack the Cantonese in Shanghai community for their various moral defects. From *Shen Bao*'s reports and commentaries on Yang Yue-Lou's case, we can see that the writers and readers of *Shen Bao* created different images of "citizen," and so did the groups involved in the case and the public. All of a sudden, the contrast between the noble and the menial; between the servants and their masters; between the individualism of Shanghai people and the focus on the kinship in Guangdong people; and the contrast between the Chinese's conservatism and foreigners' liberalism became the main themes in constructing citizenship in the process of *Shen Bao*'s reports on Yang Yue-Lou's case.

A clearer form for this kind of argument can be

found in *Shen Bao*'s report on Yang Nai-Wu's case. Between 1873 to 1875, *Shen Bao* followed up closely on the legal case of Yang Nai-Wu. *Shen Bao* reported this case in both the traditional way (using official information from the tradition "Zhao Kan") and an innovative way of "typesetting report" (Mittler, 2004). Because it was difficult to obtain the facts and information related to this case, *Shen Bao* reproduced the official methods of imperial edicts, mansion quotes, official petition, creating a huge contrast between officials' strict precautions and public's skepticism (Lu, 2012: 88-91). This way of handling the case repeatedly showed the official information to be "self-contradictory, possibly concealing the truth, and evading questions," and allowed *Shen Bao* to highlight the distinction between the identity of the officials and that of the general public. Furthermore, *Shen Bao*'s report on Yang Nai-Wu's case directly raised the commentary to a level, criticising the cruelty of inquisition by torture and defects of the institution and not of personal integrity. In these reports and commentaries, the personal safety and legal rights of a national citizen or citizen exposed a huge gap between the East and the West. On the surface, *Shen Bao*'s stance on this case seemed to imply the necessity of supporting consular jurisdiction. But when delving into the discussions of the distinction between officials and the public, and between East and West, we can find that *Shen Bao*'s reports on this case actually involve the fundamental question of "citizenship." That is: How does the government differ in its protection or violation of civil servants/citizens? How does the perception of citizenship and rights differ between China and other countries?

The discussions above show that an imagery of the "spectator" citizen emerged in *Shen Bao* during the late Qing Dynasty. For one, the number of columns related to the reports on law and legal cases continued to increase. For another, there were serial reports and anonymous letters on several high-profile cases. In particular, both the reporters and the readers displayed the attitude of a "spectator," and participated in public life with this role. At the same time, in addition to the continued focus and discussions on the

legal cases, they also came to realise the differences between each identity gradually. They also became aware that the people who embodied “the public” were not limited to the officials with public duties or the gentry; other kinds of people could also be highly relevant “citizens”, and were not just the “people of the emperor” (i.e. denigrating or negative labels like “small people”, “the common herd” and “menial people” in the past).

*The “Contributor” citizen of Shen Bao during the early Republic years: the National Citizen image that is beneficial/useless to the country*

In the early years of the Republic of China era, discussions on “citizens” in all sorts of modern press became more complex. On the one hand, constitutional movements and the republican government institution caused the discussions on “citizens” and their rights to revolve around “political rights,” especially affairs like elections and voting, etc. On the other hand, under the social climate surrounded by social crises and a prosperous nation-state, the issue of how to create the “citizen” in the new age using the concept of ‘the New Citizen’ proposed by Liang Qichao in the late Qing Dynasty further derived all sorts of social features in a refined way.

We will discuss the different kinds of theoretical constructions on “citizen” in the writings in *Shen Bao* below. Examining the formal aspect, *Shen Bao*’s reports and commentaries on political rights (including political involvement and association) will be important indicators that highlight “citizenship.” While the ideal of “the Republic” at that time involved all kinds of conflicting practices in the institution, the general public’s perspective on elections and voting directly reflected citizens’ experience of political rights. From a substantive viewpoint, we can see the theory of three sub-groups according to the “Theory on National Citizens”: discussions on the Military Citizen, the Female Citizen, and the Four Equal Types of Citizens. Due to length constraints, this paper will only use the Military Citizen as an example to explain how the writings of *Shen Bao* constructed the concepts of cit-

izens with the “national citizen/citizen” subtype and its actual image.

