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台灣日治時期平面廣告中的女性圖像：圖像符號學分析 研究成果報告(精簡版)

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計畫主持人：孫秀蕙

計畫參與人員：碩士級-專任助理：陳儀芬

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台灣日治時期平面廣告中的女性圖像：

圖像符號學分析

報告內容

1894年（光緒二十年），中國與日本爆發甲午戰爭。戰敗的清廷與日本簽定馬關條約，將台灣割讓給日本。隔年六月十七日，日本總督樺山資紀在台北城舉行「始政式」，展開對台灣長達五十年的統治。

日人對台灣的殖民統治，伴隨著工業革命以降的大量生產形式，以及企業集團的形成，催生了現代台灣廣告業。當時風行於日本的廣告設計，隨著以日人為主的廠商在台灣設立代理公司，販售日製商品，出現在台灣的大眾傳播媒體及公共場所的宣傳海報上。

然而，關於台灣現代廣告之發展，日治時期的台灣與其他國家相較，有一個最大的不同點，那就是殖民者牢不可破的政治與經濟的控制。台灣在廣告業發展之始，明顯受到了總督府的掌控。無論是代表施政官方的總督府、配合施政的商人組成的「商工會」、亦或是官方色彩濃厚，被視為總督府喉舌的《台灣日日新報》，都是日治時期推動廣告業的重要角色。他們不但引進了現代商業活動中的促銷特賣活動，更廣泛地運用報紙平面廣告、海報、紀念明信片等工具，以收商品或觀念宣傳之效。尤有甚者，在日治中期以後，更由中央或地方統治者主導，舉辦各式各樣的展覽，甚至以大型博覽會，全民動員的模式，以宣揚日人治台之政績（呂紹理，2005）。換言之，日治時期的「廣告」，並不是單純的商品宣傳工具，它更是政令宣導，教化人心的利器，進行社會及文化控制，以鞏固殖民統治為核心目標。

關於台灣現代化的研究及殖民統治史，近年來蓬勃發展，其研究結果有目共睹。然而，台灣日治廣告中的符號學研究應用，或是女性圖像的研究，其累積的研究成果仍然很少。即使有少量研究，也仍處於基本性的探討及初步的分類，缺

乏一個更具系統性的論述（例如：姚村雄，2002）。關於日治時期的台灣廣告應如何建立一套適切的符號研究模式？其分析原則與步驟又是如何？若以日治時期廣告中的「女性圖像」為分析對象，其研究結果如何影響我們對當時台灣女性地位及處境的了解？其中隱含的社會、文化、政治權力鬥爭又應如何掌握？與此一方面的相關探討，實是不足。本文的研究目標如左：

- 一、針對日治時期（1895-1945）台灣廣告中的女性圖像，以圖像符號分析法出發，並以新歷史主義理論為詮釋基調，嘗試再現並分析日治時期女性角色、地位，並說明商業設計中隱含的文化、社會、政治權力鬥爭，藉以豐富日治時期廣告研究論述。
- 二、透過整體的研究過程，包含文獻整理、研究方法選擇、實例分析與結果呈現等，提供一個符號學、廣告學及文化史研究等學門之整合及對話的研究範例，對於文本分析、廣告史、性別研究等論述均能有所啟示。
- 三、本研究橫跨了台灣五十年之日治殖民歷史，並從女性意象的角度切入，除可釐清日治時期台灣之廣告與社會、歷史、文化發展之間的關係，豐富廣告史及文化研究之內涵之外，將有助於在日治史研究領域中，開闢一個以性別政治為主軸的學術對話空間。

女性形象究竟如何在日治時期時被建構？以台灣日治時期最大的婦女組織「愛國婦人會」為例，它由總督府協助成立，以協助社會風俗改革（如宣導解放纏足）、支援戰爭（在台灣則是「理蕃」、「討蕃」）時的醫療看護，並募款以撫慰因討伐「叛亂」而傷亡的軍警及其家屬。「愛國婦人會」按照「國策」發展，透過台灣中上階級女性的集結，加上它號召而匯集的錢財，對於貫徹政策的男性統治者而言，是不可或缺的重要資源。因此，在國家體制的動員下，具有濃厚官方色彩的「愛國婦人會」，早在1908年10月便發行《愛婦台灣支部報》，以女性讀者為目標，隔年改為《台灣愛國婦人》。在台灣日治時期扮演了形塑「女性」形象的重要角色（竹中信子，2007）。

關於日治時期台灣女性地位與角色的描述，楊翠作了這樣的結論：

「對一向蟄居一方小天地的台灣女性而言，這的確是一個身體解放、走出家庭的新契機，她們可以被帶領出來，找到一個全新的活動舞台。因為『國語』的學習，她們在社會上可以有聲音；因為各種職業技能的養成，她們有了生產力；因為社會事業的參與，她們存在的位置逐漸開闊，角色變得多元；但這並不是所謂的『婦女解放』，因為即使在初階段的『婦女解放』中，也必須包含有意識上的自主性，這個條件是婦解的必備條件，而我們在其中找不到這種條件的存在，反而看到『資本家—殖民者—父權』三重支配的型態正在建構化與正當化。」(楊翠，1993：64)

本研究的分析重點，朝兩大方向進行：一是以日治時期廣告中的女性為分析文本，建議適切的符號研究模式。前人相關的研究，固然有針對廣告中的視覺設計進行符號分析(例如：姚村雄，2001)，惟迄今為止，無論是台灣日治廣告中的符號學研究應用，或是女性圖像的研究，仍處於基本性的探討及初步的分類。關於日治時期的台灣廣告，若以女性圖像為例，應如何建立一套適切的符號研究模式？其分析原則與步驟又是如何？這方面的探討可說是付之闕如。

二是日治時期台灣廣告的相關研究，至今多由設計學界進行，固然累積了初步的成果，但誠如林曼麗所言：

「自從台灣史的研究成為台灣學術界的顯學之後，台灣美術史的研究也呈現較為活潑的現象，但是多偏重於資料的蒐集、整理，或流於研究者個人主觀的詮釋，缺乏宏觀的歷史視野，難於深入剖析探討其歷史意涵……易侷限於『點』的說明，缺乏全面性的掌握。」(林曼麗，1996:127)

關於日治時期的廣告活動研究，研究者常以「藝術社會學」的理論觀點作為依據，分析視覺呈現與社會變遷之間的關係。廣告中的視覺表現本來就可以與當時的社會變遷作一對照，然而考察現有的相關文獻及研究成果，所謂的「社會變遷」，僅止於將日治時期按照施政模式分為三期，並試著將統治者的重大施政及設計表現作一連結，卻缺乏細部資料的佐證及說明，遑論加入性別觀點(姚村雄，2002)。日治時期台灣現代廣告的誕生及發展，與當時的傳播環境、商業市場、

廣告主勢力、消費者特質……等均有密切關連，但這方面的資料蒐集，至目前為止仍相當零碎，缺乏有系統的整理。而在廣告「女性」圖像的呈現方面，相關研究並未深入分析台灣日治時期女性角色及地位之變遷，因此也就無法有效說明日治五十年間，台灣廣告中女性形象再現的變化，以及這些變化與社會情境的改變，究竟有何實質關連？這也是本研究可著力之處。

因此，本研究提出四個研究問題如左：

- 一、 關於日治時期的台灣圖文廣告中的「女性」形象呈現，我們應如何建立一套適切的符號研究模式？其分析原則與步驟又是如何？
- 二、 關於日治時期的台灣圖文廣告中的「女性」形象呈現，我們應如何建立一套適切的研究史觀，以補充現有的台灣廣告或設計史論述之不足？
- 三、 日治時期台灣現代廣告的誕生及發展，與當時的統治政策、傳播環境、商業市場、廣告主勢力、消費者特質……等均有密切關連。本研究擬以日治時期的台灣圖文廣告中的「女性」為例，說明這些廣告圖像反映了何社會價值（例如：兩性互動、家庭及社會關係）與文化？而這些社會價值與文化，是否隨著時間而變遷？其變遷方向為何？
- 四、 以圖像符號研究模式分析日治時期的台灣圖文廣告中的「女性」形象，在廣告的表意過程中，它的符號運作原則為何？如何呈現其宣傳效用與說服功能？

