

## The Influence of Western Culture on Taiwan Patent Medicine Packaging Design in the Early Post-war Period (1945-1960s)

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### Abstract

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To review the contact history of Western cultural in Taiwan in the past hundred years, from the late Qing Dynasty, the western missionaries' arrival and the Holland and Spain occupation began the introduction of the earliest western culture. After the Japanese colonization of Taiwan in 1895, Japan indirectly introduced western modern civilization and Western life culture. After the war, due to the reign of the Kuomintang government and the close interaction with the United States, American Western culture was widely spread in Taiwan, also influenced the designing style and development of modern Taiwan. Therefore, this paper aims at how Western culture affects packaging design through studying the patent medicines of common products in the early Post-war period, and summed up the influences of Western culture on the design of patent medicine at that time. Which include: Traditional Western decorative patterns, Western figure image, the image of progressive civilization in the West, the modern image of internationalization, the modern fashion design style.

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**Keywords:** Packaging design, Patent medicine, Post-war Taiwan, Western culture.

### I. Introduction

Although the health system in Taiwan is complete at present, all kinds of hospitals and clinics are everywhere, pharmacies are also scattered on the streets, but in the Post-war period (1945-1960s), most of the public still need to rely on some family patent medicines when it comes to slight illness. Because of the agricultural society, the traffic was inconvenient and hospital clinics were rare and cost a lot, unless there is a serious disease, most of the people depend on their folk prescription or traditional Chinese herbal medicine.

The medicine production began in the time that Japan ruled (1895-1945). In the early times in Taiwan, most of the immigrants were come from China, and they had thousands years of historic traditional treatment accompanied with people into their normal lives. As western powers invaded and the missionaries came, western medical treatment had gradually appeared in Taiwan after Qing Dynasty. After Japan ruled, the proper western medical system was established in Taiwan. However, most of the citizens did not used to treating in western diagnose way. As the Japanese came with western medicine which was more convenient and obvious effect, it was gradually accepted by people and became the necessary medicine at homes. In the early age in Taiwan, there was not western pharmacy that sold patent medicines; it was sold by the selling system that imported from Japan that hired many sales by the pharmaceutical factories to arrange it at homes to take medicine themselves. The sales only have to do is to check the amount regularly to supply and pay. This kind of the selling system indeed solve the problems to the country area due to the traffic inconvenience and make the western medicine became the mainstream (Wu Qiuru, 2012:63-64). This kind of patent medicine selling system is still popular until 1960s. Until 1970s, the society environment transformed, standard living increased, medical system completed, this sort of selling system had started to decreased.

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After the war initially, the politics and economy were in danger, lots of goods and material were invested from US into Taiwan. It was strengthened not only the safety, but the economy which made Taiwan built rapidly; therefore, it input more American western culture and had a large influence to the modern design development in Taiwan. Also, under imported medicine and western modern design concept, marketing and packaging design of patent medicine had gradually changed in Taiwan. Under the western modern design, some of the pharmaceutical factory in order to catch up the popularity, and to increase the products image, they mimicked imported foreign medicine such as images, words, colors, and front page arrangement in some of their products. It was all different from the traditional one.

Due to western popularity effect, the visual design of patent medicine packaging usually appeared the western culture specific image decoration and symbol to emphasize its efficacy. These packaging on patent medicine not only delivered the special phenomenon, but reflected the society culture development and the taste of aesthetic. Therefore, these early packaging design indeed had its special meaning to discuss.

## **II. Packaging Form on Patent Medicine in Taiwan**

The early age of patent medicine in Taiwan, according to its features and usage way, there were many types and had its own special packaging. For example, internal powder and pills mostly packaged by sealed paper packages. Inside the paper packages, there were two to four smaller medical powder and pills. The brand name, effects and ingredients were printed on the appearance packaging, usually accompanied with images that emphasized its effects, to beautify its brand image and western decoration design. External medicine were usually liquid, grained as cream, oil, juice, soup, and pills, and mostly packaged in boxes, bottles, and cans that made of metals, glasses, ceramics to take easily, preserved and carriage. It usually printed on its name, effects, brand image, and decorated images on the appearance packaging.

