

Western Culture Influences on Taiwanese Trademark Design during Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945)

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Abstract

Taiwan's past presents the interweaving of its immigration and colonial experiences to create a history in which many cultures encounter one another. This history is further reflected in commercial visual presented in everyday public life. Within this culture, the impact of the Western culture during the Japanese colonial period is the most evident. Therefore, this study investigates design materials relevant to Taiwanese trademark design in the Japanese colonial period to determine how Western culture was disseminated and influenced the design manifestation and visual culture of this period. In its scope, and the specimens it utilizes, this study includes designs utilized for product identity, marketing and providing product information in product logos, labels, package, posters, advertisement, and other mediums which appeared during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945). Firstly, through an examination of historical literature and research specimens, it explores the social backdrop for trademark design during the Japanese colonial period. In addition, this study analyzes the development and the manifested characteristics of Taiwanese trademark design of this period, as well as how the influence of Western culture was introduced, from the perspective of the sociology of art and research on popular mass culture. After investigating the social backdrop of Taiwanese trademark design during the period of Japanese rule, and analyzing the path by which Western culture was introduced to Taiwan, we can categorize the influence of Western culture on trademark design during this period into the four following manifestations: imitation of the design of imported products; the adoption of graphics from Western visual culture and styles; the utilization of mainstream Western artistic trends as reference; and the combination of Western and Eastern symbolism. Furthermore, during the course of this study we found Taiwanese trademark design during the Japanese colonial period was not directly influenced by Western culture, nor was it impacted by the direct introduction of this culture. Rather, it was a "refraction" created by the indirect introduction of Western culture to the colonized Taiwan after it had been studied and accepted by the Japanese colonial empire.

Keywords: trademark design, visual culture, refraction, Japanese colonial period.

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I. Foreword

Taiwan was a colony of the Japanese empire from the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 until 1945. Its society was, therefore, also sharply impacted by Japanese culture. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868 Japan proactively sought to learn from Western civilization in order to attain the goal of a prosperous country and strong military and allow Japan take its place among modern nations. During this time colonial Taiwan naturally became a laboratory for the Japanese imitation of Western culture (The Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1978: 8). The modern civilization, as well as the contemporary art and cultural philosophies Japan had studied from the West, was introduced to Taiwan. However, for Taiwan the colonial empire's contact with and study of Western culture, modern art, and design technique concepts laid the foundation for the development of modern design.

In the course of modern history, Western civilization often became the predominant mainstream culture through industrialization, scientific advancements, and military superiority. During the Japanese colonial period, Taiwan also saw Western material culture as symbolic of modern civilization and representative of superior quality. Therefore, Western decorative patterns, colors and design modes gradually came to be imitated by businesses pursuing mainstream popularity and seeking to improve product image. From the manufacturing of products to their purchase by consumers, trademarks, advertising, and packaging were all important information which consumers considered in selecting products. In addition to providing consumers with necessary brand name information in order to identify products, the trademark, and its design in particular, function to attract consumers and make them willing to purchase a product, in addition to being an important element impacting consumer psychology. As a result of the impact of foreign culture Taiwanese trademark design during the Japanese colonial period also manifested the phenomenon of a popular mainstream influenced by Western culture. Not only can we obtain an understanding of how Western culture was disseminated to and impacted Taiwan through the avenue of Japan's colonial rule by investigating trademark design styles in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period, but also reflect on the mainstream culture and aesthetic interests and charm existing in the lives of the people during this period.

How did Western culture influence Taiwan? What were the channels for these popular foreign trends in their introduction to and impacting of Taiwan? What were the results of this influence?

This study takes commercial logos, labels, and advertisements, and other examples of visual design closely related to everyday public life, as the material for its study in exploring the aforementioned questions.