**(1) Elections and voting: expectations and disappointments**

*Shen Bao*’s reports on elections and voting did not focus completely on “the Republic,” “party politics,” “the parliamentary system,” or other related political ideals and ideologies. Other than the frequent and regular central and local elections, we can also see three other kinds of election news in *Shen Bao*: (1) Voting in the elections of local associations (e.g. various types of unions such as chamber of commerce, farmers’ associations, teachers’ union); (2) Elections and voting affairs (including results and commentaries) in various Western countries; and (3) News on litigations related to elections and voting. Clearly, for the theoretical construction on political rights, *Shen Bao* did not take the position of active advocacy of the political press; rather, it also paid attention to other election issues that did not directly involve political rights.

It is worth noting that *Shen Bao* even included all sorts of reports and commentaries on the chaos observed in various elections. Citizenship is also about the learning experience of exercising rights, as it refers to both the understanding of and the fight for one’s rights. For the latter meaning, we can see some reports on the experiences of elections and voting in *Shen Bao* at the time. For example, there were reports on citizens unfamiliar with voting affairs, who treated election affairs as child’s play, corrupt practices prevailing in the election process, and bribery in election.

From this, it is clear that in its process of participating in citizens’ construction of their political rights, there were reports, advertisements, and promotions but also criticisms, reflections, and satire. This reflects precisely Chinese society’s mixed feelings towards the newly-formed concept of “political rights”. There was extensive coverage on topics related to political rights, like elections, voting, the parliament, etc., but there was also much satire on the chaos caused by the lack of proper cultivation, ability, and knowledge for participation in politics. In other words, merely giving

political rights only touched the surface and did not contribute much to the society during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic. What could substantially benefit and contribute to the nation were the images of the National Citizen such as the Military Citizen, the Female Citizen, and the Four Equal Types of Citizens.

## (2) The Military Citizen: institutional practices beyond the ideals in ideology

Continued to be affected by the forced invasion and the deterioration of the Qing Dynasty in late Qing Dynasty, the philosophy that advocated for the New Citizen and theories on nationalism (e.g. Liang Qichao and Cai E) tried to combine the images of the National Citizen and the soldier and to find people who can embody an “eager, adventurous, and warrior” spirit. (Chen, 2004: 82-96; Chen, 2008; Hwang, 2001, 2004). This kind of theory on Military-Citizenship went beyond the emphasis on public ethics found in the philosophy of the New Citizen and removed the ideal type of “citizen” from the traditional image of scholars, intellectuals, and students. It had also become the basic consensus between the reformists and the revolutionists, who had unceasing debates.

Unlike the political press that directly publishes all sorts of discussions of “Military-Citizenship” or “the spirit of the Military Citizen,” we rarely find continual and dense discussions on the concept of the “Military Citizen” in *Shen Bao*’s articles. Instead, there is a range of related articles on institution planning and theory construction. In particular, there are three types: (1) Debates on education bills: for example, whether or not and how to incorporate military training courses in national compulsory education in each province, or reports on foreign professional military schools and how China could learn to introduce related military education; (2) The two most obvious examples of organisations and groups related to the Military Citizen beyond the curricula of national compulsory education are “scouting” groups and “student army” organisations, where the former was distributed throughout various periods and the latter appeared mostly after specific events of invasions; and

(3) Regarding sports, martial arts, and sports competition, other than the physical training exercises advocated by central and local governments, the most common reports were on international sports competitions that included China competing against foreign countries. Other than articles related to the Military Citizen, there were many advertisements on books related to the Military Citizen in the Advertisement section in *Shen Bao*, most of them being military practical manuals, military novels, and so forth.

To construct the image of the Military Citizen, *Shen Bao* did not directly state the meaning of its concept; rather, it indirectly touched on the practices of various institutions, using national compulsory education, local associations and organizations, reports on sports competitions, and military books to construct the image of the Military Citizen, which played a key role in the process of constructing “citizenship.”

When we make a preliminary comparison between the reports on voters and on Military Citizens, we can clearly see an image of the “contributor” citizen. Where society was unstable during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic, the ideal “good citizens” were not voters who had the right to participate in elections, politics, or to vote, but the specific type of National Citizens who could actively contribute. This sort of image of “citizen” that emphasised the “contributions/benefits” (to the country’s society) describes generally the subtypes of citizens in a more refined way (e.g. Military Citizen, Female Citizen, Youth Citizen, Industry and Business Practitioners) and uses the unspoken component of being a “contributor” to judge and, in turn, construct the ideal image of the “citizen.”

