

THE INSPIRATION OF COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS ON SHUN PAO DURING THE EARLY REPUBLIC OF CHINA UPON DESIGN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The culturing of design education is the topic being discussed in Chinese design education. How to develop our national peculiar traditional culture based on native culture, combine local social demands, cultivate regional design talents for localized teaching, and thus progress the Chinese-featured modern design are the urgent issues for the design education. Shun Pao is the most influential newspaper in modern China with its commercial advertisements during the Republic of China extremely active. The study takes the commercial advertisements on Shun Pao as examples, analyses the approach of achieve the localized design by virtue of using local historical, economic and cultural resources and provides significant reference value for the foothold keeping of modern design education in culture.

Key words: design education, Shun Pao, commercial advertisements

1. INTRODUCTION

After more than half century, the design education in China has achieved considerable development. However, comparing to those in developed countries, certain gaps still exists. Throughout the development of modern design and education system, Chinese design education has always been deeply influenced by the western, by carrying out context that is adopted from the western education mode, in mainly the form of imitation and plagiarism and with absence of comprehension in depth. This is the root cause why it is difficult for China to promote its modern design capability and why its designs present few cultural connotations. It is sure that looking for the source of Chinese design and clarifying its evolution process will provide an important basis for discovering our own cultural characteristics, while commercial advertisements on newspapers, the traditional media, is one of the mature design forms in early China.

In the late 19th century, along with the invasion of foreign capitalism into China and gradual introduced foreign capital, technology and systems, new style and feature showed up in coastal port cities in China, especially Shanghai, the metropolis invested by foreign adventurers, the standard product of western impacts, became the center of Chinese and foreign trade. At the early stage of the Republic of China, commercial activities in Shanghai were so frequent that advertising became extremely active. And this is the very first peak in the development of modern advertising in China. More and more domestic and foreign products published advertisements on all types of newspapers and periodicals. To promote sales by advertising became highly popular at that time. Among all the newspapers and periodicals, Shanghai *Shun Pao* is one of the preferred and favored by consumers. Popular domestic and overseas commodity advertisements were published and easily accessible on Shun Pao's advertising column every day upon presentation of their local culture with tremendous characteristics.

This report studies the advertisements on Shun Pao at the early stage of the Republic of China, by discussing advertising strategy and culture characteristics demonstrated in the employment of these advertisements. The time range of this report is from the beginning of year 1912 to the end of 1921. During this period, the Republic of China was established, the Northern Warlords were in a chaotic situation in which each working with its own propositions, and the Communist Party of China was established. Economically, foreign capitals had achieved overwhelming superiority in many sections; ideologically, the country had reached an all-time high level of liberty; and culturally, western culture and domestic one were in the progress of gradual mingling. Therefore, this report will study the cultural characteristics and artistic expressions of commercial advertisements on Shun Pao by content analysis of documentations, to reflect the forms of daily life and cultural consumption of the public at that time. Furthermore, base on the development history of advertisements on Shun Pao at the early stage of the Republic of China, this study analyzes the territorial characteristics reflected in the content of the circulated advertisements from the angle of advertising appeal and techniques of expression. With in-depth comprehension of Chinese cultural inheritance contained in its techniques of expression, this report hopes to provide reference and inspiration for modern design education.

The sampling objects of this report are the advertisements on Shun Pao on March 23rd of each year between 1912 – 1921 (if in any of the years, no newspapers was published on March 23rd, a paper on the neighboring day will be chosen). Due to massive size of sampling, the criterion of page layout larger than 1/5 is set to narrow the research range down to 28 pieces of advertisements. All documentations of Shun Pao come from the 1982 reprint edition stored in Ningbo Library.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As the development of economic development since the reform and opening up, design education in China also achieved rapid growth. At present, patterns of design education in

China are largely identical but with minor differences, basically plagiarizing and imitating western education concept with failure to comprehend domestic culture in depth. Most of the design works are influenced by foreign advanced design, even just in bringism with plagiarization, lack of own innovative thought. While, the commercial advertisements on SHUN PAO during early republic of China feature combination of China's peculiar historic culture, national features, language custom and life conception, fully exert the distinct national characteristic, obtain dynamic integration of design conception of commercial advertisements and local culture, especially the overseas commodities at that time minimize the exclusion factors under the state of competition with similar commodities and the pressure of advocacy upon domestic goods, take full consideration on the Chinese national cultural spirit and connotation during the design. Thereby, the commercial advertisements then adequately unfold the extensive and profound cultural deposits of Chinese nation and form the nationalized individual design.

To discuss about *Shun Pao*, it is the most outstanding one among them, from no matter the coverage of contents or the advertising design creativity. Most of all, commercial advertisements have taken up a large proportion of *Shun Pao's* page, with wide range covering almost all basic necessities of life for people. These commercial advertisements at that time represent the design capability peak of Chinese advertising.