本研究主要發現如左：

綜觀日治時期的女性地位，不難觀察到台灣婦女地位實受到總督府的統治方針，如中期的「殖民地內地化」政策，以及為推動經濟生產而展開一連串的「現代化」措施等因素的影響。殖民當局利用各種體制內教育或婦女團體來控制台灣女性，其目標則著重於透過教育及活動的方式培養認同與生產力、涵養「日本國民性」與「日本女性美德」，將台灣女性塑造為勤奮勞動、賢妻良母以及忠良愛國的角色（游鑑明，1987）。從茶葉廣告中勤奮勞動的採茶女形象，觀察其符號（圖像與文字）配置，可知「採茶女」的形象不但用於鼓勵（上層階級的日本與

北美市場)消費,也說明了勞動女性作為經濟作物生產者的重要性。在日治後期,由於軍國主義盛行,台灣在「皇民化」風潮之下,被捲入了戰爭,婦女被宣傳動員,除加強經濟生產之外,也投入了社會救助與救護行業,作為戰爭之後援,此種戰爭後援角色,亦廣泛見於當時之廣告海報(楊翠,1993)。曾有學者指出,在日治時期,日本統治者以國家力量動員台灣婦女,試圖塑造三種角色典範,分別為:「皇國婦女」(真正的日本國婦女)、「軍國之母」(「日」軍的母親與妻子)及「產業戰士」(戰爭後援的角色)等(楊雅惠,1993 & 1994;張淑卿,1999)。不過,根據本研究的分析結果,以報紙廣告、廣告海報及雜誌封面為例,除了上述三種代表「典範」的女性形象之外,廣告所描繪的女性角色毋寧是更為多元化的。例如:採茶女的勤奮勞動生產、推銷茶葉,身穿傳統漢服與和服的婦女、被稱之為「高砂族」(即今之原住民),著傳統服飾之部落婦女,她們被統治者用來「推銷」台灣的農產品或觀光勝地。換言之,透過廣告的描繪,日治時期的台灣女性,擔任的是農業生產、產品推銷和戰爭後援角色,展現了結合和、漢傳統美德中所強調勤奮與服從。因此,本研究結論指出,大部分台灣婦女之地位不但未見任何提升,其廣告所反映的,反而是資本主義、父權、種族歧視與殖民主義的多重剝削之結果。

綜合以上討論,我們不難發現,台灣現代廣告之發展與其他地域(如中國上海)最大的不同是,雖然都是外來產物,但伴隨著殖民政治及經濟之箝制,台灣現代新聞及廣告業發展之始,就明顯受到了統治者—台灣總督府—牢牢的掌控。無論是代表施政官方的總督府、配合施政的商人組成的「工商會」、亦或是官方色彩濃厚,被視為總督府喉舌的《台灣日日新報》,都在日治時期廣告業發展的過程中,扮演了重要的角色。而廣告作為觀念或商品促銷的重要工具之一,其視覺表現及採用的符號,莫不與日人統治及和式文化有密切關係。而本研究也驗證了姚村雄(2001)的研究結果:台灣「女性」形象已經不是單純的藝術創意或自由揮灑下的設計成果,「女性」作為一設計符號,與當時的政令教化目標結合,處處可見殖民者之統治色彩。

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計畫結果自評

近年來，筆者以圖像符號學研究方法為基礎，嘗試建立平面廣告之圖像符號學分

析模式，並將研究成果寫成英文論文，與國際學術社區對話。自 2006 年起，筆者以重新書寫華人廣告史為長程目標，取廣告中的女性圖像研究為切面，分別進行上海租界時期和台灣日治時期的廣告符號研究。首先，申請者執行為期一年（2006-2007）的國科會研究計畫「平面廣告的圖像符號學分析：以上海老月份牌廣告畫為例」。針對以女性為主題的老月份牌廣告畫進行圖像符號文本分析，意圖建構合於目標文本特性、適切性高的圖像符號分析方法，並從文本訊息的表層出發，觀察其符號結構及功能，詮釋女性圖像再現的社會、文化意涵。接下來則執行日治時期的廣告圖像研究（2007-2008），嘗試深入瞭解殖民地時代的台灣女性角色與地位。短期來說，希望能夠先提供一個符號學與廣告學門整合的研究範例，對於文本分析及廣告文化等相關研究論述有所啟示，長期而言，希望能釐清廣告與社會之間錯綜複雜的互動的關係，並豐富廣告史研究內涵。

上述研究成果先於於 2007 年「第十五屆中華民國廣告暨公共關係學術與實務研討會」以中文發表，接下來改寫為英文論文，於 2008 年 The Annual Conference of International Communication Association 的 Feminist Scholarship Division，以及 The 26th International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) International Congress 的 Gender Communication 領域，以英文分別發表兩篇學術會議論文，亦獲得與會者正面評價與回應，而筆者在未來也會參酌（會議論文）匿名評論者和與會者之意見，將分析與結論部分寫得更完整周全，投稿至國際學術期刊。因此，本研究計畫總共發表兩篇英文會議論文，不但建立了針對平面廣告的圖像符號學分析模式，更透過圖像符號學進行深入觀察與詮釋女性在華人社會中的角色與地位，研究計畫的研究成果可謂相當豐碩。

出席國際學術會議心得報告

計畫編號	NSC 96-2412-H-004-013
計畫名稱	台灣日治時期平面廣告中的女性圖像：圖像符號學分析
出國人員姓名 服務機關及職稱	孫秀蕙，政治大學廣告系教授
會議時間地點	2008.5.22~5.26, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
會議名稱	58th Annual International Communication Association (ICA) Conference
發表論文題目	The Framed Female Image: A Pictorial Semiotic Analysis of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters of the 1910's-1930's

一、參加會議經過

筆者近五年來致力於整理符號學相關論述，將研究觀點與分析方法應用於傳播文本之研究，藉此理解不同種類的傳播文本如何建構其修辭策略，並發揮其說服效用。筆者曾分別以總統演講詞、網路謠言、電視政論性節目等為符號文本分析對象，在學術期刊與研討會發表論文。在〈符號、敘事結構與公共關係中的『說服』：以九一一事件布希演講稿為例〉一文中，筆者建立了一個分析宣戰文稿的範例，呈現出符號、敘事結構研究與公關理論的對話可能，以及對戰爭宣傳發言策略的補述。同時，針對檢驗說服效應的方法及步驟上提出建議。不但幫助開拓公關研究視野，更提供公關從業人員在戰爭宣傳策略方面的修辭建議。

另外，在〈初探網路謠言中『女性』符號運作，以東森新聞台『網路追追追』為例〉一文中，筆者透過「公關管理」、「性別研究」和「修辭學」等研究領域之互相結合，自東森新聞台「網路追追追」網站上，有系統的蒐集網路謠言個案，找出其中「女性」符號運作的模式，呼應與修辭學取向的公共關係理論模式，並提供公關管理方面的建議，裨益公關從業人員處理以女性消費者為訴求的網路謠言。在研究中發現，面對網路謠言中「女性」符號的操作，公關人員必須正視其中所造成的恐懼心理與被剝奪感，並以保護照顧女性為內涵的公關行動來應對。