## The “knower” citizen in Chang Shi and Chang Ping: citizen quality and its practical basis in daily life

Entering the period of the Republic of China, the part of *Shen Bao* most well-known for “public opinion” was the “Zi You Tan (Free Discussion)” column in its supplement section. In the 20 years or so between 1911-1935, *Shen Bao* featured several famous commentators. Many left-winged literary commentaries joined during the period of *Shen Bao*: *Zi You Tan*,



particularly after Zhou Shou-Juan took over from Li Lie-Wen in 1930. This made it famous for starting many social criticisms and philosophical debates.

Lee Ou-Fan Leo (1999), Chen Jian-Hua (2008, 2013), Tang Xiao-Bing (2012) all point out that the commentaries on current affairs in *Shen Bao: Zi You Tan* featured political criticism and public opinions, in addition to their literary and artistic aspects. The commentators and the writers (e.g. the renowned Lu Xun published under various pseudonyms) all played the roles of public intellectuals. That said, both the written arguments and the author/reader setting show that *Shen Bao: Zi You Tan* was still circulated among the minority social group of cultural elite, such as traditional scholars and modern intellectuals (Luo, 1999, 2001). Even if they contained a high level of public content, the written arguments still set an overly-high cultural standard, or the method of argument was too indirect such that it could not influence the vast general public in the society. In contrast, the special column *Chang Shi* and the supplement *Chang Ping*, edited by Yang Yin-Hang and started in the 1920s, were targeted for the general public and provided explanations of various innovative concepts.

Yang Yin-Hang, who edited *Chang Shi*, treated public discourse as the spread of knowledge from the intellectuals to the general public and not as the typical style of debate, which featured scholars commenting on politics<sup>4</sup>. Yang took the readers to be of middle-lower class and presumed that the readers did not follow political affairs frequently or closely. On the contrary, he thought that modern citizens' interests in public affairs fell more into the scope of daily life, and were based on adequate knowledge (or “Chang Shi, common knowledge”). Therefore, *Chang Shi* had the four main regular specialised columns on “Ethics,” “Law,” “The Economy,” and “Health.” Columns on other knowledge related to daily life (e.g. “Scientific News”) appeared irregularly. In addition, the regular columns in *Chang Shi*, “Ethics,” “Law,” “The Economy,” and “Health” not only introduced new concepts, but also featured articles on “Local Investigations” and “Practical Notes.” For example, “The Economy” included data from research on specific professions and “Health” had small tips on do-

mestic life. *Chang Shi* saw this sort of trivial affairs of daily life as the basic knowledge necessary for the cultivation of modern citizens' qualities. It is worth noting that *Chang Shi* not only treated non-political, non-legal topics like economics, health, and science as the required knowledge of cultivated citizens, the contents of these columns also exemplified how it placed a high value on statistics and local investigation, distinguishing itself from other political press that discussed “citizen” knowledge based on foreign theory or experience.

Among the four regular columns in *Chang Shi*, the column that had the most direct relation with citizenship was “Law.” This column was also frequently called “National Citizens' Common Knowledge (Guo Min Chang Shi)” or “Citizens' Common Knowledge (Gong Min Chang Shi).” In contrast to “Ethics” and similar columns, which introduced common knowledge in ethics that citizens should have, “National/Citizens' Common Knowledge” introduced its topics in a clear way, through regulations.

Other than the *Chang Shi*'s supplements that regularly introduced all sorts of knowledge of modern citizens, there was also a daily commentary column, *Chang Ping* in the supplement of *Shen Bao's Chang Shi*. In addition to providing knowledge and common knowledge, *Chang Ping* also included discussions on key affairs. In *Chang Ping*, Yang Yin-Hang (pen name: Lao Pu), Chen Jing-Han (pen name: Cold, Not Cold), and other writers provided commentary articles corresponding to issues like politics, law, ethics, education, social climate, etc. Yang Yin-Hang's commentary style in *Chang Ping* articles on current events was unique, different from the usual social criticisms by traditional scholars. His writing often reflected his worries about the livelihood of the country and the social climate, and often included two characteristics: first, there was a particular focus on the importance of Chinese characters in everyday learning; second, his commentaries stayed close to daily life and were encyclopedic in scope (Li, 1994; Yang, 1986). With these two features, Yang Yin-Hang's commentaries in *Chang Ping* showed his planning concept for *Chang Shi*: citizens' cultural literacy and common knowledge were to be the foundation for building the quality of

knowledge that modern citizens ought to possess.