II. Cultural Background of Commercial Trademark Development during the Japanese Colonial Period

Japan came to rule Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese War. However, unlike the other European nations which had an abundance of experience in colonial rule, Japan only started to ponder the question of how to rule Taiwan at this time. After the Meiji Restoration (1868) Japan employed foreign consultants. It utilized England's experience as a colonial overlord as a reference, and did not seek to drastically alter Taiwan's inherent customs. This policy was referred to as the "gradual approach." (Shi Wencheng, 2010: 80). In order to accelerate the rate of modernization, and of the creation of a stable social order, the Japanese imperial overlords emphasized the pursuit of economic development. This led to the emergence and development of modern commercial design concepts. Prior to Japanese rule Taiwan primarily carried out trade with China, as well as foreign firms from the countries of Southeast Asia, England, Germany, and other nations. After Japan assumed control of the island, Taiwan was gradually incorporated into the vast Japanese trade system, and its trade came to center around Japan. Therefore Japanese commercial design's forms and styles were largely introduced to Taiwan through its colonial culture, and were transplanted to Taiwan.

After the Meiji Restoration Japan proactively sought westernization in its policies. Taiwan, which was its colony, naturally became the region in which Japan could experiment with imitating and spreading Western culture. The island was exposed to this culture indirectly through the art, culture and thought Japan had learned from the west. This gave the Taiwanese public the opportunity to gain a more international perspective and come into contact with international popular design trends.

Previous relevant research has looked into the development background of Taiwanese graphic design during the Japanese colonial period in terms of aspects such as the rise of commercial activity, government exhibition activities, the holding of design exhibition and competitions activities, the impact of introducing foreign culture, and other elements related to the pursuit of commercial graphic design development (Yao Tsun-hsiung, 2013: 37-49). The social backdrop for the development of commercial trademarks was inevitably closely interrelated with the commerce policies of the colonial government during that period, as well as public consumption patterns, popular culture and aesthetic perspectives.

Therefore, this study is expands upon the four aspects of graphic design proposed by Yao (2013) in exploring the social background of Taiwanese trademark design during the Japanese colonial period.

(1) The Rise of Commercial Activity

After the Sino-Japanese War Taiwan became a rising market the colonial government was eager to develop. Japanese companies introduced their own commercial marketing and publicizing methods, which led to the rapid development of Taiwanese commercial activities. As a result, great emphasis was also placed on the communication of related commercial information, publicizing for product marketing, packaging design, and other aspect of commercial design, and these became ubiquitous. The products imported by the Japanese, and manner in which they utilized their trademarks, created a new stimulus for and impacted traditional Han Chinese folk businesses. These therefore transformed Taiwanese product sales concepts and trademarks representing companies and gradually came to be used in product packaging, advertisements, and on signs outside of stores.

Through the influence of Japanese commercial operation culture, various regions of Taiwan hosted commercial product exhibitions, auctions, and other promotional activities. In addition to posters and advertising, various stores also utilized trademark graphics on the exterior of product packaging and in exhibitions in order to improve product image and increase its value, in addition to beautifying the outward appearance of products and attracting the attention of customers to achieve promotional and publicity objectives.

(2) Exhibition Promotions

After England held the first Great Exhibition in modern history in the "Crystal Palace" in 1851, this exhibition gradually became an activity in which the great Western powers displayed their industrial progress and national prosperity in the 19th century. This was also the case for Japan which, after the Meiji Restoration, proactively participated in Western exhibitions in order to display the progress of Japanese civilization. In 1871 Japan imitated the form of Western exhibitions in holding the "First Kyoto Exhibition" (YubaraKimihiro, 2005: 65). Japan's participation in overseas exhibition activities broadened the countries perspectives with respect to Western visual culture. This spurred new design concepts and an emphasis on visual design.

Taiwan was indirectly impacted by Western exhibitions as Japan studied Western exhibition methods and frequently hosted various types of exhibitions in Japan and colonial Taiwan.

Taiwanese businesses also started to participate in Japanese exhibition activities, and at times even represented Japan in participating in international exhibitions and extolling Japan's colonial accomplishments, in addition to marketing colonial industrial products.