筆者另有行政院研考會委託之政策建議書「社會互信與媒體責任」一案，以電視

政論節目為分析對象，結案報告已於 2007 年改寫成會議論文，發表於國際會議「第五屆世界華文傳媒與華夏文明傳播學術研討會」，並送相關學術期刊審稿中。研究發現，電視政論節目的製作是以製造對立為符號運作的基本邏輯。政論性節目對於社會互信造成傷害之主因，在於節目中所充斥的「不負責任的言論」，也是將「言論自由」與「合理推論」無限上綱的不良結果。在政論節目與新聞惡質化難分難解的狀況下，針對討論的議題，「求證」幾乎不可能存在於製作電視政論節目的過程中。公共議題討論中的所應呈現的理性與共識的追求被犧牲，弱勢邊緣的意見被極端的意識形態所取代。

近年來，筆者致力於研究國際化，並以圖像符號學研究方法為基礎，以建立平面廣告之圖像符號學分析模式。分析的標的，係以女性圖像為主，重新觀察華人廣告與其文化再現，書寫女性觀點的華人廣告史，重新敘述廣告中所呈現的華人女性主體建構過程。自 2006 年起，筆者以重新書寫華人廣告史為長程目標，取廣告中的女性圖像研究為切面，分別進行上海租界時期和台灣日治時期的廣告符號研究。短期來說，希望能夠先提供一個符號學與廣告學門整合的研究範例，對於文本分析及廣告文化等相關研究論述有所啟示，從而釐清廣告與社會之間的關係，並豐富廣告史的研究內涵。

上述研究成果先於於 2007 年「第十五屆中華民國廣告暨公共關係學術與實務研討會」以中文發表，接下來改寫為英文論文，在國科會研究計畫經費贊助之下，於 2008 年 The Annual Conference of International Communication Association，在 Feminist Scholarship Division 中發表論文（如附件一），亦獲得與會者正面評價與回應，Feminist Scholarship Division 副主席 Diana Rios 副教授（任職於 Department of Communication Sciences and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies Institute PRLS, University of Connecticut）以拉丁裔美國人的文化經驗，提供了她對於本篇論文的寶貴看法，並期待未來東西方學者可從性別傳播觀點，進行更深入的跨文化學術對話。而筆者在未來也會參酌兩位（會議論文）匿名評論者和與會者之意見，將分析與結論部分寫得更完整周全，投稿至國際學術期刊。

本研究中不但建立了針對平面廣告的圖像符號學分析模式，更發現到透過圖像符

號學的深入觀察與詮釋，由洋商所引進的廣告畫已不單純扮演促銷產品的作用，畫中所展示的女性形象，正標示了中國邁向現代化過程中新話語的開始。除此之外，筆者也認為應在原本的文化研究架構上，除新歷史觀之外，應加上殖民主義與跨文化研究的探討，才能充分釐清華人社會中，商業廣告中所呈現的資本、文化、種族、性別等多重剝削層次（capitalistic, cultural, racial and sexual exploitations），並觀察出在殖民時期特殊的環境下，台灣女性形象的呈現與歷史性變化。在場與會者，包括來自印度、韓國與美國的學者，也提出了他們的問題（包含性別再現的不平衡？1940年之後的上海廣告的發展等），並有相當豐富而多元的學術討論。

二、與會心得（及收穫）

綜合以上所述，參與本項會議（58th Annual International Communication Association Conference）的心得及收穫有：

- 一、將研究論述英語化，促進性別與廣告傳播領域的跨文化學術對話。
- 二、申請人為本校補助期刊《廣告學研究》主編，由於《廣告學研究》同時接受中、英文稿件，透過國際會議的參與，目前已邀請若干廣告相關領域學者及研究人員投稿，同時擬成立英文網頁說明英文投稿事宜，以提升《廣告學研究》學術水平，並促進《廣告學研究》國際化。
- 三、會議論文將參酌與會學者之專業意見，改寫成期刊論文，並投至 SSCI 學術期刊，以協助提升本校學術水平。

附件一 發表之 ICA 國際會議論文

The Framed Female Image: A Pictorial Semiotic Analysis of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters of the 1910's-1930's

Abstract

The present study conducts a pictorial semiotic analysis of the female image in Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters of the 1910's-1930's. First of all, we review Roland Barthes' and Göran Sonesson's theoretical perspectives towards pictorial semiotics and then propose four essentials to distinguish the features of pictorial texts, especially those of print advertisements. These four essentials are types of code, goals, media and textuality. Furthermore, we find the Calendar Posters' "textuality," the configuration of both linguistic text and pictures that produces meanings, is in the pattern of that pictorial meanings are restrained by linguistic text, and the core visual sign of this genre is "the framed female image." At last, the present study explores different layers of the significances of the two major signs—"the frame" and "the female image." According to the analysis, from prostitutes to movie actresses, there had been dramatic changes of female characters in the posters due to the invading capitalism accompanied by economic growth and western modern culture. The female image in these Calendar Posters represents no longer an object of desire for male gaze as those in common commercial posters depicted by Goffman, Buker or Page. In fact, the significances of the female image go far beyond the frame of feudalization and tradition, signifying the consumers' expectation of a better future, and this "better future" will be achieved by a healthy, well-educated and independent fine woman. "The female image" signifies beyond "the frame." The female image

of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters subverts the patriarchy embedded in Chinese feudalistic tradition and Western capitalism, and it finally reserves a precious moment of revisiting Chinese women history from the perspective of pictorial semiotics.

Keywords: Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters, female image, frame, pictorial semiotics

The Framed Female Image: A Pictorial Semiotic Analysis of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters of the 1910's-1930's

Introduction

In the early twentieth century, an era of capitalistic colonialism began. Western powers invaded China in predominant forces. Meanwhile, China was undergoing a tremendous social, economic, and cultural transformation due to the industrialization, business trust, and mass production accompanied by Western powers. Commercial advertisements thus grew rapidly in order to stimulate consumption. Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters are exactly one of the results of the Western business invasion of China. “Calendar Poster,” regarded as the origin of Chinese modern commercial advertisement, is a trinity of painting, calendar and advertisement (Chiang, 1994; Chuo, 1993; Chaou, 2002).¹

According to modern business logics, no matter in visual or linguistic messages, “product” should always be the focus of an ad, whereas on Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters, during the period of 1910's-1930's, products were seldom placed at the focus but at the marginal frames or corners. What attracts the consumers' attention are the various and gesturing Chinese women at the center of the Calendar Posters. That is to say, “female image” as the theme is the most significant feature of Classic

¹ Po-tang Chuo argues that there was no official name for these posters and some of the posters in later period did not necessarily include calendars. Chuo thus suggests they merely be named as “Commercial Posters.” However, from the social, historical and aesthetical perspectives, “Commercial Posters” cannot convey fully the significance of these posters as the derivation of Chinese modern advertisements and their unique visual expression. Therefore, this study prefers “Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters” as named by Yeng-fong Chiang, an important collector of these posters.

Shanghai Calendar Posters (Chuo, 1993; Wang, 1997).

This study aims to analyze the female image in Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters and to explore the signifying process and sign system, so as to understand how and what the female gender role was reflected by these posters in the contemporary social-cultural context. From the perspectives of Shanghai's urbanism of that period, advertisers' influence, and the characteristics of consumers, this study also tries to explain what sort of ideology and value system were re-presented by the posters. Besides, through theoretical discussion of the existent pictorial semiotics and the features of the target text, this study demonstrates an example of pictorial semiotic analysis, in the sense of pertinence, which can be appropriated to the future studies on the print advertisements containing both pictorial and linguistic messages. Finally, this study hopes to offer an interdisciplinary research model to the fields of semiotics, feminism, and advertising and sheds light on the scholarship of textual analysis and advertising culture.

Development of Semiotics and Pictorial Semiotics

American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure are the two founders of modern semiotics. Almost at the same time, though apart by the Atlantic, Peirce initiated his theory of signs as semiotics, while Saussure named it semiology. Based on notes taken from Saussure's lectures, his students edited *Course in General Linguistics* and published it in 1915. As for Peirce, eight-volumed *Collected Papers* recording most of his notions was published some years after his death.

