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**SINGAPORE**

**Copies of the Everyday: Advertisements in Republican China,  
1911-37, and the Writing of Everyday History**

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**2020**

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1911-37, and the Writing of Everyday History**

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A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological  
University in partial fulfilment of the requirement  
for the degree of Master of Arts

**2020**


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## SUMMARY

Advertisements have always been around us. Located traditionally and most commonly in the print medium, the proliferation of newspapers and other print material in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a similar proliferation of advertisements. In Republican China, advertisements were a ubiquitous part of the lives of both the elite as well as the common people. As such, one can think of advertisements as a space where both the ordinary and the elite had shared a common interaction. I refer to this space as the everyday. In doing so, this thesis also calls for a rethinking of what everyday conventionally means – which is usually used interchangeably with the quotidian, or the ordinary – as a term which accounts for both the ordinary as well as the elite. I contend that advertisements are an often under-utilized yet useful source in telling a history of the everyday. Existing work on advertisements in Republican China have often focused either on individual commodities or have used advertisements as a supplementary source for other histories. A broader history of advertisements in Republican China is lacking in the current academic conversation, and this thesis intends to fill that gap. This thesis has two key aims: the first, to write an everyday history of Republican through the use of advertisements. Through the study of print advertisements in three different commodity categories: everyday items, patent medicines, and cigarettes, I aim to tell a history of the everyday experience in Republican China. The analysis of the advertisements from the respective commodity categories gets increasingly microscopic, where we first examine the general consumer culture surrounding everyday items; following that we examine one resulting strand of this everyday narrative which involves national consciousness; finally from the national consciousness, we look at how local-foreign binaries are played out in these advertisements. The second goal is more historiographic in nature which is to demonstrate the importance of writing an everyday history within the context of historiography and consider the implications of an everyday approach in the writing of history. I contend that when one accounts for this everyday in historiography, we can move away from a linear ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ approach and consider instead how a more inclusive history is instead flattened.

## Chapter 1: The Skeleton of the Thesis, and Everything in Between

The history of Republican China is neither unexplored nor is it narrow. There exist many different approaches to such a history: political, intellectual, cultural, and social approaches to write such a narrative. In writing a history on making the Republican Citizen, Henrietta Harrison points to two problems dealing with Republican Chinese history. The first, that “writers have often sought to fit all responses to the republic into a single framework”; the second, that “the literature on the emergence of a new republican political culture is that it has focused on the theoretical debates of the period and the scholars, officials and politicians who conducted them”.<sup>1</sup> To put it shortly, much of Republican Chinese scholarship attempts to pigeonhole the era into specific ideas, and underlying this, ideas that were spread only through the elite. This thesis may not directly solve the problems that Harrison has posed, but I believe that it can begin to broach some aspects of these problems. To expand further on what Harrison has stated, I believe that much of the literature concerning Republican China history is lacking in providing a space that accounts for both the poor and the rich together. Because the literature attempts to account for things under a single framework, it presents a history that is neat and theorized. I propose that this is problematic because when we account for both the elite and non-elite, we will instead get a history that is messy and inconsistent – a history that attempts to account for the everyday.

Advertisements therefore present us a way to address these problems. The nature of advertisements because have a wide reach, through newspapers, billboards, and other public installations. They give us an understanding on what people were thinking, and how they were consuming, without having the need to seek a voice from them; these people do not explicitly need to speak to the historian. This solves a problem often faced in history: it is difficult to

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<sup>1</sup> Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China 1911-29*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 4.

write a history of the voiceless, if they leave no trace or records of what they have. This thesis is an attempt to write that history without having a need to find their voice per se.

The central engine that drives the historical motivations behind this thesis comes from the work of Michel de Certeau, and it is with de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* that I begin this literature review. It is important to consider the central thrusts of *The Practice of Everyday Life* before one can further discuss other works that deal with the topic. Published in 1980, de Certeau's work represents the foundation of the study of "the everyday". A key idea that is brought up is the idea of strategies and tactics, which the former refers to "calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an environment", while a tactic is one that "cannot count on a proper, nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality".<sup>2</sup> Put simply, it refers to negotiations of power, between institutions and the 'other'; between the object and the subject; and I believe – between the seemingly elite, and its corresponding everyday. De Certeau's work has influenced many other scholars to write on the everyday, as well as to consider how the ordinary exert force against the corresponding elite.<sup>3</sup>

Within *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau provides the example of reading as an act of consumption where the reader has the agency, to as de Certeau states, "introduce into a way of turning it to their advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven onto the first".<sup>4</sup> I believe that as an artifact, the advertisement represents simultaneously a space in which one can understand how ideas were transferred and understood by the elite and ordinary respectively. While consumers of advertisements do not

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<sup>2</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans., Steven Rendall, (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), xix

<sup>3</sup> It would be difficult to begin explaining the influence de Certeau's work has had on contemporary scholarship, having influence in anthropology, sociology, and urban studies for example, but within the discipline of history, one can see his work influencing historians such as Szonyi (in *The Art of Being Governed*) or in Yue Dong (in *Republican Beijing: The City and its histories*)

<sup>4</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 30.

explicitly turn their consumption into some form of advantage, as what de Certeau has suggested, this illustration demonstrates how reading, an act which can be extended to the reading of advertisements, is an active action that accounts for the consumer's perspective, which in most cases also includes non-elite actors. In other words, the advertisement itself is a dialectic creation of both strategies and tactics.

At this juncture, it would be prudent to make clear that this thesis is in no way a study of advertisements solely through a de Certeau lens. This work instead uses Michel de Certeau as a starting point to explore how we can construct everyday life, and from there write a history of Republican China.

Advertisements are all around us: from the television, to the full-page newspaper advertisement, to five-second video-clips on the Internet. They have been around us from as early as business existed, with the earliest commercial messages found inscribed on walls, papyrus, and stones; one example would be “billboard-esque painted inscriptions that included political campaign messages, advertisements for Gladiatorial games, and other public notices”, found in the ruins of Pompeii.<sup>5</sup> There are multiple ways scholars have located the function of advertisements in society. Vestergaard and Schroder argue that they “make products appear as aesthetically pleasing as possible”.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Tanaka states that “the advertiser would be quite content if he could manage to persuade his audience to buy his product”.<sup>7</sup> Broadly speaking, advertisements were traditionally found across the print medium – such as newspapers, posters, billboards, or posters – with its broadcast and digital counterparts joining the fray in the nineteenth and twentieth century onwards. Fundamentally, the function of an advertisement is

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<sup>5</sup> Adrienne Lafrance, “Pompeii’s Graffiti and the Ancient Origins of Social Media,” *The Atlantic*, March, 29, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/03/adrienne-was-here/475719/>.