Taiwan participated in the 1897 Ninth Nagasaki Exhibition. Hereafter, unique Taiwanese products were displayed in almost all of the various types of exhibitions held by the Japanese. Before the end of the Japanese colonial period, Taiwan had participated in one hundred some exhibition-related activities. In addition, after the 1899 "Tainan Agricultural Produce Fair" displaying Taiwanese produce, there was practically no cessation to the hosting of various large and small scale product exhibition activities. Many Taiwanese businesses promoted their goods and corporate image while participating in commercial exhibitions, which led to a common emphasis on the design and use of trademarks. Therefore, not only did these various exhibition activities open the eyes of the common people of Taiwan, they also accelerated the dissemination of modern foreign products and culture to all of Taiwan, thus hastening the advancement and development of Taiwanese commercial design.

(3) Hosting of Design Activities

In order to create greater fluidity in Taiwanese commercial activities, the Japanese proactively introduced modern commercial design concepts and technology, in addition to often holding learning activities for the examining and learning of excellent design works from Taiwan and abroad, as well as design competitions. These types of activities provided new design concepts and allowed for the learning of new design styles. The visual design of Taiwanese products thus came to imitate foreign styles. It also became a common trend to imitate Western style trademarks as a symbol of progress in commercial image. For example, the label design of alcoholic beverages utilized by the Governor General imitated the styles of imported Japanese or Western alcoholic drinks in order to accentuate the product's image of modern quality.

After the intermediate period of Japanese rule the colonial government held many commercial window display competitions, commercial graphic exhibitions, and foreign commercial design product examination and learning exhibition tours, as well as other activities in the various large cities of Taiwan. For example, in 1932 the colonial government held the "Commercial Graphic Exhibition" in Taipei in order to promote industrial and commercial development and raise the level of commercial graphic design. This was the largest scale exhibition of the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan. European, Japanese, American and Taiwanese commercial posters, advertising, promotion, packaging, commercial logos, and other excellent works were displayed in the exhibition (EbiharaKosui, 1932:35).

Not only did the hosting of design activities allow for the common Taiwanese people to understand advancements in graphic design in Taiwan and abroad during this period, but also led to the introduction of popular Western design.

In addition, it caused merchants to value the importance of commercial graphic design to product sales and promotion.

(4) Introduction of Japanese Culture

As a Japanese colony, Taiwan was forcibly introduced to Japanese colonial culture, and the Japanese rulers systematically imported this culture through the use of political power and education. At the same time, however, the introduction of everyday Japanese products led to the proactive acceptance and imitation of Japanese products among the Taiwanese people. It also impacted commercial design at the time, and led to the development of a greater diversity of manifested styles.

Following the introduction of Japanese culture, and the increase in Japanese residing in Taiwan, the demand for Japanese products largely expanded. These products gradually rose to a place of prominent popularity in the marketplace. In particular, famous Japanese brands, and the products of its large scale industries, were extremely fresh and attractive to the Taiwanese people. Taiwanese merchants copied the trademarks used by Japanese industries, as well as the packaging designs of its imported products in meeting market demands. These new visual symbols came to represent modern consumerism. In Japanese society each family had its own emblem which was referred to as its *kamon*, or family crest. In order to guarantee product quality and build credibility, all merchants utilized the family crest in their packaging, and this gradually evolved into the trademark. The Japanese habit of utilizing the trademark influenced Taiwanese merchants, and led many corporations and store merchants to create packaging which used Japanese-style trademark designs. The method in which the Japanese utilized the family crest as their business trademark further influenced Taiwanese merchants' concepts how to use their brand trademarks, which led to the prevalence of trademark development in Taiwan (Yao Tsun-hsiung, 1997: 43).

