

## Taiwanese Visual Design which was influenced by American Western Culture during the Early Post-War Period (1950-1960s)

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### Abstract

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Due to the intense interactive relationship between Taiwan and America after World War II, massive western American-culture had spread to Taiwan, and to affect Taiwan's social life and the style of visual design at that time. In this special American culture affected situation, many enterprise in Taiwan received the exotic cultural impact, and to feature its brilliant product image to achieve the benefit of marketing promotion. At that time, there was some common topics America-culture design affection as followings. Symbolized image to America, American social culture, American aerospace technology, developed western life, western-cultural popularity, international modern intension, western modern design, and modernism design.

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**Keywords:** Design history in Taiwan, American culture, Post-war

### 1. Introduction

After World War II, America became the world's power nation to lead global politics, economy, culture development. Plus, US heavily aid to Taiwan after war, US military assisted protecting Taiwan, and R.O.C and US established intense cooperative relationship, which made Taiwan became the member of the international liberal democratic allies to against communism. Exotic American western culture was changed by the atmosphere under cold war and against the antagonistic relations between China and Taiwan that had changed the position of Taiwan politics status that made it largely introduced into Taiwan. Because of the friendly politics relationship between Taiwan and America at that moment, propagate the positive figure to America. It made America not only to be a progressive, but also the cultural symbol, in addition to promote the positive image of America. It made America not only to improve, to be modern, to be the symbol of culture, and to make American product to be more high quality image that made way to be loved and to be imitated by the customers in Taiwan. During 1950s to 1960s after the War, affecting Taiwan visual design popularity and to become the special visual style in Taiwan.

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This study focused on various type of commercial design in Taiwan as a research which was happened after War in 1950s to 1960s, and specific in the designing influence. First of all, the investigation and recording of design works, with the relevant literature discussion and comparative analysis. Through the process of surveying, collecting, collating, summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting, a review of the development and expression of Taiwan's commercial design at this stage was conducted, and then the phenomenon of American culture under special circumstances was summarized, and the American visual culture and symbol types that commonly used in Taiwan's commercial design at that time was studied.

## **2. The Social Environment of Taiwan in the Early Postwar Period**

After the Korean War on June, 1950, American in order to prevent from communism power expanding in Asia area, strengthening west pacific anti-communism protection line. After that, announcing Korean War Statement which is about Taiwan Bay neutralized, and the 7th fleet, American Navy to assist protecting Taiwan. On January, 1951, American according to China-US Agreement on Mutual Assistance sent military consultant group to Taiwan to sign China-U.S. Mutual Assistance Agreement. The year on May, U.S Military Assistance and Advisory Group/Republic of China on Taiwan were established; therefore, Taiwan had entered global Cold War Age between China and America<sup>i</sup>. In 1954, Taiwan even signed China and American cooperative defense convention<sup>ii</sup>, and outbreak of Vietnam War had come after. Taiwan had raised its international position and becoming the American's first protection line to against communism. In 1951, Taiwan had started to enter "The American Aided Age"<sup>iii</sup>. American offered Taiwan various aid such as military, economy, and technique, which was very helpful on reconstruction after war. At that moment, as lots of American army came for vacations from Vietnam War and the aid from America, and foreign American social culture imported, impacting Taiwan's livelihood cost, popularity, and visual culture development.

After War, due to the changes of politics form, society construction, economy system, forced the government actively promote the industries construction and business events to response Taiwan society reconstruction and requirements of social costs. Various types of manufacturers were found that made the industries prosperous. Promotion media of commercial sales was also started to be regarded. Meanwhile, the products advertisements and package designs in newspaper and magazines developed promoting commercial marketing and advantages of advertisements, which were gradually used enterprises. In 1950s to 1960s, due to the commercial redevelopment phase after War, it was the time that American culture was heavily spread in Taiwan; so, the commercial design at that moment was clearly affected by American culture. It made the commercial design in Taiwan at that phase, the popularity phenomenon showed the American culture way, animating visual images frequency using by western culture colors.