“A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from the Greek semeion 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes

signs, what laws govern them,” Saussure defines (Saussure, 1966: 16). Accordingly, a sign contains two elements, the signifier and the signified; and the link between them generates meanings. However, the relation between the signifier and the signified is by no means natural but arbitrary. The link is sustained only by the common practice within a certain cultural context. It is more than obvious that between the signifier and the signified, there is not a natural link but in fact, an artificial one. Derived from this understanding of signs, French Structuralists develop methodologies like Structuralistic approach toward Myth (e. g. Levi-Strauss, 1963), Structuralist Poetics (e. g. Jakobson, 1971), and Narratology (e. g. Genette, 1972). Scholars apply Saussure’s linguistic methods, examining texts from the aspect of the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic relations, to reduce a text into some basic elements in the sense of Structuralism and to elucidate the effect caused by every single element and their combination. In short, they explore the structure and operation of language use in a text as a sign system (Sun, 2005a & 2005b).

Peirce categorizes signs into three types: iconic sign, indexical sign and symbolical sign. This typology explains how the sign refers to its object. The iconic sign is related to its object by a quality of its own, like in the cases of portrait, sculpture and onomatopoeia. The indexical sign, by real connection, causality mostly, is related to its object. A sign of smoke means fire is a typical example of the index. As for the symbolical one, it is related to its object by a habit or rule, namely conventional, for its interpretant. Language is a perfect example for the symbolic signs (Peirce, 1931-1958).

Italian semiotician Umberto Eco indicates that Peirce’s definition of sign, avoiding any emphasis on its artificial or communicative quality, helps to remove the materialism and the utilitarianism from Saussure’s theory which presupposes sign as the very medium of human expression and communication. Eco furthermore adopts

Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev's opinions about sign, separating the contents of sign, the signifier and the signified, from the referent that is outside of the sign itself. He prefers discussing the "sign function" than merely the "sign," in which the relation between the expression and the content can be fully described (Eco, 1976).

This discussion of the relation between the expression and the content is especially important for pictorial semiotic studies, because the relation between the signifier and the signified is not always arbitrary as Saussure asserts. That is to say, the link between the signifier and the signified is not necessarily artificial and the break between them is not that obvious for most of the pictorial signs, the icons. This type of sign has a feature that the relation between the signifier and the signified, or the sign function in terms of Eco, is based on similarity, likeness and semblance. As Swedish scholar Göran Sonesson points out, people tend to "see" the pictorial sign (icon) "into" its actual expression, although the icon also contain signifier/signified (and of course the break within) like verbal languages (Sonesson, 1992). Thus, it is critical to reflect on the pertinence of applying linguistic semiotics to pictorial sign studies. To adjust and rethink the research principles and steps becomes necessary.

Pictorial semiotics is to study pictures as vehicles to convey meanings, which is different from semiotics that aims at language only. It focuses on the material, structure and signifying process of pictures. Scholars, either revising linguistic approach or innovating new theoretical models, devotes themselves to the study of pictorial semiotics.

Roland Barthes in his "Rhetoric of the Image" points out that the composition of an image is a signifying complex, and especially in the photography, "the denoted image naturalizes the symbolic message . . . [and] innocents the semantic artifice of connotation" (Barthes, 1977: 45). Barthes' keen observation on pictorial sign reveals and depicts the significant features of image in terms of pictorial semiotics.

As in his analysis of Pazani, a colorful print advertisement of pasta, he defines three messages in the pictorial text: linguistic message, coded iconic message, and non-coded iconic message. Nevertheless, he clarifies the two functions of the linguistic message with regard to the (two fold) iconic message: “anchorage”—“the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of image . . . remote-control[ing] him towards a meaning chosen in advance”; “relay”—“text . . . and image stand in a complementary relation . . . and the unity of the message is realized at [the] level of the story” (Barthes, 1977: 39-40).

Barthes’ “Rhetoric of the Image” is a cornerstone of pictorial semiotics, establishing the primary model and research steps toward the study of image. With his theoretic basis of linguistics, he pays more attention to how the content and the referent are linked to the ideology in the real world.

The same trace of linguistic methodology can be found in Eco’s pictorial semiotics. He regards the signifying process of image as the one of idioms. At first, he tries to reduce the image into some basic elements, and names the smallest unit “iconeme” as a parallel to Saussure’s “phoneme,” the smallest contrastive unit in the sound system of a language that does not carry any meaning, in order to perform the structural analysis on image. However, it is impossible for the small units in an image to mean nothing. For instance, when a pure single color represents the smallest unit, it still carries meanings in different cultures (Eco, 1976 & 1977).

Besides Saussurean semiotics, there are other methodologies adopted or adjusted to study the image. René Lindekens discusses the issue of conventionality and double articulation by blending Hjelmslevian semiotics, Greimas school, phenomenology, and experimental psychology of perception from Gestalt school (Lindekens, 1971 & 1976). Later on, Jean-Marie Floch and Felix Thürlemann, applying Greimas’ theory, illustrate the double layer of signification in the picture:

iconic and plastic levels, in order to explain how the concrete or the abstract concepts are transmitted by the picture. Floch, applying structural semiotics, further argues that pictorial signification exists and exercises in the structure of binary opposition (Floch, 1984 & 1986a & 1986b; Thürlemann, 1982 & 1990).

Other than linguistics and structuralism, there are also Liege School, so-called Group μ and Quebec School contributing ideas to the field of pictorial semiotics. Group μ uses the classification of figures in the classic rhetoric to analyze image and combines theories of mathematics to establish their “general rhetoric.” They treat figure as a deviation from the norm, and figures often stand as redundancy as what Greimas calls isotopy. They also probe into issues of iconic and plastic levels brought up by Floch and Thürlemann. They assert the existence of the iconico-plastic figures in the plastic level actually results from the function of redundancy. Given that a blue man in a comic that is supposed to be in the plastic level and carrying abstract meanings, the abstract meaning of “blue man” will be produced only because the redundancy/isotopy of “man,” as a norm, that can generate the “blue man” as a deviation (Group μ , 1979 & 1992).

Fernande Saint-Martin, a leading figure of Quebec School, reckons that the image is by all means a visual product serving the visual perception selectively and can be efficiently analyzable according to six variables: color/tonality, texture, dimension/quantity, implantation into the plane, orientation/vectoriality, and frontiers/contours generating shapes (Saint-Martin, 1987 & 1989 & 1990). Other members of Quebec School, like Marie Carani and Michael O’Toole, also offer their criticism on Greimasian approach and suggest some analytical tools for the pictorial semiotics. They challenge Group μ ’s applying binary opposition to visual sign system, redefine the representation, modal and composition of the image and suggest a interdisciplinary effort in the future studies of image, including perceptual

psychology, philosophical and phenomenological theories of perception, etc (Carani, 1988; O'Toole, 1994).

Works of different schools and scholars provide various theoretical and analytical models to study image. However, as mentioned above, from language to image, semioticians encounter the problem of pertinence when applying linguistic methodology to the study of image. Nevertheless, although the image is the target object of pictorial semiotics, its essential material and signifying system are still different whenever the composition of the object changes. It is still difficult to assert that there is a single theory or an analytical model suitable for all kinds of pictorial texts. Advertisements are different from pictures, not only because of the material element (photography or watercolor) but also because of the communication intention (commercial or aesthetical expression). Therefore, the dichotomous development of the pictorial semiotics, i.e. the semiotics of publicity and the semiotics of visual art, becomes inevitable. Actually, more and more scholars admit the necessity of adjusting and theorizing analytical tools for every individual visual object. Then there will not be too much emphasis on appropriating pertinent theory and methodology to different types of advertisements (print ad, TV commercial or classified ad) according to their own characteristics and social context.

The Semiotics of Advertising and Female Images

Barthes establishes the core concepts and steps of semiotic approach for the advertising in his "Rhetoric of the Image" (Barthes, 1977). Later on, based on the heritage from Barthes, Ron Beasley and Marcel Danesi publish *Persuasive Signs: The Semiotics of Advertising*, attempting to elucidate various aspects of advertising, including brand naming, package, logo creation and copywriting (Beasley & Danesi, 2002).