Clearly, the post-1920s commentary style in *Shen Bao*'s *Chang Shi* and *Chang Ping* was different from scholars commenting on politics; its style of writing was more accessible to the general reader. What emerged was the "knower" citizen image. For instance, Yang Yin-Hang, who had studied abroad and legal practice experience, had a style that differed from writers in the arts and literature circle, and designed columns that had practical knowledge for daily life. He also wrote commentaries that focused on the basic qualities expected of modern citizens. This sort of discourse that emphasized on the "knower" nature of citizens differed both from the "spectator" image of citizens in early *Shen Bao* and the image of the "contributor" citizen in the early Republic. It started to formulate the ideal "good citizen" directly and discussed the knowledge and quality for self-improvement.

### Discussion: The "citizen" image, the public nature of *Shen Bao* and "press modernity"

Combining the analysis on the three aforementioned periods, we can see that the "citizen" image in *Shen Bao* underwent an evolution: from the "spectator" to the "contributor," and then to the "knower." Organising these three kinds of "good citizen" allows us to propose a further overall observation.

The evolution of the three citizen images was a step-by-step process. Even though the "spectator" and the "contributor" images do not necessarily match the Western theory on citizens introduced to China, as the two key early stages, they laid the foundations for the "knower" citizen. Perhaps, it was only after experiencing the stages of the somewhat concerned "spectator" citizen and the "contributor" citizen who was committed to serving the country, that we could understand how difficult it was to arrive at the "knower" citizen, and understand the gap between the daily lives of the general public and the enlightened New Citizens - the intellectuals<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, found in the historical context is the imagery of "citizen" but not its definition. Even when examining the meaning

of how the terms were used directly, "national citizen" and "city residents" were more common; however, we can still see that the three different images of "citizen" were embedded into the various issues in daily life in *Shen Bao*; for example, in noticing the difference between "us" and "them" as a "spectator" in controversial legal cases and in gaining substantial understanding of public life through common knowledge on health, science, and the economy. From another perspective, the "citizen" image was not necessarily related to such legal and political terms as "public opinion," "the public," "constitutionalism," "republic"; there were more accessible ways for the general public to form various imaginations of the "good citizen."

Existing research often asks - as an important modern press, in what way has *Shen Bao* shown that Chinese society became "modern" in that period? According to this paper, for this problem, one needs to first differentiate the concepts to clarify the debate in existing research. On the one hand, modern press can show all aspects of modern society from various perspectives; for example, rational discourse, enlightened individuals, city life, individual consumption, etc. On the other hand, newspapers, as a special form of media, can possibly develop its own modernity gradually; for example, the establishment of professional values in journalism and the significance of journalism in public life. The analysis of this article points out that *Shen Bao* uses various discourses to construct the image of "citizen," and this construction process can be said to relate to "press modernity" in two layers of meaning. Formally, it represents the "modern form of the press." That is, as "media quasi-interaction" described by Thompson, *Shen Bao*'s three images of "citizen" all display this specific kind of "commonality." Substantively, it exemplifies "modernity in the press." That is, the three images of "citizen" and the evolutionary relationship of the three images all point to a modern pursuit of the ideal "good citizen."

According to this paper, *Shen Bao*, as an important example of Chinese modern press, echoes Carey's expectations of the rules in the professionalism of journalism and Schudson's basis of the public life on which the "good citizen" is rooted. Carey (1986) thinks that among the professional communicators

working in journalism, advertisement marketing, or public relations, only those who work in journalism can develop professional values with public implications during their career. In contrast, the professional communicators in advertisement and public relations will gradually surrender to commercial powers and political powers. From the findings of this paper, the three images of “citizen”: the “spectator,” the “contributor,” and the “knower” do exemplify the “commonality” particular to *Shen Bao* and its continual pursuit of the image of the “ideal citizen.” These imaginations of the “citizen” were deeply rooted in various issues of daily life and were not limited to political affairs in the strict sense, and this paper analyses how this dissipates Schudson’s worry for “underdeveloped historical understanding of journalism” (2008). Learning from Schudson’s research on the “good citizen” (1998), this paper reorganises the three “citizen” images of *Shen Bao* and confirms Carey’s statements that “journalism is culture” and “journalism is citizen.”