<sup>6</sup> Torben Vestergaard and Kim Schroder, “Advertising and Society,” in *The Language of Advertising*, in idem, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Keiko Tanaka, “Covert Communication,” in *Advertising Language: A Pragmatic Approach to Advertisements in Britain and Japan* in idem, (London and New York: Taylor and Francis Routledge, 1994), 36.

to sell a product. These products range from material goods, such as medicine or household appliances, to services such as legal advice, or insurance.

In China, the earliest known advertisement can be traced to the Song Dynasty, which as William O’Barr points out, was a simple illustration with an advertising copy which “proclaimed the excellence of needles and provided the address where they were manufactured”.<sup>8</sup> Little else has been said about advertisements from that period onward – until we reach the nineteenth century – because many of these advertisements between the various dynasties were unable to survive to the present.<sup>9</sup> From the twentieth century onwards, advertisements in China have become an extremely dominant and prominent force in the lives of the Chinese, except for the Mao-era in post-Second World War China, where Chu argues that “between 1966 when the Cultural Revolution began and 1978, two years after the fall of the “gang of four,” commercial advertising completely disappeared from the Chinese media”.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, a study in 1985 noted how “China’s advertising industry has increased by 50 percent per annum” since 1979, and “is expected to reach 1.5 billion yuan by 1990”.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to imagine China today without the business and commerce in its cities, and with it, its advertisements. This study therefore aims to look back at China’s interwar period – which some might argue is the foundation of contemporary Chinese advertising; more importantly, it was also a foundation for the construction of a modern China.

## **Thesis Argument**

The aim of this thesis is twofold: the first is an interrogation of the everyday through the assessment of advertisements in Republican China. Through the systematic study of

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<sup>8</sup> William M. O’Barr, “Advertising in China,” *Advertising and Society Review* 8:3 (2007), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.; Original Source: Ellen J Laing, *Selling Happiness*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>10</sup> James Chu, “Advertising in China: Its Policy, Practice and Evolution,” *Journalism Quarterly* 59:1 (1982), 41.

<sup>11</sup> Sally Stewart and Nigel Campbell, “Advertising in Mainland China: A Preliminary Study,” *International Journal of Advertising*, 5:4 (1986), 318.

advertisements through three categories: everyday items, cigarettes, and patent medicines, I aim to tell a history of the everyday experience in Republican China. I argue that an everyday history can shape the way we understand existing structures, and in understanding how the everyday works, we can better understand the way we write history. In addition, I argue that the way we understand what everyday means has to change: the parameters that wrap around how we conceive the everyday. A recurrent aspect in the analysis of the advertisements in this thesis is the attempt to demonstrate that the everyday has to consider the experiences of the elite and non-elite alike. While there might be multiple everyday that exist together, these are all part of a single narrative that this thesis aims to capture.

A history of the everyday, as this thesis aims to show, is a narrative that can properly account for both elite and non-elite. In this respect, advertisements become a signifier for the everyday, as a space where both the elite and non-elite interact with, and in. These advertisements, as symbols of the everyday, are analyzed through various narrative lenses such as a national consciousness and local-foreign tropes to achieve the earlier goal of rethinking how we define the everyday. Marchand refers to advertisements as a *Zerrspiegel*, a “distorting mirror that would enhance certain images”, stating how “such a mirror distorts the shapes of the objects it reflects, but it nevertheless provides some image of everything within its field of vision”.<sup>12</sup> And so while advertisements might have distorted, they certainly function as a mirror where they also reflect. And it is this reflection that this thesis is leaning on to tell a history of Republican China. The distortion is, as is with using a lens to view the historical past, a form of bias historians have to navigate.

A secondary pursuit of this thesis is more historiographic in nature, which is to demonstrate that the writing of history is not linear as is presented conventionally in either a

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<sup>12</sup> Roland Marchand, introduction to *Advertising the American Dream: Making way for Modernity, 1920-1940*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xvii.

top-down or bottom-up approach. A conventional top-down history is often elite-driven, and is a history of institutions, structures, and so-called “Big Men” in history. The countermove to this, bottom-up, was born starting with social history, and in the middle to late twentieth century, this bottom-up school of thought has passed through different hands, from the cultural turn to the post-structural, to post-colonial and subaltern histories. My suggestion is that history can be neither, and in this regard, should be flattened. Of course, the flattening of history is something that cannot be achieved through one project; this secondary objective is therefore meant to set historiography in motion towards that direction.

The first set of questions that I address concern the questions that serve to drive the content of the thesis: What is the everyday in China? Is it possible to determine the view of the common person through the reading of advertisements? And if so, does the ordinary non-elite citizen’s thoughts and ideas differ from how that of the elites and intellectuals? These questions aim to unravel the relationship between advertisements and the everyday – seeking to understand the actors involved in the creation, distribution, and consumption of advertisements, and to understand the underlying messages within advertisements. Understandably, due to the nature of how consumers interacted with advertisements, it is difficult to explicitly state how advertisements were consumed, as there are very limited accounts of consumers thoughts on advertisements. However, based on the reading of advertisements, and the reports from advertisers on sentiments of advertisements, one can state with a high degree of plausibility how consumers would have interacted with the advertisements. Vestergaard and Schroder describe how all advertisements are made up of two forms of content: explicit and implicit, where it “is necessary to distinguish between what is actually said and what follows from either the content of what is said or from the mere fact that it is said”.<sup>13</sup> To expand on their argument,

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<sup>13</sup> Vestergaard and Schroder, *The Language of Advertising*, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985), 24.

I would also add that the variable of images into the equation, further completing the resultant implicit messaging that can be retrieved from advertisements. As such, these questions serve to go beneath the layer of the explicit and identify what the implicit messages are behind these advertisements.

### *The Elite and Non-Elite of Republican China*

If one could, or would, dichotomize the people of Republican China into the elite and non-elite, how might we begin to organize them? While such a task might appear herculean in nature, Lu's study on Shanghai provides a general suggestion as to how it might be so. Lu sees the elite as comprised of "bureaucrats, warlords, politicians, landowners, literati, and magnates of all sorts".<sup>14</sup> Of course, as Lu's study was set in Shanghai, the definition of elite might fluctuate across different areas of China. However, as Yue Dong has shown, the elite of Republican Beijing included "modern students and Qing aristocrats".<sup>15</sup> A broad definition that will suffice for the purposes of this project will therefore state that the elite were those people in Republican China who possessed the ability to spend indiscriminately, who did not only spend on necessities, and could therefore have the luxury of choice when deciding between one brand or the other.

It might be easy to claim that the non-elite represented everyone outside this demographic, and while that might be an accurate statement, it would obscure more than it might inform. The non-elite were a large group of people that included the middle-lower class, but also included the homeless street beggars. Surely the middle-lower class had more spending power and consumer choice than the beggars; they certainly did. In general, Lu states that the "common people were those who had to work to make a living," where working for a living

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<sup>14</sup> Lu Hanchao, "Going to Shanghai," *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, (University of California Press, 1999), 55.