## **3. The visual image of the influence of American Western culture**

After the industry revolution in 18 centuries, by military, politics and economy strong power, it made Europe and America became not only the mainstream culture, but also the symbol of advanced and modern culture. After 1950s, massive American imported living products stimulation with American aid, and also the influence from foreign western American culture, made western cultural colors and popularity of design style commonly used in commercial design in Taiwan after War. At that time, there were many commercial designs were affected by western culture directly showing the visual images with American colors, and the images with western intension or even popularity mode.

### **I. American color images applied directly**

#### **(1) American National Symbol Image**

In this special environment which affected by American culture, many Taiwan enterprises made their commercial design with American colors or its intension to emphasize its superior product figure. At that moment, commonly seen affected design had following impression:

Statue of Liberty, as the most representative landmark in US, it is not only the symbolization, but the image represents global democratic freedom. Some of the Taiwan enterprises in order to follow the American culture popularity, and call for the announcement for democratic freedom politics, using Liberty Statue as its brand to emphasize its advanced and the impression of US quality (Figure 1).

Apple, star striped image, and eagle are usually as US symbol. After War, many Taiwan enterprises like to use these images as commercial design to concrete the product as the US excellence. For example, "Apple Soda", as its brand and image is to focus on American culture feature, and to emphasize its superiority.

In the west of US, Indians and Black are sometimes also be the symbol of US. The initial age after War, some of the Taiwan enterprise would use Indians and Blacks as its enterprise logo spreading US intension to product (Figure 3, 4). Especially the Black Man Head as its logo. It not only a Taiwan toothpaste product, and it was intimated by other enterprises as similar logo design. Even there are some Taiwan manufacturers in order to emphasize American intension, using an American directly as its logo design, like Mei-Tai Chemistry Medication "American People". Besides, blond western people that had American intension were also represent visual image. That is the way that Taiwan enterprise usually used in advertisements.

Figure1: Free Crayon 1960S Figure2: Apple Soda1963Figure3: Central South American Coffee Shop 1960s



Figure4: Darkie toothpaste 1949 Figure5: Darkie medicine1960sFigure6: American brand medicine1960s



Figure7: Ruby cream 1960s Figure8: Children's medicine1960s

(2)American Life Culture Image

American western lively culture imported caused Taiwan society into fresh stimulation and culture impact, which influence every level in livelihood. American life products, popularity, public entertainment and cost from American culture are obviously influenced Taiwan society. Especially, American imported products with fresh form, movies, and music entertainment affects are the targets that Taiwan people love to chase after. Christmas, in American lively culture, because of commercial marketing strategies and activities promotions, made Taiwan to have special festivals with American western culture. Many Taiwan manufacturers in order to outstand its products with American features design their commercial logo design with Christmas, Santa, Christmas trees, Christmas bell1s, etc. (Figure 9). And American television programs, movies, cartoons, and comics came after into Taiwan lives. After America Disney played their cartoons in Taiwan, active cute American style cartoon characters were designed into commercial designed by the Taiwan enterprises, like Mickey Mouse was used in package front page by Tai-Kong Children Fireworks (Figure 10). ZhenMeiXiang Bakeryused American cartoon, Bunny, as its Moon Festival cake packages (Figure 11). After War, American films industry became prosperous, American performing college hold Oscar golden medal, and it became the index of global film entertainment. Due to western Hollywood movies were popular in Taiwan, which was affected by this kind of American entertainment culture. Some of the Taiwan manufacturers used popular film as its name of enterprise (Figure 12, 13).