The patent medicine in early age of Taiwan, due to its family selling system, medicine had its own individual package. Every pharmaceutical factory had a big paper package devise in every house to carry common necessary medicine made it easier to sell and record. These bags usually printed its brand name, enterprise image and decorated images on its front. All kinds of product type and quality emphasized its effects to promote or to cooperate with the government. At the back of the package, there were details about the price, usage amount to regard as the basis that pharmaceutical factory checked. In the early age, which is not well-educated, some of the common hygiene sense is very helpful in these necessary medical bags to develop it special education. Therefore, all of the medical bags packaging design we discussed above in this essay was including its individual design, and every large paper packaging that carry medicine.

## **III. Patent Medicine Packaging Design under Western Culture Influences**

In this phase, medical packaging design were under western culture effects, due to the foreign culture affected and different stages, the way to show its design had these following styles:

### **a. Traditional Western Striped Decoration**

Western culture became the powerful mainstream due to their developed technology and Imperialism arisen. Since Meiji Restoration (1868) in Japan, they aggressively absorbed the goods from western, and learned their culture with plan, to be the powerful rich nation on the top of the world (LvLizhou, 1994:221-250). So, western culture started to affect Taiwan by Japan during their ruled. Foreign items were always superior representation in people. Many of the stores in order to increase the product image, started to mimic foreign form and popularity style, or to massively use the traditional decorated images. Western design was keep popular during the Japan ruled; it was still a special intension in Taiwan society. Many of the enterprise in Taiwan would show their improved modern image by western culture color, and the commercial design (Sun ChuYu, 2018:12).

After the ar, the packaging of patent medicine was still decorated by western images or mimicked western popular styles to outstand its superior quality as normal foreign products. On the packaging appearance, massively use classic whirlpool decorated lines, images, and colors to mimic Victorian Style in the early 19 century as a glorious visual effect (Roger D. Meyer, 1987:42) (Figure 1). Secondary, in 20 century, Art Nouveau style which decoration images or border images design had their packaging visual impact (Figure2). Even on Ying a Tang pharmaceutical, it was very clear to find Art Deco style design (Figure3).



Figure 1 Pain Killer Packaging 1950s



Figure 2 Chang An Tang Large Medicine Bag 1960s



Figure 3 Ying an Tang Large Medicine Bag 1960s

### b. Imagine of Western Figure

Western foreigners that have different skin color and appearance usually became the symbolization of Western culture, so they were widely used in Taiwanese package design or advertisements. For example, on the children's medicine package there were foreign mother's holding their babies, the purpose is to emphasize the culture and the prosperity of Western countries. Since the United States became the representative of the western mainstream culture and the symbol of the progressive country after the war, some Taiwanese enterprise also used Native American and black people's picture to design and represent the American image of goods.

Even some of the manufacturer liked to use American to design their brand image, in order to highlight the progressive of their products. Like "The American" brand medicine package design that produced by Pharmaceuticals of the United States and Taiwan. (Figure4) On the other hand, picture of angels, Santa Claus and other characters which were commonly seen in Western religious culture were also being used to medicine's package design, in order to tell people the patent medicine company's high quality. (Figure5)



Figure4 "The Americans" brand medicine package 1960s



Figure5 The package of children's medicine 1950s

### c. Image of the Progressive Civilization in Western Culture

After the industrial revolution, the human transportation has huge progress, the invention of car and train changed the definition of speed, especially the airplane and rocket brought human into brand new horizon. Since the maiden voyage of Zeppelin spaceship in 1900, the flight century was unveiled. The Wright Brothers' plane was a breakthrough in the concept of flight. This kind of huge and dramatic flying tool has brought mankind's worship of mechanical civilization. (Li, Qingzhi, 1993:37-39) Therefore, when the early western Art Deco style was popular, trains, planes, rockets and other high speed transportations that represented modern mechanical civilization were often used in design, to deliver the message of "modern" and "progress". After the war, the packaging of patent medicine was influenced by the trend of Western culture; they still like to use the image of modern Western science and technology civilization in the design, to emphasize the modernity and advanced sense of their products. For example, "The Airplane" medicine bag of He Chun pharmaceutical factory was trying to use airplane as their theme graphics, with the picture of the smoky chimney from the factory, they tried to present the modernization of its products (Figure6).