<sup>15</sup> Madeleine Yue Dong, "The City of Experience," *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories*, (University of California Press, 2003), 152.

meant that their “daily working hours occupied most of their daily ‘productive hours’”.<sup>16</sup> Yue Dong also defined these people as people who might have “little left from their income after they paid for housing and food”.<sup>17</sup> These people, according to a 1930 survey by Tao Menghe, included “clerks, bank tellers, policemen, elementary school teachers, craftsmen, and rickshaw pullers”.<sup>18</sup> The same survey also featured a distribution of Beijing families in 1926 by economic group that showed how 47.3 percent of the total population comprised of the lower-middle class, with 25 percent in the poor to destitute region. While a clerk or a policeman might have had more spending power than a rickshaw puller in this regard, it would not be possible within the scope of this study to consider the spending ability of the individual non-elite and stratify the category further.

## Literature Review

As is with any academic endeavor, this thesis owes much intellectual debt to the following scholars and authors in their contribution to the field of history, Chinese studies, cultural studies, and advertising studies. The resultant work that it is this research is therefore an interdisciplinary effort to marry the above fields together into a single project. While there are multiple strings that I have drawn from to write this thesis, the common thread has to begin with a questioning of the everyday. The following section is organized thematically, and in lieu of the limitations of this dissertation, will focus primarily on the most essential works in the field. This section is divided into two general themes: literature on the everyday, and literature on advertising in China.

### *Writing on the Everyday*

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<sup>16</sup> Lu Hanhchao, “Out of the Ordinary,” *Everyday Modernity in China*, Madeleine Yue Dong and Joshua L. Goldstein, eds., (University of Washington Press, 2006),

<sup>17</sup> Madeleine Yue Dong, “Consumption,” *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories*, (University of California Press, 2003), 157.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Original Source: Tao Menghe, *Beiping shenghuo fei zhi fenxi* (An analysis of the cost of living in Beiping) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1930).

Frank Dikotter's *Age of Openness* is one another angle to broach our understanding of the everyday in Republican China. Through the study of the pre-Mao era of China from the late Qing to the late Republic, Dikotter challenges the notion that "modern China was mainly defined by 'warlords', 'imperialism', or 'disintegration': [suggesting] instead that in many respects it might very well be qualified as a golden age of engagement".<sup>19</sup> By arguing that it was globalization, rather than revolution that was characteristic of Republican China, Dikotter's book moves away from the role of elite actors, choosing therefore to highlight the role of these ordinary people and their part in the creation of a modern China. Such an argument informs us of the possibility of exploring the role the everyday plays in the history of Republican China. In looking at the ordinary citizens, Dikotter informs us that many of the traditional narratives that govern Republican China often has overlooked the role of the everyday in favour of a political, elite-centered telling of history.

Beyond just looking at the everyday as a concept to understand people as demonstrated in *Age of Openness*, another approach to it is to look at everyday items. Because there are different foci when examining everyday items; be it the way these goods were circulated, consumed, or even how everyday items can be defined, the literature on everyday items is difficult to put a parameter to. Contributing to this is Dikotter as well with *Things Modern*. *Things Modern* examines the material culture of China during its Republican era, looking at how the Chinese community interacts with different commodities: from necessities such as water and lighting, to luxuries such as new fashion and food. In particular, Dikotter studies how "individual users understood objects in their own terms and used them for their own purposes, often other than those intended by their producers", and how "the lives of individuals

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Dikotter, introduction to *The Age of Openness: China before Mao*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 3.

from very different social backgrounds were transformed.<sup>20</sup> His work is an important contribution to the academic conversation on everyday items as it offers a comprehensive and holistic review of the different objects and ways in which the people interacted with them. The few arguments he makes will also be explored in a later chapter. Nevertheless, while Dikotter's work is important, it considers very little about the advertising that went into these products: how these products were sold from business to consumer, which is an important process and actor within the entire everyday ecosystem. As such, this chapter aims to offer a complementary role to what Dikotter has argued.

The last point I would like to raise here regarding the existing literature on the supposed "everyday items" as a category is a question on why they (for example electronics, or clothing), as compared to cigarettes or patent medicine, hardly have any study dedicated to it. I believe that this might be a result of a limitation in the sources itself. A survey into the newspapers of Republican China will reveal that the latter two products were the advertising heavyweights of newspapers. Second, cigarettes and patent medicine were strictly speaking *everyday items* as well. That leaves the category as a rather awkward container, where it simply meant everything else, rather than a useful category of analysis.

### *Writing on Advertising History in China*

Histories of Chinese advertising is limited usually to the studies of specific advertising campaigns, companies, or commodities. A part of the reason for the conception of this thesis has been borne as a result of such a trend in existing historiography – where concentrated attention on the cultural aspect of advertising as whole has been lacking. Most of these narratives have approached the history of advertising from a very top-down centered

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<sup>20</sup> Frank Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 21.

perspective. This section has therefore organized some of the more important literature in a similar regard, starting with Gerth's *China Made*.

One of the more important studies that is concerned with Chinese advertisements is Karl Gerth's *China Made*. Karl Gerth's *China Made* reflects on the broad National Products Movement (henceforth NPM) in China during the Republican Years, where he argues that "consumerism played a fundamental role in defining nationalism, and nationalism in defining consumerism".<sup>21</sup> As such, he looks at the symbiotic relationship between the Nationalist government and the industrial elites within China, and how they each created, managed, and spread the narrative of national products versus foreign products, in a span of around thirty years. The book goes into various aspects of the NPM, which includes origins of the NPM, the boycotting of foreign products, the establishment of national exhibitions, and the NPM's relation to gender and patriotism. These areas form battlegrounds where national products are placed in opposition to their foreign counterparts, where the consumption of nationally-produced commodities was deemed as good, patriotic, and desirable, and the opposite – the consumption or the selling of foreign products (especially Japanese products) – were deemed as being traitorous, backwards, and contributing to the backwardness of China.

Prominent in Gerth's work are the Chinese advertisements that were circulated as part of the NPM. For Gerth, these advertisements were an important medium in understanding the nature in which new culture was spread to the masses, for "those who could not read could still gaze at representations of this new culture in advertisements and illustrations".<sup>22</sup> These advertisements were primarily print advertisements, with them appearing on billboards, newspapers, and pamphlets as conduits to the broader nationalist spectacle. For example, the

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<sup>21</sup> Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia, 2003), 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

brand Sincere presented their toothpaste in an advertisement as a cannon protecting China from the ‘foreign’ ships threatening the sovereignty of China. Gerth argues here that advertisements were a space where many of the NPM tensions had manifest: stating how it reflected first that “it was increasingly difficult to separate Chinese and foreign things”; and second, that there was “the persistent appeal of appearing foreign”.<sup>23</sup> This illustration is particularly important as it suggests that advertisements like Sincere’s” were a reflection of the sentiments of the social milieu. Furthermore, in placing equal focus on advertisements as a space in which a conversation could exist with regards to nationalism and consumerism, Gerth opens up the space for subsequent historians to work on Chinese advertisements, taking the ephemera more seriously as key actors in the historiography of China.