The development of *Shun Pao* had went through several historical stages such as the three Qing Dynasties of Emperor Tongzhi, Emperor Gunagxu and Emperor Xuantong, the Revolution of 1911, the May 4th Movement, the Northern Expedition, the Anti-Japanese War and the Liberation War. At each stage, the newspaper experienced different development. From 1872 to 1949, *Shun Pao* advertisement had published 27,000 issues. Due to its long time span, large yield quantity, complete range of advertising as well as significant influence, *Shun Pao* was one of the most important advertisement media domestically at that period. During late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, Shanghai has already evolved into world financial center and gained its reputation as an international metropolis. Its industrial production capability was far ahead nationwide. In consequence, its commerce had achieved considerate development as well. The advertisement on *Shun Pao* well reflects the life style, cultural characteristics and concept of values at that time. It is thus very representative to take *Shun Pao* as an object to study its advertising design style, and to analyze in depth its traditional cultural characteristics.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 STAGES OF RESEARCH

This report surveys and discusses advertisements between 1912 and 1921. The research will be carried out in two stages:

1. Once finished collecting aforementioned advertisement samples, classification will firstly be carried out according to advertising commodity category and recorded in the table designed, so that advertising frequency of each category of commodity can be computed for the comprehension of commodity advertising expression evolutions within these 10 years.

2. Collect relevant reference data for graphic advertisement design, analyze and discuss the advertising appeal and artistic expression in the graphic; by means of comparative analysis and induction at this stage, analyze types of themes and forms of expression on the graphic of the advertisements listed and support the study result with relevant research references; finally deduce out result as reference full of inherent Chinese cultural characteristics for modern design education.

3.2 BASIS FOR CLASSIFICATION OF NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

For statistics of advertising frequency of all types of commodities, this report adopts the systematic classification and subdivision methods of Asia-Pacific Advertising Awards by China Times as its basis of sample analysis and classification. The Asia-Pacific Advertising Awards by China Times has been held for 37 times. It is highly recognized by the academic circle and the industry circle. It classifies commodities into 11 categories, which are: 3C industry, communication, food, beverage, household and personal products, architecture and decoration, tourism, financial service, circulation channel service, health care, and miscellaneous.

3.3 RESEARCH SAMPLING TABLE

The advertisement samples are organized according to its years by category into the following table for further study (please see Table 1.2).

Advertising Category	Quantity	Relative Quantity Percentage	Enterprise / Commodity Description	Quantity
Health Care	17	60%	Douanshi's Secret Kidney Protection Pill, Douanshi's Lung Tonifying Panacea	7
			Rendan Mini-Pill	5
			Vitality Pill, Fu Mei Da Ming, Sanatorium Life Prolonging Powder, Blood Hematinic, Shanghai VIVE Mosquito Repellent Fragrance	
Personal Product	7	25%	Shui Yan Hua, Triple Happiness Cigarettes, 555 Cigarette, Front Door Cigarettes, Huile Cigarettes, Hatamen Cigarettes, Ingersoll Luminous Watch	
Food	1	4%	Qigong Old Brand Milk	
3C Industry	2	7%	Foreign Firm Machine Department, Textile Machinery	
Miscellaneous	1	4%	Bullring	
Total	28			

(collected and summarized by this report)

Table 1 Industry Classification Summary of Shun Pao Advertising Works

	Category	Class	Sub-Class	Sample No.
Combination of characters matched with specific graphics	Calligraphy, oriental characters combined with portrait, product, furniture and scene	Calligraphy combined with garment	Calligraphy combined with oriental garment	001 · 003 · 007 · 023
			Calligraphy combined with western garment	005 · 014 · 009
			Western and Oriental calligraphy combined with garment	019 · 025
		Calligraphy combined with traditional garment and product		004
		Calligraphy combined with traditional garment, product, furniture, and scene.	Single portrait in the scene	006 · 012
	Multiple portrait in the scene		011 · 021 · 026	
	Calligraphy combined with symbol and product image	Calligraphy combined with symbol		002 · 010
		Calligraphy combined with product image		008 · 010 · 015 · 018 · 017 · 020 · 022 · 027 · 028
		Calligraphy combined with symbol and product image		013
	Miscellaneous			024

(collected and summarized by this report)

Table 1 1912 -1921 Shun Pao Newspapers Advertising Components Relation

4. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

4.1 ADVERTISING QUANTITY BY CATEGORY AND ANALYSIS

Statistic in Table 1 shows the top three commodity advertisements between 1912 and 1921 are health care, personal products and 3C industry. There were totally 17 pieces of health care advertisements, about 60% of the total, among which Douanshi's Medicine product made the most publication, following by Rendan mini-pills. Health care products are the fever at that time. There were 7 pieces of personal products, about 25% of the total, which are mostly cigarette advertisements. The third place belonged to 3C products mainly consisting of machine selling advertisement.

4.2 ADVERTISING CONTENT

It is shown in Table 2.3 that advertising appeal ways during this period is mainly figure-oriented, product-oriented and scene-oriented in order. With respect of the content, advertisements such as DOAN'S, Rendan and cigarettes mainly emphasis on the product function(Figure 1) ; in terms of the identity of appealing object, taking middle class adult male and female as primary and children as second places, all of which making male as main characters(Figure 2) , showing the family system of men are superior to women of this historical period and the males are more authoritative. Most of the advertising works regarding daily necessities as the demands, also

some other for advocating domestic products and first-class society(Figure 3) , such as Happiness cigarette and Huile cigarette.