Beasley and Danesi especially pay attention to how the text of advertisement produces certain meanings and layers of connotation by using Biblical stories or Greek mythology. They fully explore Barthes' concept of mythologizing and point out the signification of the ad is closely related to the convention and the social context. The form (signifier) and the meaning (signified) of visual sign are linked at the first moment of its appearance to its interpreters in certain context and will immediately become a new sign waiting to be interpreted, and the process may go on and on. This is the "connotative chain" representing how the meaning of image expands and increases as different connotations. Take "apple" as an example. For most of the Western audience, a picture of an apple, first of all, signifies the concept of the fruit "apple" and then, almost simultaneously will bestow the symbolism rooted in Genesis, forbidden sex or forbidden knowledge (Beasley & Danesi, 2002). However, given that the sign "apple" appears in different cultures, the same symbolism (apple=forbidden sex or forbidden knowledge) will not occur to the audience so easily.

The more abundant meanings the connotative chain will produce, the more audience the ad will attract, as Beasley and Danesi find. However, more audience does not necessarily mean more buyers. Advertising is to persuade. The naturalization of visual sign is to blur the break between the signifier and the signified and so to make people believe what they are made to see in the ad. The persuasive power lies in the ad design that helps to fix the meaning (what the advertiser wants to convey to the audience), instead of that creates more layers of connotation.

Thus, reviewing from semiotics to pictorial semiotics, and finally to the pictorial semiotics of advertising, this study benefits from the previous scholars and find that a pictorial semiotic approach to the advertising is, in short, to observe the interior and the exterior elements of the ads structurally. Material and texture in general belong

to the interior, context and effect, the exterior.

Then, it is time to move a step further to take a look at the female image in the advertising. According to Jib Fowles, “gender” as a sign, especially represented by the female image, is the most popular sign used in ads, and its re-presentation is also a major concern for the academic (Fowles, 1996). Erving Goffman, an American sociologist, tries to decipher the gender relations embedded in the ads by analyzing the gesture, pose and facial expression of female models (Goffman, 1979). Later on, Nancy Signorielli, Douglas McLeod and Elaine Healy’s research on the female image in music video confirmed Goffman’s findings (Signorielli & et al, 1994). The female characters are designed to be the desired object of male gaze. Moreover, gender stereotypes are duplicated continuously in different categories of ads (Browne, 1998). “Beautiful” and “sexy” are the essential qualities of the female image portrayed in ads.

As for feminist studies on the female image in ads, they are more likely to pursue an ideological interpretation than to conduct a structural (or even semiotic) analysis of the image itself. They point out the re-presentation of the female image in ads is indeed a mean of the social control of patriarchy (Rakow, 1992; Buker, 1996; Page, 2005). Although “power feminism,” may argue that new generation’s confident exhibition of female body becomes a self-empowerment of women, it is still hard to alter the conventional and core concepts of beauty, sexiness and femininity passed down from the previous generations (Fowles, 1996; Gorman, 2005). The similar conclusion can be found in Asian culture. Tomiko Kodama, a Japanese semiotician, finds that the female image in a real estate ad serves to reinforce the stereotype of Japanese woman, dependent and motherly, in order to sustain the group-ness, peace and order in Japanese society (Kodama, 1991).

Most of the studies on the female image in the advertising incline to put more

emphasis on the social, cultural or even political effects brought out by the ads and the sexual discrimination reflected by the ads. That is to say, these studies pay more attention to “the exterior” elements than “the interior” ones as defined by the present paper. Sociologists find the ads are mirroring real life in terms of gender relation; feminists’ discourse hardly reaches beyond the objectified female body. They simply reveal the truth that what the advertisers request is to sell products; provoking controversy or challenging the value system of the mainstream will be the last choice for them to attract and persuade consumers. This “prone-to-exterior” methodology of the female image study often leads to a research report of the status quo. Academic roars, in this case, cannot scare away the advertisers with the vested interest in capitalism and patriarchy.

After all, a strategic move, slightly toward the “interior” of the female image study, becomes important, because the “interior” (semiotic or structural) approach may help to discover the subversive power lying beneath the surface of the text. The analysis of the image-text’s material and texture provides the opportunity to find the clue of that the text is not totally subordinate to the context. Text and context are actually in a dialectical relation promising the multi-interpretation of the ads. Hence, the female image in ads will not always be condemned politically incorrect, and the feminists can empower rather than criticize the female image in ads finally to challenge the status quo.

Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters shall serve as a perfect target for this adjusted pictorial semiotic and feminist approach to the female image study for its historical background and unique features of the commercial design.

Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters: History and Style

Advertising business in Shanghai began in the early twentieth century and

flourished in 1930s, a glowing era of Shanghai culture (Li, 2003). At the very beginning, calendar posters were imported to Shanghai by Western traders and then widely adopted by Chinese businessmen as a gift attached to products. These posters are the earliest form of commercial posters and ads in modern China. The naming of “Calendar Posters” (*yue fen pai guang gau hua*) comes from the juxtaposition of paintings and calendars. More than seventy percent of the collected posters of now show that female characters are the theme and the focus of the paintings (Wang, 1997). Diverse female characters include Peking opera actor (e. g. Lan-fang Mei), movie actress (e. g. Ling-yu Juan and Li-hua Li), fictional heroines in dramas or novels (e. g. Dai-yu Lin in *Dream of the Red Chamber*) and fashion models. Their facial expression, clothing and the background of the painting all reflect the most trendy fashion, decoration and culture in the contemporary Shanghai (Chiang, 1994; Chaou, 2002). The image of the product that should be at the visual center is on the contrary placed on the margin frames. This is the feature that makes these posters exclusive and a special genre in advertising.

At first, women were not the sole theme of the calendar posters. Western traders introduced to China not only the paintings with women but also those with knights, landscape, still life and even religious stories. However, they found Chinese consumers are not interested in these subjects and gradually sense the need of localization. Chinese landscape paintings, folklores, festival icons and traditional dramas all had been themes of the early posters. Finally, the calendar posters depicting beautiful women and modern life style became the most popular genre of the ad posters in Shanghai, a shining and rising modern city in China. Also because of the pragmatic function of calendars (usually with both the western and lunar ones), customers used to hang the poster for a whole year. Beautiful modern women calendar posters turned to be a part of daily life, a practical but also appealing home

deco item, and thus the effect of the publicity had been highly increased (Chiang, 1994).

According to Yeng-fong Chiang, a collector of calendar posters, besides Western ad design, the other origin of the posters is the Chinese traditional woodcut. In fact, women in western dresses appearing in the calendar posters are the inevitable result from a semi-colonized city life in Shanghai. Citizens admire the fashion and modern culture introduced by the Westerners. She also points out that the large circulation of ad posters is simply because paintings are easier for people (of different classes) to understand than words on newspapers. These posters even get so popular to be exported to the overseas Chinese societies in Singapore and Malaysia (Chiang, 1994).

In late 1930's, the technique of photography was greatly improved, and then the newly developed photomechanical process replaced the paintings. Meanwhile, economic slump occurred due to the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese civil war. After 1949, certain numbers of the calendar posters still had circulated for a short period but soon deteriorated since ads, representing capitalism, was severely attacked especially during the Cultural Revolution.² Artists and painters were denounced and condemned in the movement of abolishing the "Four Olds" (Wang, 1994). These beautiful women calendar posters gradually become history and have been collected as Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters (CSCP) till now.

Painters of CSCP are indebted to Yo-ju Wu, a famous folk customs painter in late Ch'ing Dynasty, and the traditional Chinese "court lady" paintings (Chiang, 1994). Wu's realistic style of paintings used to be published on *Tienshihchai*

² In the short period after 1949, the advertisers substituted modest farmer and laborer women for modern urban fashion women in order to meet the preference of Chinese communists' ideology.