The achievement of the 1960s American space exploration pushed the USA into the place of international leader of space technology. Influenced by the foreign culture of the United States, the Post-war Taiwan society also ignited the space craze; the word "space" became the fashionable symbol in 1960s and represented the progress of science and technology. Many enterprises have taken space related themes as their commodity names or packaging designs, like "The Spacecraft" and "The Rocket" patent medicine package, shows the image of progressive technology



Figure6 "The Airplane" brand medicine package 1960s



Figure7 "The Rocket" brand medicine package 1960s

### d. Image of International culture and Modernization

With the modern Western science and technology progress, convenient transportation and the information communication technology development, the concept of internationalization and global village has become a global issue of common concern after the war. Especially the Western international trade business model was dominated by the rising power in the Western circulation, also affected the development of commercial activities in Taiwan after the war. Many enterprises in Taiwan were designing the theme of their products with the sense of internationalization, picture like the earth, global and other international symbols are widely used (Figure8).

Under the influence of the Post-war American mainstream culture, English has already become an international language and intercultural communication tool, also equals to westernization, modernization, or international symbolism.

According to the close relationship Taiwan shared with the USA, English has become the symbol of progress and internationalization of Americanization and Westernization in Taiwanese society, it also affected some patent medicine’s package design, some Taiwan's medicines like to use English branding and use English word in their packaging design to highlight their progress and internationalization (Figure 9).



Figure8 “The Eagle Earth” brand medicine package 1960s



Figure9“Piratin” flu medicine package 1960s

### e. Modernization Design Population Style

After 1960s, Taiwan started to contacted with US whom imported western art trends and design concepts. After the war, simplification design style prevailed in US which were also spread in Taiwan. In the meantime, the business activities were aggressively arisen, and the business related jobs were gradually required. Through imitation of US imported products and mimicked from foreign enterprise, the government invited the foreign designers to speech and promote. Plus, government related facilities and professional design organization were found and to promote that made US kind of modernization effected rapidly in Taiwan. At that moment, many of the Taiwan enterprises emphasized they had modern and advanced high quality US product, and they usually made it a clean and simple style design.

For example, packaging like Antipyretic medicine that made from Mi Nan pharmaceutical factory were the things that were under western modern population. Abandoned the complicated striped images, to make up a clean spot, were the innovation packaging in modern style in Taiwan (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Antichloristic medicine packing 1960s

## Conclusion

Except for the early Japanese involved some of the western culture that still kept in Taiwan, Taiwan and America had intense interaction after the war which made massive foreign culture imported. Obviously, it had influenced the Taiwan society at that moment, and spread widely to become the symbol of modernization, western culture improvement regard as normal commercial design. However, it had become a special population culture after the war. As the analysis of this research, we found that western culture impacted the concrete action of Taiwan commercial design and there were some following utilization or visual style:

- a. Traditional western decorated striped was massively used on the packaging which was full of traditional western colors, images, and striped. Victorian Style, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco were the most common in all of these.
- b. Western characters images symbolized the west, and made to be the design in packaging, which were the promotion regarded as its westernized, civilized, and improved. Some of them, there were even an American or a Black person on the patent medicine packaging design.
- c. Using airplanes and rockets to be the symbol of advanced technology to emphasized the products of modern and superior. Especially in 1960s, the achievement of aerospace exploration was usually to be a common topic in packaging design
- d. The advanced of western technology, modernized transportation convenience, and information broadcast technology development made international intended to made them utilized global. Also, massive English fonts were intended to utilize in commerce applications.
- e. Modernization design style was become popular. After 1960s, the impact of western design, started to be simplification, and images design imitation.

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## Biography

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