Figure 9: Santa medicine 1960s Figure 10: Tay-Kong fireworks 1960s Figure 11: Moon Festival cake 1960s



Figure 12: 007 clothing 1963 Figure 13: King Kong locks 1967

**(3) American Space Technology Civilization Affect**

After American shuttle successfully launched on the moon in 1969, broadening the horizons for human beings. Aero-technology has been improving a lot and achieved the great exploration, it made America head the international leadership position in aerospace technology. Receiving the American culture affect, Taiwan society fell into the aerospace technology flow. A word “Space” would be the symbolization in fashion popularity and advanced technology. Many enterprises would use space as their product name or package design one after another just like Space custom logo (Figure 14). In the same year, after launching successfully, Taiwan enterprises called for the current affairs as their product design topic. Take Moon Kingcrayon for example, the image was an astronaut was sitting in a shuttle launching the moon on the crayon box. Rockets and shuttles became the beloved brand name, visual image, which represented technology, advanced enterprise figure. For example, Rock matches (Figure 16), Spacecraft became the medical bag designs (Figure 17).



Figure 14: Space custom logo 1962 Figure 15: Moon King crayon 1960s



Figure 16: Rock match 1960s Figure 17: Spacecraft medicine 1960s

**II. Western Culture and Modern Design**

**(1) Western traditional graphic application**

Affected by western American culture, the images designs were full of western colors that made people felt the enterprises and products were superior quality intension. After War, this kind of western special intension existed in Taiwan, many of the Taiwan enterprises would use visual pictures or commercial designs by western colors to prove its advanced modern figure.

Traditional western striped, royal stamps, religious images, or classic special visual pictures were use the most common in commercial design as western culture symbolization. The crowns and the shield which symbolized traditional western imperialism were used in all kinds of industries to show the imperial quality. Take Yimei for an example, its logo was designed as a crown(Figure 18).

In the ancient Greece myths, lions were the symbol of the furious and power. However, some of the Taiwan enterprises would name or design images by a lion(Figure 19). There was also a flying hippo with the wings symbolized psychic power ad intelligence would usually be used as decorations. There were some Taiwan enterprises would use hippo as the image design (Figure 20). In western history legends, the animals with wings flying in the sky have special magic power and imagination. Excluding flying horses, flying tigers were common western decoration that was usually intimated by Taiwan enterprises (Figure 21). In addition, other designs with western classic striped decoration were also showed its well quality figure on its products. After War, there were some Taiwan enterprises would use western laurel, ribbon, music score, musical instrument as the commercial design, such as the logo of JuShui-Xuan (Figure 22).



Figure 18: Yimei Foodlogo1957 Figure 19: Orient Tileslogo1969



Figure20: Flying hippo medicine 1960s Figure 21: Flying tiger medicine 1960s



Figure22: JuShui-Xuan food logo 1950 Figure 23: Bachelor tooth paste logo 1954

## (2) Western Modern Life Imagery Performance

Through western images and the striped decorations could show the western culture intension of enterprise and products, using the modern achievements to emphasize the shape of advanced quality. Modern western nations made western culture to be modern symbolization by using their military, politics, economic power, and advanced technical research, and to represent the high-class life quality. Under western culture affect, many enterprises would establish their excellent commercial figure by their product packages or western style designed logo. At that time, western life style, constructions, professional person, life crafts, sports...etc. Visual images were the design to show western culture intension. At the beginning period after War, people who had been well educated, had professional knowledge, or society achievements would be great admired, and would also be the commercial topic (Figure 23). Even a dressed Jazz image would be used by large companies as their commercial designed topic.



Olympic games which held once in four years, is always symbol the modern activities and to become the common topic. In addition, especially in 1960 and 1968, after Chuan Guang Yang and Zhengji won the game, Olympic game started to popular, and lot of the Taiwan enterprise having related topics as design(Figure 24).

After War, western science and modern industrial technique improved so fast that made Europe and America became the pioneer of modern society. At the beginning, technology was usually recognized as western and modern. Many enterprises in order to outstand the modern facilities and advanced manufacturing quality, using technology marks, especially in physics, electric machines as design topic which was usually used at that time(Figure 25).