With regards to Gerth’s methodology, he clearly states that the book “extends the top-down approach to reveal the broader institutional and discursive environments in which notions of nationhood were conceived, diffused and enforced”; and while he mentions how he also wants to expand the “bottom-up approach by integrating different levels of Chinese society”, it is clear that major emphasis still revolves around the top-down partnership between Nationalist politics and industrialist ideology concerning the consumption of national products.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the resultant narrative is an important piece of work in understanding the development of nationalism in China, through the lens of consumerism and consumption. Ultimately, Gerth’s work on the NPM in China has been particularly informative in helping readers understand how nationalism developed through consumerism during the interwar years. Gerth therefore presents a narrative in which advertisements feature an instrumental role in. However as mentioned, Gerth’s narrative has presented a very top-down approach towards Republican China and the narrative might not be entirely representative in that regard; as such

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*, 5.

this thesis aims to question the nature of the narrative as presented, and to suggest other ways in which that single narrative might have manifested.

Cochran's work on *Chinese Medicine Men* is also an important contribution to the field of advertising in Republican China, but also important in the field of patent medicine. Of particular interest is Huang Chujiu – who used print advertising as a primary strategy in marketing his medicine to the Chinese market. Huang was a dropout from school who received very little formal education – a non-elite in the books of Cochran. As a businessman, Huang employed artists to transform the portrayal of women in advertisements, publishing seminude paintings in calendar posters which had advertised his medicine; Huang also sought to brand his Chinese medicine with Western ideas, marrying two messages into a single product, even though his Ailuo Brain Tonic was a purely Chinese medicine; last, he successfully used nationalist rhetoric to position his medicine against Japanese goods, co-opting much of what the intellectual elites were advocating at that time. All this points to what Cochran argues as an individual who “poached on the Chinese intellectual elite's discourse”.<sup>25</sup> This suggests a middle-man position in which businessmen like Huang operated within Chinese society, influencing not only Chinese consumption but the broader Chinese conception of culture and ideology. More importantly, this work is rather telling of how ideas from the elite may have been communicated across to the non-elite: the writings and publications that these intellectuals published and circulated were not necessarily always consumed by the non-elite in the same medium in which they were produced. Advertisements therefore acted as a medium – unwitting in part of the copywriter or not – to communicate these ideas. It therefore problematizes the notion within intellectual history that might present notions of modernity, nation, identity as something that is widespread and shared by the masses. Cochran demonstrated how within

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<sup>25</sup> Sherman Cochran, *Chinese Medicine Men Consumer Culture in China and Southeast Asia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 62.

China, there were “numerous historical agents – corporations acting from the top down, consumers participating from the bottom up, brokers mediating in between – all promoting the spread of consumer culture”.<sup>26</sup> While a part of this research has drawn inspiration from Cochran’s arguments, because Cochran’s focus is on the business aspect of it – the businessman, and the way he ran the patent medicine company, much less focus is placed on the advertisements that were produced. Hence, the narrative, while trying to go away from the elite, still tends towards a history of the elite. My understanding of the everyday is not so much to exclude the elite, but to write the elite into the everyday as well.

Specific studies on advertisements with regards to particular commodities would include Valentina Boretti’s paper on toy advertisements reveals what she terms as the “cognizant modernity” that refers to people who “did not inately yearn for the fashionable or novel per se, but judiciously pursued the improved and improving, with a view to elevating themselves and the nation concurrently – through children”.<sup>27</sup> Boretti concludes that toy advertisements, through their presentation of toys, children, and the nation, was a part of the broader material modernity which was “accompanied and bolstered by other immaterial tags such as affection, patriotism, intelligent style...that promised and simultaneously confirmed improvement”. The consumption of these advertisements – be it the viewing of the advertisements, or the buying of toys – became a circulation of these ideas of modernity. Advertisements as presented by Boretti represent more than just a marketing tool to sell toys – they were a symbol of a “negotiated appropriation and deployment of a “frame of reference”, whose shared understanding or acceptance reinforced the message”.<sup>28</sup> This means that the

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<sup>26</sup> While Cochran does state this, it is evident the driving point that he tries to make is emphasis on the middle ground; mention therefore, of the top and bottom are often in relation to the core of his argument who are the non-elite brokers.

See: Cochran, *Chinese Medicine Men Consumer Culture in China and Southeast Asia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 164.

<sup>27</sup> Valentina Boretti, “Small Things of Great Importance: Toy Advertising in China, 1910-30s”, *Asia Pacific Perspectives* 13:2 (2016), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Valentina Boretti, “Small Things of Great Importance: Toy Advertising in China, 1910-30s”, 20.

messages contained within the advertisements were, as is the presupposition of this thesis, a space where there was an equal opportunity for the consumer as well as the advertiser to create meaning from the advertisement. Advertisements are not unidirectional.

Of all the books that heavily discuss advertisements in Republican China, Ellen Johnston Laing's *Selling Happiness* is possibly one of the most widely cited. It is an excellent history on the history of calendar posters in China, and acts as a commentary of visual culture in Chinese history. The research is structured into two key acts: the first deals with the general setting and structures of calendar posters in China, and the second act deals more strictly with the artists responsible for the calendar posters. Laing's work deals with "not only advertising art but also its production".<sup>29</sup> Her work therefore places huge emphasis on the artists responsible for the calendar art and advertisements, and the production process that goes behind these visual masterpieces. In short, Laing's work examines the relationship between the artwork on calendar posters, manifested in the form of advertisements, and the artists who drew them, in the context of a rapidly modernizing Republican China. *Selling Happiness* is, within the context of Republican Chinese history, a rare book that deals more specifically with the visual culture of calendar posters and advertisements in that era that any overlapping academic work would have to use. Unfortunately, because Laing's focus is on calendar posters and the art behind it, it reads more as an art history than a cultural history of advertisements. The lack of focus on the content of the advertisements themselves in relation to the people means that there is still a gap in the academic narrative concerning advertisements in Republican China that deals more comprehensively with the advertising landscape.