Figure 01: Rendan advertisement



Figure 02: DOAN'S advertisement



Figure 03: DOAN'S advertisement

4.3 EXPRESSION METHODS

From Table 2.3 we can see that the main stream advertising expression method is calligraphy combined with hand-drawn graphic. In commodity advertisements, human character and relevant scene are presented in the form of realism hand-drawn (Figure 4) and line drawing (Figure 5). Line drawing inherits traits of traditional Chinese paintings, while Rendan Mini-pills advertisement is strongly influenced by western popular art deco style judging from its geometric line models repetitively used in the advertisement graphic.



Figure 04: Realism Hand-drawn



Figure 05: Line Drawing



Figure 06: Illustration of Commodity User



Figure 07: Illustration of Product Packaging

Among hand-drawn graphic advertising, the main expression is illustration of commodity user (Figure 06) and illustration of product packaging (Figure 07) and illustration of product packaging. In health care commodity advertising, . In health care commodity advertising, consideration was given from basically the angle of users and in mainly the orientation of characters with scene or single character. The audiences appealed to were brought into the graphic by illustrating them in the mandarin gown and mandarin jacket popular at that time. Some advertisements even adopted dialogue scene between multiple characters, other in scenes including chairs, beds, desks and couplets full of Ming and Qing Dynasty style. With adults as their main appealing audiences, these advertisements well presented rich emotional appeals. In personal products and 3C product advertising, consideration was more given from the angle of product packaging, to describe product image in detail and to highlight description

of product advantages. Some specific illustrations even integrated form of folk paper-cut and expression of advertising words combining with the Confucian culture to guide customers' positive impression and trust on the product, which is good example of rational appeals of products.

In general, advertisement during this period utilized inherent territorial characteristic culture and blended folk custom in the expression in Chinese of titles, copywriting and trademarks. Among which, the expression of titles were often planned in advertising words that complied with Chinese language conventions, in vertical composition mode and reading habit from right to left that passed along from ancient time. Meanwhile, with combination of graphic language, modeling methods and creativity thinking modes from domestic culture, a commercial advertising full of Chinese local characteristics naturally came into being.

5. THE INSPIRATION OF COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS DURING THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA UPON DESIGN EDUCATION —TAKING THE COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS ON SHUN PAO AS EXAMPLE

From the analysis of sample advertisements, we can see that in the graphics there are visible elements full of Chinese culture characteristics such as calligraphy, Chinese painting, paper-cut, mandarin gown, couplet, mandarin jacket, Ming and Qing Dynasty furniture and decorative patters; as well as invisible elements such as language conventions, the Confucian culture, national customs, proverbs and illusions. The commercial advertisements at the early stage of the Republic of China had employed comprehensively philosophical view, value system, aesthetic taste, artistic thought and visual intentions, which fully embodied the territorial and humanistic connotations of China.

Design education shall adopt global perspectives, attitude of integrating territorial spirit as demonstrated in the design and creation of advertisement at the early stage of the Republic of China, and oppose aimless direct reference of education system from other countries. Japanese graphic designer Kenya Hara mentioned in his book *Education of Desire* that "the concepts of design shall not be the same but the forms of expression can be used as reference". This sentence well interprets the idea that for the purpose of creating designs that are with territorial culture characteristics, design education shall establish itself in cultural connotations, combine local cultural resources and characteristic educational environment and learn and refer from the logical procedure methods of modern western design. Just like the commercial advertisements at the early stage of the Republic of China, only the type of design that is influenced by the western art deco style but still kept its Chinese characteristics, could be the fundament for developing Chinese contemporary design and design education system.

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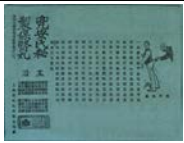

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Table 3 Sorting list of Advertising work samples on SHUNPAO during 1912-1921

001	002	003	004	005
				
1913- Douanshi	1912- Rendan	1913- Vitality Pill	1913- Fu Mei Da Ming	1914- Douanshi
006	007	008	009	010
				
1914- Shui Yan Hua	1914- Rendan	1915- Qigong Old Brand Milk	1915- Douanshi	1915- Rendan

011	012	013	014	015
				
1916- Sanatorium Life Prolonging Powder	1917—Shanghai VIVE Mosquito Repellent Fragrance	1917- Triple Happiness Cigarettes	1917- Douanshi	1917- Rendan
016	017	018	019	020
				
1918- Blood Hematinic	1919-Chouji	1919- 555 Cigarette	1919- Douanshi	1919- Front Door Cigarettes
021	022	023	024	025
				
1919- Huile Cigarettes	1919- Foreign Firm Machine Department	1920- Douanshi	1920- Douanshi	1920- Bullring
026	027	028		
				
1920- Ingersoll Luminous Watch	1920- Textile Machinery	1920- Hatamen Cigarettes		

(collected and summarized by this report)