Huabao portraying the daily lives of common people and also introducing Western novelties to the local people.³ Wu's delicate lines, strokes and merging modernity and tradition in paintings allegedly bring new life to Chinese folk customs paintings (Wu & et al, 2005). Another influence of Wu is his paintings collected as *Haishang Baiyentu* (translated as "Shanghai Ladies" by the authors); most of the paintings are about the family life of married women and their children (Wu & et al, 2005). Following artists often applied Wu's techniques and the subject matter to the calendar posters.

Chinese court lady paintings achieved maturity after Han Dynasty and since then the style of the female image in Chinese paintings was officially established (Liu & Chang, 2003). The content of court lady paintings mainly aimed at teaching women about virtues (chastity and obedience) and social responsibilities (weaving and reproducing). Of course, the aesthetic and entertaining purposes cannot be excluded. However, women's talents to be writers or power to be fighters are seldom illustrated in the traditional court lady paintings because of "a woman without talents is therefore virtuous," a concept deeply rooted in Chinese feudalistic society.

Although CSCP and court lady paintings both use women as the major visual sign in the composition, their motives are quite different. The former is to create a visual stimulation to the (male) watchers or consumers and to achieve almost an immediate purpose of selling products (Sun, 2003). Comparatively, the theme of the latter is often didactic and moral (Yi, 2005). Certainly, it can be argued that as long as the female image is designed by male artists and for male watchers, the lack of the

³ In May 1884, *Tienshihchai Huabao* was at first delivered as an eight-paged attachment to the subscribers of *Shenbao* (a daily Chinese newspaper published in Shenghai), and later sold as a magazine. *Tienshihchai Huabao* stopped publishing in 1898, accumulating up to four thousand paintings in fourteen years.

female individuality and subjectivity is an obvious phenomenon of both the CSCP and court lady paintings, no matter they are modern commercials or ancient arts.

However, this expected and even predictable interpretation is exactly the result of the “prone-to-exterior” feminist analysis of the female image regardless of its material, motive or features of composition.

Therefore, a strategic shift of methodology is a necessity in order to avoid the presupposed idea of the “objectified female body,” an ideological trap into which feminists used to fall, while studying the female image. This study will take CSCP as the target text and propose a pictorial semiotic analytical model to study the female image on the color print advertisement with linguistic and iconic messages in the early twentieth century.

Features of the Print Advertisement and CSCP

This study shares the same opinion rendered by Sonesson that pictorial semiotic analysis should pay more attention to the features of the target text (Sonesson, 1993). The four viewpoints—“rules of construction,” “effects which they intend to produce,” “the channels through which pictures circulate,” “the nature of the configuration”—Sonesson proposes to differentiate the features of various pictorial texts pave the way for applying pictorial semiotics to the advertising studies (Sonesson, 1993). As mentioned above, this study concludes the previous pictorial semiotics of advertising as a structural analysis of the exterior and the interior elements of ads. From the perspective of structural semiotics, “the channels” and “the effects” of the pictures actually belong to the exterior level, “rules of construction” and “the configuration,” the interior, as suggested by this study.

Moreover, Sonesson’s terms like “the channels” and “the effects” can be understood as “media” and “goals” of communication of the ads, whereas the “rules

of construction” and “the configuration” can be “types of code” and “textuality” of the composition of the ads.⁴ This study finds that these four essentials can depict the features of different kinds of advertisement and help to efficiently complete a structural semiotic observation of the ads.

In the case of CSCP, a color print advertisement with not only the pictures but also the linguistic messages, its “goals” are obviously to attract the audience and sell products, and its “media” belong to the category of print advertisement. As for its “types of code,” they include (1) color painting of female characters, products and background in a realistic style;⁵ (2) stylish rectangular frames; (3) the company name and products in traditional Chinese or Western characters; (4) Western and lunar calendars on two sides or at the bottom of the poster. In short, iconic messages and linguistic messages are juxtaposed on the posters.

“Textuality” is a particular way of constituting a text as a text generates meanings. It is like “figures of speech” in rhetoric consisting of certain structure or rules. In advertising, the image of product can be placed together with or replaced by another object on the screen in order to create the effect of simile or metaphor (Forceville, 1996). Both the visual and the linguistic signs have their own textuality;

⁴ Although this study agrees with Sonesson’s idea of differentiating the features of pictorial texts as the first and the most important step of pictorial semiotics, it still finds that Sonesson’s definition of these four viewpoints are more like an announcement of departing from the linguistic tradition of semiotics than a practical analytical model can be applied to the study of image. Therefore, this study directly appropriates the four terms often used by Mass Communication scholars in order to efficiently theorize them and establish a research model.

⁵ The distinctive and popular technique of CSCP painters, *tsapitantsaihua*, a fusion of fusain and watercolor on paper, was first used by Man-tuo Cheng in 1910’s. This technique specializes in the description of facial features and the modulation of skin color.

nevertheless, there is also textuality lying between them, which is described as “anchorage” and “relay” by Barthes, i.e. the “intertextuality” of the iconic and the linguistic message. Then, what is the textuality of CSCP?

CSCP is consisted of the iconic and linguistic signs. Pictures are mostly vertical framed; names of the products and company, slogans and calendars are blended into the design of margin areas and frames, as showed in Figure 1 and Figure 2.⁶

Given that there are no frames around the picture, products and linguistic messages are placed at the marginal part of the poster as in Figure 3. Or even when the products appears in the picture, they still need the linguistic message on the frames to make clear the brand name and the copywriting as in Figure 4.

⁶ The target texts of this study are selected from the collections of Yeng-fong Chiang (from Taiwan) and Po-tang Chuo (from Hong Kong). Yi-wen Wang’s research indicates there are around one thousand plates of CSCP left now since 1949 (Wang, 1997). Chiang’s collection had reached up to six hundred pieces when she published *Lao yue fen guang gao pai*. In 2006, Chiang told the authors of this study the number of her collection was already more than one thousand. Comparatively, Chiang prefers modern and fashion women posters, while Chuo’s collection shows the diversity in terms of subject matter and periodization.



Fig 1 Hatamen Cigarette (Chiang, 1994)



Fig 2 Toa Tobacco (Chiang, 1994)



Fig 3 Jintan (Chiang, 1994)



Fig 4 Insecticidal Incense (Chiang, 1994)

Visually, the picture is framed, and expressively, its signifying meanings are limited by the linguistic message (product and company names). That is to say, from

the perspectives of visual effect and signifying process, the framed image and the limited signification simultaneously happen on the plate of CSCP. This structure of framed image meeting the goal of selling products is exactly the typical “textuality” of CSCP—a picture (iconic message) is framed (limited) by words (linguistic message).

This type of textuality may remind us of Barthes’ notions about “anchorage” and “relay” in *Rhetoric of Image* (1977). However, the female image in CSCP seldom creates implication, connotation or symbolism after the anchorage and the relay functioned by the linguistic message. Opposite to Barthes’ case of Pazani, the connection between the iconic message (female image) and the linguistic message (frame) of CSCP is very weak. A picture (a woman) can always be replaced by another picture (another woman) without influencing the communication goal of publicity. In other words, Barthes’ analytic model is not efficient for the study of CSCP, because the clear fissure between picture and words cancels the possible function of anchorage and relay, and thus hinders the possible interpretation of the image. On the other hand, through the process of clarifying the features of the pictorial text, the most important structural semiotic elements of CSCP, “the (female) image” and “the (linguistic) frame,” reveal, and so does the fissure between them.

Based on the four essentials to distinguish the features of pictorial texts, this study finds CSCP, as a genre, has the feature in terms of textuality that image (meaning) is framed (limited) by words. Its presentation of the visual sign is structured as “the framed female image.” Therefore, “the frame” and “the female image” are the most important signs in CSCP.