To summarize the review in a few words, especially pertaining to the state of current academic conversation relating to advertisements in Republican China, I would state that while

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<sup>29</sup> Ellen Johnston Laing, *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 1.

much of the work has been instructive in the direction of this research, it is still lacking in the focus and articulation of what this thesis believes to be necessary in an everyday history of advertisements. My work therefore aims to properly articulate some of the ideas hinted in existing scholarship that has not been fully teased out, and at the same time, pay a more concentrated focus on advertisements itself, rather than to use advertisements to write a history of businessmen, or of nationalist movements. The advocating of a flattened history, while suggestive in existing scholarship, was not necessarily the ultimate purpose reflected in the above academic work, and it is the hope of this thesis to fill that gap, through a rethinking of what the everyday means.

### **What Makes an Advertisement?**

Identifying what an advertisement is might be a rather banal to begin this thesis; yet, it sets an important first step to identify the data that this thesis works with. As discussed in the introduction, the history of advertising goes back as early as Pompeii, where an early example of advertising was discovered amongst its volcanic ruins: a sign which promoted a brothel.<sup>30</sup> Advertisements are everywhere and they can refer to a space in society where information is transmitted from one party (the seller), to another (the audience, or in most cases, the buyer). The information is concerned with, but not limited to, providing “information about various commodities, about sales, notice of new publications, school announcements, automobiles, home necessities, and amusement places”.<sup>31</sup> The public therefore relies on this information to make decisions over what to consume, and how to spend their money.

The type of advertisement also matters in twentieth century China. Because China was a country with a high proportion of illiteracy, advertisements also ranged from as simple as a

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<sup>30</sup> Mark Tungate, *Adland: A Global History of Advertising*, (London and Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2007), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Hollington K. Tong, “Newspapers as an Advertising Medium in China,” *China Commercial Advertising Agency* (1936), 29.

single advertising copy, to as lavish as a full-coloured graphic with minimal accompanying texts. Most of the time, these advertisements were for specific commodities such as cigarettes, soap, or pharmaceutical products. Depending on the social background of these buyers, and the spending power, the type of advertisements across these spaces varied; in addition, the spaces also varied, where specific commodities were advertised in spaces which were received by specific audiences. These spaces can take the form of the printed press, or in outdoor posters and signages; alternative forms can include the seller physically touting their goods. Advertising space also included non-physical forms such as radio and television; however, these spaces will not be the focus of this research project. The next chapter will go into greater detail concerning these spaces.

## **Thesis Parameters**

### *On time*

The time period that borders the thesis is from 1912 to 1937, starting with the end of the Qing, and ending at the cusp of the Second World War – a period many scholars would term as the Republican Era of China. Of course, the Republican Era is understood to have ended with the rise of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949; however, the end point of 1937 also marks the start of the second Sino-Japanese war and would make an adequate punctuation to the study.

The biggest question mark that would arise within the borders of this thesis with regards to the timeframe is my treatment of it. Within the Republican Era, scholars might bracket them, as Judge has illustrated, as “the early Republic (1911-17), the May Fourth (1915-25), and the Chiang-led Nanjing era (1925-35)”, and the Japanese occupation (from as early as 1932 to 1945).<sup>32</sup> Such a presentation already might be problematic: evidently, many of these eras

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<sup>32</sup> Joan Judge, *Republican Lens*, 5.

overlap, and it is sometimes difficult to identify when one era ends and the other begins. Can one write a history of the early Republic while ignoring the fact that it was also at the cusp of the May Fourth Movement in 1919? Rhetoric aside, such issues with periodization do appear throughout the writing of any kind history, Chinese history notwithstanding, and it is not my intention here to directly resolve it. Instead, my intention is to suggest that while it is possible to write a history within one of the above brackets, it is just as possible to write a history of advertising that connects all the brackets together under a single narrative: that of Republican China.<sup>33</sup> In choosing to look at the Republican Era as a single block, I see the different decades as more similar than different. Admittedly to some, this method of thinking and writing might obscure more than it might illuminate – understandably as it will flatten out differences within the eras in the interests of creating a cohesive story. However, in attempting to write a history of advertisements in Republican China, some concessions have to be made. This thesis believes that there is merit in adopting a broad view of the Republican Era.

Other historians, such as Strand, and Dikotter, and Lu, have in their research on Republican China, also presented the era as a whole, and each corresponding narrative demonstrates a cohesive Republican period despite of how the brackets might exist. As such, while this does not necessarily present a solution or answer to the issue of time periods, I believe that the parameters of this thesis is in concert with the existing academic consensus, that a history of Republican China that examines the whole era is as legitimate as its narrower counterparts; it acknowledges that while a closer, deeper, and more specific examination of

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<sup>33</sup> Here lies the immediate hypocrisy whereby I still resort to a form of periodization. One cannot ignore the fact that many late Qing institutions, practices, and culture remained well into Republican China, and that there is no clear break from the dynastic to the republican. Understandably, there will always be problems that arise with periodization. However, I believe that the existing academic conversation can accept the starting point of the Republican era (1912) to be a good beginning, and the corresponding end point as the second Sino-Japanese War (1937).

each bracket, either as a single unit or in relation to each other would be important, it is not possible within the confines of this scale of study.

### *On space*

Another big question mark that should be addressed before entering into the argument proper is the treatment of space. China as a geopolitical landmass is one of the largest in the world. To write a history of China in itself is challenging if not impossible. To draw a conclusion of Republican Shanghai might not necessarily mean the same for Republican Beijing. To give an example, a study of Republican Shanghai by Yeh Wen-Hsin is markedly different from one of Republican Beijing, by Madeleine Yue Dong. The former has its focus on the urbanites in Shanghai, through the examination of the “shopping, working, reading and forming [of] connections, [which] fashioned the expanding opportunities that were transforming the city”.<sup>34</sup> The state, Yeh believes, was restructured, “instead of the adjustment of the merchants to conform to bureaucratic norms”.<sup>35</sup> In so doing, Yeh examines the dialectic between the middle-class merchants and the state in the formation of a modern Shanghai. On the other hand, the latter’s emphasis is on the vast changes that occurred in Beijing during the interwar years – an era of rapid urbanization and, some might say, modernity. However, Yue-Dong wishes to turn that argument on its head, arguing that in Republican Beijing, “what remains of the past can serve as an important resource for coping with the present”.<sup>36</sup> Through the examination of the “city’s spatial order, the material life of the city’s inhabitants, and cultural representations of the city, [the book] hopes to extricate the present of Republican Beijing from a history conceived in terms of a linear progression”.<sup>37</sup> In spite of the fact that histories of Chinese cities are common, there are also approaches towards Chinese history

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<sup>34</sup> Yeh, *Shanghai Splendour* 8.