In summary, this paper has deepened the understanding of “public” of existing research on *Shen Bao* and combined the two sides of “press modernity,” “theory/imagination” and “formal/substantial.” More importantly, by the three images of “citizen” in *Shen Bao*’s cases, it has constructed an interdisciplinary approach and perspective that combines sociology and other disciplines, such as history of modern press and journalism history.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For readers in sociology, some history materials and history research have been omitted from the in-text citations and references. For the original article, please see Tsai, Po-Fang (2016).

<sup>2</sup> As for the concept of media interaction and quasi-interaction, Thompson (1995: 100-118) further distinguished two kinds of “action at a distance”: (1) acting for distant others; (2) responsive action in distant contexts. The main reason that this paper does not plan to follow up on Thompson’s discussion is that his foundation is built upon TV as a mass media, which is different from modern press, the research focus of this paper. Therefore, the discussion of this paper is only on the way in which the concept of “media quasi-interaction” has inspired research on modern press.

<sup>3</sup> For this point, please refer to Schudson’s footnote 2 in the preface of his book (Schudson, 1998: 315). Put simply, the main focus of the more common “citizenship studies” in the social sciences today is the protection by the institution; for example: the protection of the individual’s legal, political, and welfare rights by the country. Therefore, citizenship studies present the current trend of historical research, and also focus on the country, scrutinising the developments and variations of these institutional protections. Schudson, however, wants to use newspapers as the material to investigate the image of the “good citizen,” so as to sort out how individuals know and understand the ideal way to participate in political life. This sort of research approach that focuses on culture and meaning is not necessarily consistent with research that focuses on the institution. For similar approaches, please see Jeffrey C. Alexander’s cultural sociological studies (2003: 203-250).

<sup>4</sup> The editor and the associate commentator Yang Yin-Hang himself was a practicing lawyer. He also taught at Peking College of Political Science and Law, was the Director of Jing Shi Higher Court, Jing Shi Higher Prosecutor, and Counselor of Ministry of Justice. In addition, this series of supplements in *Chang Shi* also inspired its competitor *Xin Wen Bao* to start adding columns in its supplement *Xin Zhi Shi* from 1922.

<sup>5</sup> The most well-known example of theory on “citizen” based on enlightenment was Liang Qichao’s “Theory of the New Citizen” (Shen Sung-Chiao, 2002; Liang Qichao, 2011, Chen Yong-Sen, 2004: 330-347, Chang Hao, 1971; Fogel & Zarrow, 1997; Goldman & Perry, 2002). Shen Sung-Chiao and Goldman & Perry discussed the effects of the “Theory of the New Citizen” respectively. Shen Sung-Chiao (ibid.: 722-725) points out that the process of praising the National Citizen found in “New Citizen” theory and the “Theory on National Citizens” was affected by the deification of the nation. Therefore, these theories were “disembodied entities” and “derivative discourses.” Goldman & Perry (ibid.: 1-6) on the other hand, think that the concept of the New Citizen was more focused on the public and moral aspects, in contrast from the Western concept of “citizens,” which focused on rights and utilitarian aspects. But the “New Citizen” theory still had a key transformative effect, changing a “national citizen” into a “full-fledged citizen.” Unlike these studies that emphasized the perspectives of enlightened intellectuals, this paper takes the general reader’s perspective to illustrate a citizen image that is different from the theory of “the enlightened New Citizens.”

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Tsai Po-Fang is Assistant Professor at the Graduate Institute of Humanities in Medicine, Taipei Medical University (TMU), Taiwan (R.O.C.). He received his Ph.D. in Sociology at the National Taiwan University (NTU) in 2010. His research interests include sociology of profession, legal and cultural sociology, citizenship studies, and social theory. He has published on Max Weber studies, historical sociology of traditional Chinese law, and professional education in medical humanities.  
pofang@tmu.edu.tw

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