III. The Path of Western Culture's Introduction to Taiwan

As a result of the promotion of Westernization policies by the Japanese rulers, Western culture was disseminated and introduced to Taiwan because of its study and acceptance by the Japanese. While it was introduced to Taiwan both through forced acceptance by the Japanese rulers and active learning on the part of the Taiwanese people due to curiosity, foreign culture undoubtedly both conflicted with and was integrated into Taiwanese culture.

Because of the unique characteristics of this rapid dissemination of this visual culture to Taiwan, the influence of foreign culture was visible everywhere during this time. The freshness and attractiveness of Japanese and Western visual culture became synonymous with new trends and were quite fashionable.

Therefore, this study examines the transformation of trademark design style during this period in reflecting on the influence of Western visual culture, as well as its manifestations.

(1) The Indirect Introduction of Western Culture

After the Meiji Restoration Japan actively learned from the strong Western colonial powers and their modernization policies. In addition, Japan studied and imitated popular Western design styles and artistic trends. Japan witnessed the progress of Western product design and industrial development upon taking part in the "World Exhibition in Vienna" in 1873, which spurred the gradual formation of design concepts, in addition to the establishment of related courses in Japanese universities, and the proactive cultivation of professional designers. This led to the improvement of Japanese product image and market competitiveness. (Lin Pin-chang, 2009: 24). In 1922 the Japanese designers Nakada Sadanosuke and Ishimoto Kikuji traveled to the Bauhaus School in Germany and brought modern Western design concepts back to Japan, which influenced design education and advancements in design activity hereafter (Nakada Sadanosuke & Ishimoto Kikuji, 2003: 89).

Western visual culture was disseminated to Taiwan via the path of Japanese colonial rule, as colonial Taiwan became a place of experimentation concerning the imitation and learning of modern Western. The island was therefore largely indirectly introduced to the influence of Western culture through Japan. This precipitated the island's early contact with this culture owing to its unique role as a colony. This led to modern Western civilization being refracted from Japan on to Taiwan. Because of the indirect influence of Japan's introduction of Japanese culture to Taiwanese society during this time, novel new items and foreign import products were commonly seen as symbols of modern progress and representing excellent quality. In response to popular trends, and in order to improve product image, many Taiwanese products imitated or plagiarized the manner in which foreign product trademarks were used.

(2) Import of Everyday Western Products

The study of Western civilization during the Meiji Restoration was the beginning of Japanese contact with Western everyday products, and led to the Japanese to experience life in a new way. Not only did the import of novel Western products alter Japanese traditional society and lifestyles, but also became symbols of excellent quality and modernization (Yao Tsun-hsiung, 2013: 189).

Through trade exchanges with Western countries and the formation of ties with modern Western civilization, Japan rapidly became counted among the modern nations, and began to identify itself as civilized and enlightened.

This popular phenomenon was also the case in colonial Taiwan. Japanese government and merchants indirectly imported Western products, and promoted them in Taiwan, because of economic interest and in order to expand the market. These novel Western items were often seen as symbols of modern civilization, and imported products further represented excellent quality. In the pursuit of fashion and improving product image, many Taiwanese companies imitated Western products imported by Japan, and created designs with Western cultural hues in their manifestation. For example, wine and fruit wine produced by the Governor General Monopoly Bureau primarily used Western label designs in order to improve the product's image of international quality (Figure 1). Japanese and Western product imports enriched the lives of Taiwanese people and created more affluent consumer patterns from the perspective of visual culture. The visual design of original products often quickly caught the eye of consumers, and were imitated and studied by Taiwanese businesses.



Figure 1: Monopoly Bureau Western Alcoholic Beverage Packaging 1938

(3) The Japanese Introduction of Modern Artistic Trends

The Japanese artistic movement after the Meiji Restoration proactively pursued advancement by following modern Western artistic trends. At the beginning of the 20th century many Japanese artists who had studied in France quickly spread and developed the styles they had studied, including Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, and other modern artistic concepts. For example, in 1920 the “Russian Futurist Exhibition” was held in Tokyo. In the same year the Futurist Art Association was established and held its first exhibition (Hsieh Li-fa, 1979: 24-26).