<sup>35</sup> Yeh, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Madeleine Yue-Dong, *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>37</sup> Madeleine Yue-Dong, *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories*, 12.

which considers the history of China as an entire geo-political block. Studies by Dikotter for example, in *Things Modern*, have presented the nation as a whole, looking at the general material culture of Republican China. The point to be made here is that there exist different ways of slicing China's history,

This could become a question of scale: how much can we stretch the history of a person, or of a city, or of a relic to equate to the history of a country? This might not be the appropriate space to discuss such a historiographical puzzle; instead, what I hope to pose is the fact that scale is often subject to the discretion of the historian, and just as one can claim a history of Beijing is in essence a history of China, one might also argue that a history of Beijing needs to be examined more microscopically, as the scale of the city is far too large to capture the subjectivities of the lives of its inhabitants. Is it therefore possible to tell a history of China? Or am I merely arguing for a history of Shanghai, or Guangzhou, or of urban Chinese cities? In essence, how can what I say of so little translate to so much? The short answer is that it cannot. Republican China, even though more centralized than its Qing equivalent, is not a monolithic entity. Urban cities differ from rural cities. Even within urban cities, histories obtained from people living in different parts of the city (from alleyway houses to shanty houses) would result in greater confusion over what account is truly representative of China, rather than an obtaining of a unified voice.

This begs the question – should we still bother? Many academics still do, in fact, attempt to write a history of China. While I believe that this question has no answer, one can begin to reach an understanding of how we can treat this issue when we turn to the existing academic conversation. The most direct response to this query comes from Joan Judge in *Republican Lens*, where, in relation to her study on the *Funu Shibao*, she argues that her study is “more than merely a lens onto the singular metropolis of Shanghai, it is a lens onto the

Republic from the vantage point of that metropolis”.<sup>38</sup> In considering this, I believe that the best way to understand the parameters of this thesis, spatially-thinking, is to consider it a way to understand the broader Republic; the history of advertisements in Republican China that will follow is therefore not a complete historical representation of Republican China. As is mentioned in the previous section, this section here does not aim to present a solution to the query on the claim to the telling of a history of Republican China despite the fact that it does not explicitly cover the whole of China, nor does it account for the differences between different regions in China (urban-rural divide, the greater China region that includes the Chinese diaspora, and inland-coastal divide). Nevertheless, this does not delegitimize the claim of writing a history of Republican China which, borrowing Judge’s expression, is a lens onto the Republic, albeit from multiple vantage points.

## **Methodology**

### *On Sources*

This thesis would have been nothing if not for the efforts put in by scholars and archivists who have dedicated their effort to preserve and digitize essentially all of the advertisements that have been used in this paper. These advertisements were all gathered from digitized archives that have been made open access. For example, the East View’s Center for Research Libraries Global Resources Network has an extensive collection of Republican Chinese newspapers from all around China – Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, Chengdu, to name a few – and these newspapers are digitized in adequate condition. Heidelberg University’s digitization project on Chinese women’s magazines like the *Funü Zazhi*, *Funü Shibao*, and *Linglong Magazine* is also an important source of advertisements, as many of these magazines relied on the money earned from advertising fees to stay afloat. Last, MADspace is a database

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<sup>38</sup> Judge, 4.

developed by Cecile Armand in the process of her dissertation for the use of other collaborative research and for future researchers of advertisement history in China. This has also been very valuable in the process of my research. Apart from advertisements, this thesis also uses government archival records, trade records, and consular reports that help to give a better perspective on the workings of the elite circles in local and foreign governments and their relation to the advertising world. It would be worth commenting here on the nature of these sources. Some of the above sources also include secondary studies of the advertising scene that were published in journals. However, because these secondary accounts were created in the same period in which this project is studying, and is directly describing the advertising landscape, it is fair to treat these sources as primary material.

Last, there are personal diaries, biographies, and other accounts that this thesis finds extremely valuable as a means to get a more private understanding of how the everyday was constructed by some of the people. Unfortunately, many of these personal and private accounts come from the middle-upper levels of society, and therefore there is already a specific type of “everyday life” in which these sources depict. Nevertheless, as the next chapter will demonstrate, there is still a lot to learn from these examples, and they are used to give a more vivid picture of this everyday life, beyond just my reading of advertisements.

A noticeable gap in the sources involves the use of English-language advertisements. To be clear, English-language advertisements were not uncommon in China. Of course, most English-language advertisements would have been found in newspapers in port cities such as Shanghai or Canton, where most Westerners would have resided. For example, the below advertisements for Three Castles and Capstan Cigarettes are examples of English-language advertisements which were common in English newspapers such as North China Daily News. These cigarette advertisements, while published in newspapers in China, was not entirely different from advertisements found in Western publications.

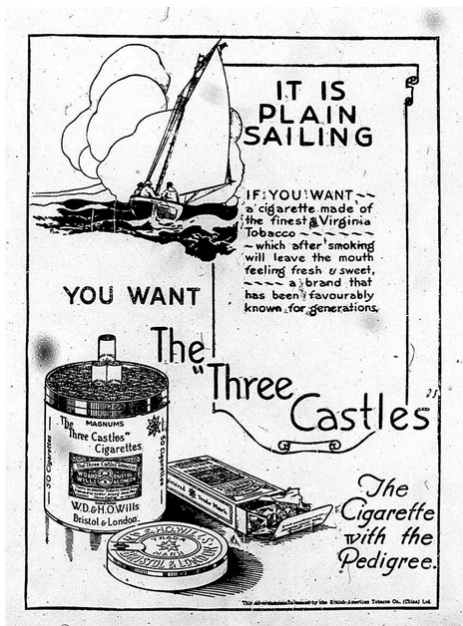


Figure 1 (Left): “Three Castles Cigarettes: It is Plain Sailing”.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 2 (Right): “Capstan Cigarettes: The Cool Hygienic Smoke - Ask the Man Who Knows!”<sup>40</sup>

Having said that, while this thesis is an attempt to write a history of advertisements in Republican China, the consumption of English-language advertisements represents a demographic that is not the focus of this paper. To be clear, even journalistic agencies such as the Chun Mei News Agency which was set up in 1918 by “Carl Crow and other Americans in Shanghai and Peking”,<sup>41</sup> which as letter from Arnold to the Chief of Bureau reveals, had already been “making a specialty of Chinese advertising in the Chinese language, and is effective connections throughout the Chinese press and other Chinese agencies [to get] the attention of the Chinese reading public”.<sup>42</sup> It was the Chinese public that is the focus of this paper, and therefore Chinese-language advertisements that will be featured in the next three chapters of this dissertation.

<sup>39</sup> “Three Castles cigarette advertisement,” *North China Daily News*, 3 January, 1924.

<sup>40</sup> “Capstan cigarette advertisement,” *North China Daily News*, 1 January 1924.

<sup>41</sup> Peter O’Connor, “The Background,” in *English Language Press Networks of East Asia, 1918-45*, (United Kingdom: Global Oriental, 2010) 32.

<sup>42</sup> Julean Arnold, “Advertising in Chinese,” *Julean Arnold to Chief to Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Washington, July 24, 1919*. Letter. NARA General Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce (RG 151), File 470, Box 2249.