Artists created the beautiful women paintings to be bought by merchandisers and then framed by products, firm name, and calendars. The technique of duplicate plate even multiplies the circulation of the poster. Indeed, this manufacturing

process of CSCP, from visual arts to commercials, seems to tell the story of Chinese social transformation, from feudalism to capitalism, re-presented as in the structure of “pictorial sign/woman/arts framed by linguistic sign/product/capitalism.”

Is “the framed female image” the icon of the era signifying Shanghai in the period of 1910’s - 1930’s? Were women as well as Shanghai, the early modern city in China, actually restricted by some power as on the layout of the posters? Or does the specific textuality of CSCP, an ostensive fissure between “the frame” and “the female image,” actually imply an embedded instability of signification and interpretation? Then, the signifying process and the signification of “the frame” and “the female image” of CSCP within the context of 1910’s - 1930’s shall be further examined.

Frame: Besides Women

Women may always be eye-catching and the focus of the posters, but the frame is the essential element to define CSCP, a picture as a poster. Without the frame, these beautiful women pictures are merely color portraits that may not necessarily be valued as art pieces, not to mention commercials. When the women pictures are framed, they immediately become gifts, practical home deco items, and one-year-long lasting commercial posters. But what are the contents of “the frame”? What cultural significance can be decoded from “the frame” as one of the essential signs of CSCP?

From the viewpoint of art design, most of CSCP are vertical framed and the pattern of the frame includes both Chinese and Western styles. There are often product names, company names, slogans, and calendars merged into the frame. The juxtaposition of Chinese and Western characters is actually the manifestation of a mixed culture that blends Chinese and Western, traditional and modern components

into Shanghai society. “The frame,” in the narrow sense, means the composition of art design and a technique to confine the visual realm. In the broad sense, “the frame” signifies the multi-cultures hidden in its contents. Besides the visual signs, the linguistic signs especially indicate the dimension, Shanghai, the Paris of the East, in the early twentieth century. In other words, “the frame” symbolizes a limitation of signification and a confinement of the tempo-spatial and cultural context of the poster as in Figure 5.



Fig 5 British American Tobacco (Wu & et al, 1994)

This “British American Tobacco” (BAT) poster in 1916 can be a perfect example to see how Shanghai in the preliminarily modern China is illustrated and depicted by the “the frame.” Although the poster belongs to the earlier stage of CSCP, the frame style of this poster is rather typical and standard: calendars on the sides, products and company names on the top and the bottom. Some posters of the later years may not have calendars attached (e. g. “Indanthrene Cloth” or “The

Palmolive Company” posters) (Chiang, 1994; Wu & et al, 1994). The style and arrangement of the frame remain almost the same (Chuo, 1993).

The style of the picture in the BAT poster is under the influence of Renaissance portraits. The human figure is against the background of perspective scenery. The picture is firmly framed mostly by linguistic message. Calendars are placed on two sides, one as “Western Calendar 1915-1916” on the left hand side, the other as “Republic of China 4th year, Lunar Calendar year of Yi Mao” on the right hand side. Both calendars are put in Chinese characters. The company name “British American Tobacco” in Chinese is on the top of the poster, and various kinds of cigarette pack, “The Three Castles,” “Atlas,” “Peacock,” “Pin Head,” and “Pirate” are painted at the bottom.

The opposed Western and lunar calendars though stands for the clues of Western culture in daily life, the use of Chinese characters and the Chinese style of calendar layout imply that Western calendar is actually subordinate to Chinese lunar calendar. Since the opening of Five-Treaty-Ports and English Concessions in 1843, Western culture had been introduced to Shanghai for quite a while by 1916. However, people still lived their lives according to the lunar calendar as in the agricultural society. It indicates that, at that time, during the period of World War One, the life in Shanghai was still economically agricultural and ideologically feudalistic.

The company name in Chinese helps people who do not know any foreign language to figure out what kind of product is promoted. Nevertheless, the co-existing Chinese and Western characters prove that Shanghai people are used to foreign objects and exotic cultures in their daily life. Since 1845, following the English, the Western powers began to establish concessions in Shanghai. “Countries within the country” became an idiosyncratic phenomenon of Shanghai. After 1890, mass production and capitalism resulted from the Industrial Revolution and the idea

of stimulating consumption by means of advertising had already rooted in Shanghai. British American Tobacco introduced the first offset printing machine to China and initiated the circulation of numerous color printing pictures in 1911. Henceforth, Shanghai was framed by the capitalism from the West. In the mean time, Shanghai, though still agricultural, was surrounded by Western culture and Western commodity.

Thus, colonialism and capitalism as well as Chinese tradition and feudalism build “the frame” around “the female image” of CSCP. As moving onward to a modern society, Shanghai cultural and social context was so depicted, in spite of that “the female image” in 1916 was a foot-bound Chinese woman.

Women: Beyond the Frame

“A woman without talents is therefore virtuous.” Traditionally in Chinese feudalistic society, attending husband and raising children are women’s major responsibilities. Women are not allowed to show up in public. In 1903, the first law concerning women education, “Kindergarten and Family Education Law” (*monyangyuan yu chiatingchiaoyu changcheng*), was announced by the Ch’ing government. It stated that women should stay home learning *Filial Obedience Book for Women* (*nyu shiaoching*), *Four Books for Women* (*nyu seshu*), and *Biography of Virtuous Women* (*lieh nyu chuang*) or some necessary knowledge about home economy. Women’s going to school was officially banned because it conflicts to the traditional idea of “telling the difference between men and women [by literacy]” in China. Furthermore, it would encourage a woman to choose her own husband regardless of parents’ opinions. Till 1907, “Women Elementary School Law” emphasized that all the courses should not violate the convention of Chinese virtues and courtesy. The educational goal was to turn women students to be “quiet, tender, diligent” future wives and to keep them away from wild and vulgar customs.

Women students could not go to the same school with men and had no right for the higher education. Shanghai might be one of the earliest modernized and westernized cities in China. The Episcopal Church established Bridgman Memorial School for Girls in Shanghai, 1850. However, the first woman student was not accepted by Private Tatung College until 1916 (Chronology of Shanghai Women Editorial Council, 2000).

Then, in this conservative and feudalistic social context, who is the displayed foot-bound woman painted in the BAT poster? Who is this “Chinese beauty” chosen by the Western advertiser to replace Western women, knights, landscape, still life and Biblical stories for the reason of localization? She is definitely not an ordinary daughter or housewife whose appearance in public is forbidden. Her costume, on the other hand, implies she is not a westernized woman. In the tempo-spatial context, it is very possible she is a famous prostitute who is used to show herself in public, and the public reckons her exhibition common and unoffended.⁷

From some photographs of Shanghai in the same period, the study finds a picture of Ping-shiang Li, a famous poet prostitute, whose facial features, costume, and pose are similar to the woman in the BAT poster.

⁷ A research on the costume and fashion of late Ch’ing Dynasty indicates that the costumes of women in CSCP and of the famous prostitutes are quite alike (Juan, 2002).



Fig 6 Ping-shiang Li (Shueh, 1996)

The style of displaying the female image in two pictures is identical. Both the photographer and the painter arrange the same items for the portraits, such as flowers in hand, bonsais and splendor clothing. The same aesthetic choice confirms that the female image adopted by the Western advertiser is based on the value of local and popular culture. Even though the woman in BAT poster may not be Li, it is obvious this popular female figure is not a fine daughter or a virtuous housewife praised officially by the mainstream China. Subversively, this popular female image represents the culture and the value system identified by the Shanghai people.

In 1898, *Tienshihchai Huabao* printed a “Skirts Party” (*ch’unch’aitahui*) covering Shanghai mayor’s wife invited both Chinese and foreign upper ladies for the establishment of a Shanghai women school. Attendees include wives of foreign ambassadors and lawyers, sisters of the church, wives of Chinese officers, and a courtesan of a pharmaceutical businessman (Yieh, 1998). In 1903, an American missionary, Gilbert Reid restarted the International Institute of China in Shanghai.