In 1931 the photo montage master Moholy-Nagy's tour held exhibitions in Tokyo and Osaka. These exhibitions had a huge impact on Japanese art (Steven Heller, 1996: 15).

At this time, modern Western art and design trends were primarily introduced to and influenced Taiwan through indirect dissemination by Japanese painters residing in Taiwan, which led to the popularization of Western Painting and art in Taiwan. What is more, Taiwan did not have an independent design field early on. Rather commercial graphic design was undertaken by painters on the side. The development of Taiwanese art and design during this period was also influenced by Western culture, manifested the West's most recent trends in design (Yao Tsun-hsiung, 2005: 42).

IV. Western Influences on Trademark Design in Japanese Colonial Taiwan

(1) Imitation of Imported Western Products in Design

During the Japanese colonial period Western import products were introduced to the Taiwan following the arrival of the Japanese. These foreign products, such as high-end consumer products such as American and European wines, were seen as the symbols of modern progress and representing excellent quality. Certain Taiwanese alcoholic beverage producers even started producing Western style alcoholic beverages in the early period of Japanese rule.

In order to improve product image, these companies deliberately imitated Western product trademark design styles in order to emphasize that their products were of equal quality to alcoholic beverages produced in the West (Yao Tsun-hsiung, 2004: 55). For example, the traditional red rice wine utilized a Western red wine label style in order to emphasize an image of this traditional Taiwanese alcoholic beverage as being similar in quality to imported ones (Figure 2). Traditional tonic wine imitated Western wine in its labeling and utilized the image of angels often-seen in Western religious culture in order to highlight that its quality was the same as that of imported products (Figure 3). The Monopoly Bureau's wine labeling even more comprehensively imitated foreign product patterns in order to emphasize the international characteristics of its product (Figure 4).



Figure 2: Red rice wine label 1920s Figure 3: Tonic wine label 1920s Figure 4: Espero Whisky label 1932

(2) Design Use in Western Cultural Images

Influenced by Japanese reverence for Western culture, patterns, letters, utensils for daily life, religious images, characters, and architecture, as well as other visual symbols of Western culture, were commonly adopted for product labels and logos, where they were used to communicate the modern image of the business or product. For example, images symbolizing modern Western civilization often appeared on the label of Taiwanese-produced canned pineapple in order to emphasize its modern product image. Blonde-haired beauties, the angels of Western religion, and other images of persons clearly symbolized Western culture. Therefore, Toyo Canned Pineapple Company labels displayed the image of an angel (Figure 5). Kaohsiung's Bijin Brand canned pineapple shows a young woman in the field picking pineapple as its trademark (Figure 6). The Mitsubishi Corporation's Kewpie Canned Pineapple utilized the kewpie doll which was popular in the west as its trademark (Figure 7).

Many Taiwanese companies commonly utilized Western script in their trademark in order to highlight their image of modern quality (Figure 8). In addition trademarks, design styles with Western letters were often seen on store signs or the exterior of architectural structures during this period (Figure 9).



Figure 5: Toyo Canned Pineapple label 1920s Figure 6 Bijin Brand Canned Pineapple label 1910s



Figure 7: Kewpie Canned Pineapple label 1920s



Figure 8: Trademark with Western letters (Source: Taiwan Daily News)



Figure 9: Trademark with Western letters

(3) Allusion to Mainstream Western Artistic Trends in Design

Taiwanese trademark design often utilized popular Western stylistic forms to emphasize their modernity as a result of the indirect influence of modern Western artistic and design trends introduced by Japan. Among the Western mainstream cultural, artistic, and design trends of the time, the Victorian art, which was popular in the 19th century in Europe, as well as the later styles of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, and others, had the most discernable influence on Taiwan, and emerged relatively often in Taiwanese commercial design (Yao Tsun-Hsiung, 2013: 40).