Figure 3: Advertisement for Ruby Queen cigarettes in 1928<sup>43</sup>

At this juncture, it will be important to note that while all the advertisements here were sourced from digitized newspaper archives, meaning that the advertisements in this thesis are all newspaper advertisements, it does not mean that these advertisements were exclusively published and circulated in newspapers. As the next chapter will illustrate, advertisers used a wide variety of media to circulate advertisements. In fact, some advertisements also reflect and reference the prominence of non-newspaper advertising, as shown in the advertisement above (Figure 3) which, while taken from a newspaper, directly illustrates how the same advertisement can appear as a poster on a street wall or banner. This accounts for the people who did not necessarily read newspapers – the illiterate especially – as advertisements were just as ubiquitous outside of the journalistic world.

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<sup>43</sup> “Ruby Queen Cigarettes advertisement,” *Suzhou Mingbao*, 18 February, 1928, 4.

## Chapter 2: A Landscape of Twentieth Century Everyday Advertising in China

Chen Duxiu once lamented that many popular expressions such as consciousness or patriotism, or even hygiene or reform, “once landed in Shanghai can only serve as a sharp weapon for [the advertisements of] cigarette companies, pharmacies, book dealers, etc.”<sup>44</sup> His disdain demonstrates how advertisements might have operated, or at least perceived to have operated – that they take ideas from the elites to sell products to the masses in an almost parasitic manner. Were advertisements truly as nefarious as Chen has painted them to be? The best way to begin our study of advertisements is to first understand the landscape where advertisements existed in Republican China. This chapter is split into two sections. The first, and in beginning to tell a history of advertising in China, would be to paint a portrait of what it meant to advertise in China in the early twentieth century. Drawing on perspectives from both local and foreign advertisers (ad-men), business owners, and journalists, on the culture of consumption in China. This includes the various media that was used as advertising platforms, the major products that were advertised, as well as common issues faced by these ad-men in creating an advertising campaign. While this chapter aims to paint an advertising landscape of Republican China, it does not include the various institutions and companies and the ad-men that ran them. While such information is just as relevant, the parameters of this thesis does not have the space to fit in a business history or biographies of ad-men. Additionally, in choosing to lean towards the everyday, it is also an attempt to place less emphasis on institutions, and more on the everyday interactions and people. In investigating the publications by ad-men foreign and local, this chapter seeks to ask: what was the primary mode of advertising in China

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<sup>44</sup> Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 315. Original source: Chen Duxiu, *Duxiu Wencun*, (Hefei, Anhui: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1987), 589; 595.

in the early twentieth century? Who was the target audience for these advertisers? And last, what sort of products or commodities constituted the most bulk of advertisements during that era? I will do so by first discussing what constitutes an advertisement. Following that, I will look at the various mediums in which advertisers used to distribute their advertisements.

The second part of this chapter begins our journey into advertisements. In this chapter, I focus on some items which historians refer to as “everyday items”: apparel, and other electronic devices that entered Republican China’s market. I first define the parameters of what everyday means and implies, before exploring how these goods were advertised. This latter section therefore seeks to complement the ‘how’ of advertising as with the ‘what’ as achieved by the former, by probing into a broader dimension in the consumption of the everyday Chinese. Unlike cigarettes and patent medicine in the succeeding chapters, it is difficult to classify the items that fall within this category under specific labels. Lightbulbs, cars, electric fans, western clothing, toys, and spectacles are some of the new items introduced into Chinese markets, and then into Chinese households.

Taken together, this chapter acts primarily as a foundational chapter to better contextualize the advertising environment in Republican China; by first breaking down how the means in which advertisements manifested in society, and second, the broad strokes concerning the advertising of everyday items. On a deeper level, it seeks, through the use of the advertisements, to question the meaning of “everyday”, and how we can better conceive of its parameters.

## **Context on Republican China**

Before talking about the landscape of advertising media, it is prudent to first provide some general context of Republican China. Of course, it is impossible to consider its context methodically – it has taken Fairbank two volumes in his Cambridge Companion just to

sufficiently talk about Republican China's history. And so, it might be better to illustrate such a context thematically. Dikotter's *Age of Openness* presents China as having, progressively, open governance, borders, minds, and markets. In an attempt to "challenge the view that modern China was mainly defined by 'warlords', 'imperialism' or 'disintegration': it suggests instead that in many respects it might very well be qualified as a golden age of engagement with the world".<sup>45</sup> Against the preceding Qing era, the Republican Era saw China's increasing interaction with foreign actors.<sup>46</sup> Foreign actors implied a few things: a booming intellectual scene, who were either educated or travelled abroad and had new ideas about China's path forward; it also brought about an increased vibrancy in terms of consumer goods, exposing the Chinese market to foreign brands and tastes.

There was also an increase in internal migration, which saw more people move from the rural villages to the burgeoning cities. For example, many farmers from villages near Shanghai had moved there from rural villages to work in factories, and "many of them managed to get acquainted with people in cotton mills and found jobs there".<sup>47</sup> The domestic migration within China had seen an increase concentration of people in the major cities, with everyone looking to find a better life for themselves, and for their families. For some, after having achieved that life, they would relocate their families to the city permanently; others would return back to their rural villages to retire. According Lu, many of the urban poor in Shanghai had migrated to the city for reasons similar to the better-off, "to find a better life".<sup>48</sup> A part of this better life, which implied jobs which paid more, also meant the ability to afford a higher

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<sup>45</sup> Dikotter *Age of Openness*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> As Fairbank rightly points out, the idea 'foreign' is too broad a term that can act as a satisfactory quantifier of China's relations with its outside world. Foreign could, as Fairbank states, refer to "events abroad, ideas of foreign origins, or events in China which foreign people or ideas played a part". For the purposes of this context, foreign would therefore refer to both the events that occurred abroad, as well as the foreign ideas and people that were playing a part in shaping local events.

John Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Lu Hanchao, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Lu Hanchao, 66.

material quality of life. As such, it might seem that much of our narrative of advertisement in China revolves around the major cities: does this mean that the rural parts of China experienced a different story? As explained in the previous chapter, while this is not a complete historical representation of Republican China, it hopes to still provide an effective lens on the Republic, through the advertisements, which were more common in the cities.

Alongside the increased domestic migration was the booming intellectual landscape, which was driven partly indirectly by an easing of international movement. The birth of Republican China, as well as the entire Republican era, was a period where many new ideas were being introduced, and circulated amongst the people, from the Chinese intellectuals. A survey of Chinese intellectual history beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, and which usually ends at the twenties, will point to various chapters such as the advocacy for reform in its education and political system in the late Qing, and in its Republican Era, with the New Culture movement, the May Fourth movement, and the headlining of various ‘isms’. Some of these ideas were inspired by the intellectuals’ education overseas, from places such as Japan, and the United States. Expressing their voice through publications, these intellectuals would write extensively on how they felt China should progress, and what about China they wanted to change. And so it is important to note that while some scholarship might mark the 1910s-20s as the hotbed of Chinese intellectual dialogue, this era had set the groundwork for many of subsequent changes in China. It had, as Furth describes, “created novel modes of communication and association in the form of newspapers and periodical press...and various types of societies and political parties on the other”.<sup>49</sup> It is in particular the newspapers and periodical press that is of interest here in this thesis, specifically the advertisements.