Not only the socialites but also some famous prostitutes attended at the inauguration. “Prostitutes appear as socialites and celebrities in public is unique in Shanghai” (Yieh, 1998: 144). Actually, in late Ch’ing Dynasty, high-class prostitutes are “the first group of working girls in Chinese society. They are few women who can show up in public and therefore are responsible for the public relations” (Hsu, 1998: 120). Tabloids in Shanghai often treated these prostitutes as celebrities and gossiped the fashion of their costumes and writings. Ping-shiang Li, the poet prostitute, used to be described as a modern Ch’ing-chao Li (a famous woman poet in Soong Dynasty) and praised as a wonderful woman with writing talent (Hershatler, 1997). That is to say, these educated, economically independent, and out-going women had already found their position in the popular culture, and their popularity and charm is exactly the reason why the Western advertisers would choose them as models in CSCP. The female image in CSCP is the evidence of a powerful female subjectivity transgressing the conservative and moral frames built by the patriarchy and feudalistic tradition. During 1910’s, women in Shanghai, a setting of the mixed Chinese and Western cultures, a transitional state between feudalism and capitalism, gradually seized the power and became aggressive. The traditional belief, “women without talents are therefore virtuous,” was finally overturned in the popular culture, because of the opportunity offered by the capitalism from the West.

Hence, the female image of BAT in 1916 is no longer merely a foot-bound, feudalism-and-capitalism-framed, and conservative Chinese woman. This female image signifies the subjectivity that possesses the subversive power and ready to grow beyond the frame. Soon, after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, women were allowed to enter the university (Wu, 1998).

Besides prostitutes, there were also some cross-dressing Peking Opera actors (e.g. Lan-fang Mei) played as models for CSCP in 1910’s. However, the advertisers

adopted cross-dressing models are mostly Chinese companies. It implies that Chinese businessmen's idea about the female image was comparatively old-fashioned. They still followed the sexist tradition of cross-dressing actors in drama. Still, in the eyes of the scholar-officials (*shihtafu*) of Chinese feudalistic tradition, cross-dressing actors as well as prostitutes are to serve and satisfy men's desire. Chinese and Western advertisers' using cross-dressing actors and prostitutes as models of CSCP, on the other hand, indicates that most of the target consumers were still male during the period in China.

The rapid growth of economy and market made people think different. The female image of CSCP had been through a great change because of people's different taste and value judgment since 1920's. The costumes in "Tai Woo Dispensary" poster in 1924 and "Lin Wen Yen Perfume" poster in 1927 altered to be high heel shoes, reformed cheongsam blouse, pleated skirt, and curly hair as in Figure 7 and Figure 8.⁸

⁸ The first department store in Shanghai opened in 1917 and the first beauty parlor specialized in perming started in 1922 (Wu, 1998).



Fig 7 Tai Woo Dispensary (Wu & et al, 1994)



Fig 8 Lin Wen Yen Perfume (Wu & et al,1994)

According to these two posters, the hand fan should be a trendy ornament for ladies at that time. Furthermore, in the “Lin Wen Yen Perfume” poster, there are more than landscape or flowers around the woman in the picture. The Chinese fashionable woman (in a reformed cheongsam and high heel shoes) leaning against a bookshelf becomes the visual center of the commercial advertisement for the target female consumers. The juxtaposition of a woman and books ought to be a popular image especially for those women who are capable of purchasing the product. The poster implies that buying the perfume means to identify with the intellectual and fashionable kind of woman as painted in the picture. Buying the product and then becoming the woman in the poster is the consumer’s psychology responding to the female image.

After May Fourth Movement, Shanghai society experienced even more radical changes in 1920’s. Foot binding, prostitution, and concubinage were all considered as outdated feudalistic customs by the intellectuals. The image of high-class prostitutes gradually disappeared from CSCP, retreated from the popular culture, and eventually faded away against the background of the growing numbers of college women and the flourishing film and entertainment business (Hershatter, 1997). Meanwhile, Li, the poet prostitute, retired and started an art studio (Shieh, 1996). Movie stars acted as college women holding books (for example, the series of “Indanthrene Cloth”), as sporty women, nature-loving energetic women, or modern housewives enjoying the Western style of life were becoming the new female image on CSCP in 1930’s.



Fig 9 Stomach-ache Pills (Wu & et al,1994)



Fig 10 Great Eastern Dispensary (Chiang, 1994)

In Figure 9, the woman of the “Stomach-ache Pills” poster in 1931 was never again shy and reserved. Although the model is still a Chinese woman, her costume and jewelry are obviously westernized. Her gesture and facial expression reveal self-confidence. The background of the picture is a living room in western style. The fireplace, chandelier, sofas, and the portrait of the host all together create a luxury, spectacular and voguish atmosphere. Besides the ideal modern family life, CSCP of the 1930’s also depicted women in the magnificent dancing ballrooms, such as “Wusi Maolun Silk and Satin Shop” and “Insecticidal Incense” posters (Chiang, 1994). Dazzling, slim fit cutting, half back and side slit cheongsams and the gorgeous dancing hall illuminated the luxury and hedonic Shanghai at that time.

In Figure 10, the picture of a young lady in a boat is one of the famous sports series of CSCP during its meridian period. Swimming, tennis, horse riding, golf, biking or even flying planes, women joined all kinds of sports and outdoor activities. The female image of CSCP in 1930’s was not thin-narrow-shouldered and no longer languid and fragile. Women were healthy, strong and sporty in the posters. Even the male artist of “Great Eastern Dispensary” poster might draw the half-covered breasts on purpose and this demonstration of female body might not be acceptable for every consumer. It cannot be denied that the consumers’ attitude toward female body had been changed dramatically within a decade.

Besides reflecting the daily life and popular culture, the female image of CSCP offers an opportunity to understand the value system and the aesthetic judgment of the era (Chen, 2004). Especially when more and more women become capable of purchasing products, the advertisers dare not use those images may offend female consumers. Westernized objects imply the modernization; splendid decorations suggest luxury life style; strong and healthy body signifies self-confidence and independence. These elements of CSCP in 1930’s enriched the imagination of a

better future life for the audience. Neither subordinate to men nor the passive and weak second sex were women in the meantime. Confident, aggressive and active Shanghai women were popular and admired as a visiting writer from Taiwan recounted:

[Shanghai women are] much more active than Taiwan women. They deliver speeches in public and participate in patriotic activities and women's rights movements. They are talented both in writing and fighting. They are women warriors (Hsu, 1998: 214-215).

Shanghai is a women's world. They are like Persephone bringing the real spring to Shanghai. On the streets or around the corners, lonely and dull it would be if without women (Hsu, 1998: 243-244).

Conclusion

The development of the female image of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters illustrates that women's obtaining economic independence seems synchronal to the awakening of female subjectivity. Previous feminist studies often treat the female image of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters as an evidence of commodified and objectified female body in commercials (Shen, 1999 & 2006). However, after the pictorial semiotic analysis conducted by the present study, it is revealed that the female image in the posters is not merely an object of consumption and desire. The four essentials of pictorial semiotic analysis of the print advertisements—"media," "goals," "types of code," and "textuality"—as proposed by the study, help to clarify the features of the target text and to elaborate the signifying process of both the linguistic and pictorial signs, "the frame" and "the female image." The evolution of the posters enounces a new discourse about the transformation of modern China (Li,

2000). Paradoxically, because of the invading capitalism and the free market economy, Chinese women could gain the chance to work and to be independent. During the period of 1910's - 1930's, Shanghai women gradually obtained the supreme women's rights ever in Chinese history. They were financially, spiritually and physically liberated as shown in the posters. "The female image" signifies beyond "the frame." The female image of Classic Shanghai Calendar Posters subverts the patriarchy embedded in Chinese feudalistic tradition and Western capitalism, and finally, it reserves a precious moment of revisiting Chinese women history from the perspective of pictorial semiotics.

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