The Taiwan Railway Hotel, which opened in Taipei in 1919, was the most fashionable Western style hotel of this period, and its trademark shape presented the Art Nouveau style popular in the West in the 20th century (Figure 10). The trademark for the Taiheikan Theater utilized the Art Deco style graphics popular in the 1930s to present its modern image of metropolitan civilization(Figure 11). The designs for the Yanshui Can Sugar Company and the Nankuo Company trademarks use the Modernist style's succinct geometric patterns (Figure 12).



Figure 10: Taiwan Railway Hotel trademark 1909 **Figure 11: Taiheikan Theater trademark 1930s**



Figure 12: Modernist pattern trademark
(4) Designs Combining Eastern and Western Symbolism

After Western culture was indirectly introduced to Taiwan through Japan, it was adapted to Taiwan's social environment, and this led to a culturally integrating effect.

Furthermore, this led to a unique visual and cultural style integrating Eastern and Western culture in the manifestation of trademark design. The alcohol labels for the JurinKoshu Wine Company, which utilizes a traditional pattern with bending vines, also possesses an Art Nouveau style which combines Eastern and Western culture (Figure 13).

In addition to traditional trademark designs, whose ornamentation utilizes Western visual style; other trademarks combine Western lettering to create visual designs integrating Eastern and Western cultures. For example, *Tetsueki Nin Jinshu*, a traditional Chinese medicinal wine made with ginseng, uses a label design which combines the auspicious image of the kylin (mythical Chinese animal) and Western lettering, places the Western letters TSK within a diamond figure for its trademark to create a typical manifestation of designs integrating Eastern and Western culture (Figure 14). The Koko Canned Food Company's trademark integrates the traditional style crane and deer figures with the English words "Crane Deer Brand" (Figure 15). The Niitaka Company Banana Caramel packaging design combines Eastern and Western culture, as its cover contains bananas and Taiwanese beauties, both local symbols, which are integrated with the English spelling of the brand name, and the trademark design presents the letters H.M inside of a diamond figure (Figure 16).



Figure 13: Jurin Koshu Wine label Figure 14: Tetsueki Nin Jinshu label 1910s



Figure 15: Koku Canned Food trademark 1920s Figure 16: Niitaka Company Banana Caramel trademark 1930s

V. Conclusion

This study has provided an analysis of the channels through which Western culture influenced Taiwanese trademark design during this period. It primarily categorizes the manners in which the introduction of Western culture influenced contemporary trademark design into the following four manifested forms: the imitation of imported Western products; the utilization of Western graphics; the utilization of mainstream Western artistic trends as reference; and the combination of Western and Eastern symbolism.

Trademarks influenced by Western visual culture primarily manifest the product's correlation with Western mainstream culture and communicate the unique Western cultural characteristics of the product. In addition, they articulate the modern and international qualities of the product, in addition to emphasizing that it is in keeping with the times.

The avenues by which Western culture were Asian colonies in the 19th century, as well as its influence, can be categorized as either direct or indirect. For example, England politically colonized India, as was the case with France in Vietnam, and these two regions were directly impacted by the introduction of Western culture. By contrast, the Japanese colony of Taiwan was influenced by Western culture and the styles it reflected through the study, acceptance, and adoption of it by the Japanese. This was, in fact, a refraction of Western culture on to Taiwan. Put more succinctly, Western culture was refracted onto Taiwan through the choice, study, introduction, and dissemination of it by the Japanese. It is for this reason that we can often find design manifestations with the original elements of local culture in the material culture of the Japanese colonial period, as well as designs in which the cultural elements of the Japanese colonial empire appear together with, or are combined with, Western and other multicultural ones. This was the unique cultural style of this period.

Therefore, we can witness the impact of the ideology of colonial empire everywhere through the manifestation of Western visual culture reflected in contemporary Taiwanese trademarks. This is the unique phenomenon created by the indirect introduction of Western culture.

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Biography

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