Figure24: World game match logo 1964 Figure 25: Atomic textile logo 1969

### Internationalized modern imagery emphasizes

As western technology improved, modern transportation convenience and data technology, international and global village become the concerned issue. International trade business mode raised, western strong economic power nations led global economy to flow, and that impacted commercial development activities. Many Taiwan enterprises used international related as design topic. Earth and universal ... etc international symbolization became hot brand name. Earth became the commercial designed mark (figure 26). “National” and “Universal” were usually be the logo name to make the enterprise to be more international and universal.

After War, under western American culture affected, English had become the international and cross culture communication tool. Using English would be regarded as western, modern, or international. At the beginning, due to the intense interaction relationship with America, English became Americanized and westernized symbol, and also international behavior. Therefore, impacting many Taiwan enterprises loved to have English logo to outstand its advanced and international figure (Figure 28).



Figure26: Earth medicine 1960s Figure 27: National bicycle logo 1960



Figure 28: Coro soda logo 1950

### III. Western Modern Design Cultural Performance

After 1960s, Taiwan started to contact modern art thoughts and design concept that imported from US. US prevailed modernism design, and also spread in Taiwan. In the meantime, commercial activities started to raised actively, careers related to commercial art are gradually required. Through America imported product design, foreign business intimation, inviting foreign designers for lectures and promotions by government, and government-related institute and designing organization promoted, made American modernism design rapidly affected in Taiwan. At that moment, many Taiwan enterprise in order to emphasize they had modern and advanced American products standard,

they usually shaped a clean modern style design. At that time, not only a domestic professional designer response a logo, but foreign designer assisted Taiwan enterprise designing schedule. In 1961, monopoly bureau had hired American designer, Alfred B. Girady, who had coached Taiwan industrial design, to design packages on wine and cigarettes (Figure 29). At that time, Taiwan folk enterprise followed this kind of design as a clean design one after another. In 1960s, under pop style affect, Taiwan appeared this kind of illusion affect style design(Figure 30).



Figure 29: Cigarette package design 1961 Figure 29: Magazine cover design 1969

#### 4. Conclusion

Due to the intense interactive relationship in politics and economy between US and Taiwan, massive of western American culture was imported into Taiwan and cause obviously impact to Taiwan livelihood that time. Modernized and advanced westernized spread regard as cultural symbolization, and it was commonly used in the commercial design at that time. The study analyzed and found out there are several images present and styles that was strongly influenced by Western culture, usually been used in Taiwanese visual design:

- 1.) The use of visual images with obvious American colors includes images of American national symbols. Such as statues of the Statue of Liberty, star stripes, eagles, apples, blacks, Indians, and Americans; images of American life and culture, such as Christmas and the United States. Films and cartoons; the effects of space science and technology in the United States, such as landing on the moon, spacecraft, rockets, and space shuttles.
- 2.) Influenced by Western culture and modern design, there are traditional graphic applications of Western imagery, such as crowns, shields, and traditional coats of arms; western modern life imagery, such as artifacts, food, and people in Western life.
- 3.) The modernized international image emphasizes images and names with international symbols such as the earth and the globe, and the design and use of English fonts with Western images.
- 4.) Western modern design cultural expression, the simplification of modernism, the imitation of pattern design style.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Kort, Michael, The Columbia Guide to the Cold War. (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2001)

<sup>2</sup>Yuan, Wenjing, U.S. Taiwan and Continental Triangle Relations, (Taipei: International Weekly News Agency, 1981) The "Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty" was signed on December 3, 1954 by the Republic of China and the United States. Based on military affairs, it includes political, economic, and social cooperation.

<sup>3</sup>Lin, Bingyan, American aid to defend Taiwan (1949~1957), (Taipei: Sanmin Bookstore, 2004) The "United States aid period" refers to the period in which the United States provided assistance to the Republic of China from 1951 to 1965. During the period, Taiwan received various assistance from the United States. Apart from the people's livelihood and strategic materials, it also included basic construction materials such as construction roads, bridges, dams, power plants, and natural resources development.