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<sup>49</sup> Furth, 322. *Cambridge History of China Part 1*

In addition to being a platform for intellectuals to express their views, a further impetus to the increased consumption and the demand for publishing was the growing print culture in China through the proliferation of newspapers, periodicals, magazines, and journals – which became a platform for advertisements, in addition to the various essays, and novels that were published. Mackinnon points to the early 1900s as the “emergence of an independent popular press in China’s coastal cities”.<sup>50</sup> Print capitalism, as Reed argues is an “offshoot of the process of mechanization in the printing and publishing sector...arrived when commercialized, secularized, nongovernmental, and non-philanthropic printing came to be done”.<sup>51</sup> In major Chinese cities such as Shanghai, new printing technologies and machinery were adopted by publishing firms and newspaper companies and, which saw the industry growing in numbers as publishing firms saw the profitability in this booming industry. A large part of the profitability came from the advertising space that businesses – both local and foreign – would purchase to advertise their goods, and it more often than not became a major factor in keeping publications alive.

Having considered this context of Republican China, with the conditions in play concerning the demographic of people, the burgeoning dialogue initiated by intellectuals, and the growing print culture, it is at this juncture that we can begin to explore its landscape of advertisements, beginning first with the various advertising media that was utilized by ad-men and businesses to advertise their goods.

## **Advertising Media**

As mentioned earlier, advertisements today exist and are distributed across three primary media: print, broadcast, and digital. Advertisers then had less to work with. Operating primarily across print lines, the broadcast industry was still in its teething years, with the

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<sup>50</sup> Stephen Mackinnon, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Reed, 9.

medium of radio not favoured by the ad-men. Within the print media category is a cornucopia of different medium, chief of which were newspapers and periodicals. Apart from newspapers and periodicals were electrical signages, billboards, vehicle advertisements, calendars, mail advertisements, and in some instances, the physical products themselves. This section will go over the various advertising media to illustrate how ubiquitous the world of advertising was in Republican China.

### *Publications: Newspapers*

Newspapers were an extremely important medium which advertisers relied on to post their advertisements, which according to Tong, was “the key to the advertising situation by its ability to carry the advertiser’s message to the greatest number of people in the shortest time”.<sup>52</sup> Both Chinese and English newspapers were published in China with different frequencies: dailies, weeklies, and bi-weeklies; there were Japanese and German newspaper publications reported as well, but this paper will focus on the Anglo-Chinese publications. In 1919, a letter from Carl Crow to Julean Arnold indicates how “three papers in Shanghai have in excess of 10,000 in circulation and two in Peking and Tientsin. One Shanghai paper claims 30,000 and may have it”.<sup>53</sup> Eight years later, in Shanghai alone, the 1927 report from American Consul General Edwin Cunningham notes twelve different dailies in circulation (six in English and six in Chinese); more than that, the report also records dailies in other provinces of China, from Jiangsu to Zhejiang – therefore showing the extent to which the journalism industry in China has flourished in the twentieth century. To give some context on the extent of this growth, MacKinnon has described how individuals like Liang had “argued early on that freedom of expression...[was] essential to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy in China”, and

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<sup>52</sup> Hollington K. Tong, “Newspapers as an Advertising Medium in China,” *China Commercial Advertising Agency* (1936), 29.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Crow, “Advertising in China,” *Carl Crow to Julean Arnold, March 9, 1919*. Letter. NARA, General records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce (RG 151), File Class 470, Box 2249.

was therefore responsible for this “emergence of popular press in China’s coastal cities”.<sup>54</sup> While a large proportion of China’s journalistic world grew because of its use in the political world, Christopher Reed also points to the rise of mechanization in China that “laid the material foundation that made Chinese print capitalism possible”.<sup>55</sup> All in all, it was a combination of the increased mechanization in Chinese factories, together with the opportunistic spirit of individuals like Liang which was the massive proliferation of the newspaper industry in Republican China.

These newspapers were definite targets for advertisers as a medium to advertise commodities. The report therefore reflects an American perspective on the attitudes and strategies American advertisers and businessmen could undertake should they wish to expand their business in, or to, China. For example, Cunningham’s report in 1927 noted that the morning daily newspaper in Shanghai, “The Republican Daily News”, has an estimated circulation of twenty thousand a day. The same report notes that “advertising in the publication appeals chiefly to the Chinese merchant, student and man of affairs”, and “strongly favours the new Chinese nationalism”.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the English morning daily newspaper, “The Shanghai Times”, which has an estimated circulation of around five thousand people daily in the country, has advertisements “appealing to the American, European, and Chinese of European tastes”. The newspaper itself is “British, with Japanese sympathies in political comment”, and is a primary medium for “reaching the American, British and other English-speaking communities”.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Stephen R. Mackinnon, “History of the Chinese Press in the Republican Period,” *Modern China* 23:1 (1997), 4

<sup>55</sup> Christopher A. Reed, introduction to *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937*, (Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press, 2004), 9

<sup>56</sup> Edwin S. Cunningham, “Advertising media and methods,” NARA, General records of the Department of State, Consular Trade Reports, Box 257, 1927, 67.

<sup>57</sup> Edwin S. Cunningham, “Advertising media and methods,” 108.

While the reported distribution of newspapers appears to be low, Crow notes that “papers are not read and thrown away in China, but are passed on from one family to another so that a single copy may be read by four or five families”.<sup>58</sup> As such, as much as reported newspaper circulation figures might, on paper, reflect a low readership count, therefore implying that advertisements through newspapers were ineffective, Crow’s observations therefore suggest the opposite, that advertising through newspapers as in fact a good way for a company – foreign or local – to attain brand recognition and presence in Chinese society. Nevertheless, given the reach and ubiquity of newspapers in Chinese society, they form the backbone of the advertisement landscape in China, offering advertisers a reliable and consistent network that linked the businesses to the broader society at hand.

#### *Publications: Magazines and Trade Journals*

On very similar grounds to newspapers are magazines, periodicals, and miscellaneous trade journals that were published and distributed across China. Unlike newspapers, these publications were catered towards a niche audience, therefore alluding that the readership and reach of advertisements in them were comparatively lower. These publications would include topics such as women, sports, leisure and entertainment, or general lifestyle; trade journals on the other hand can revolve around topics such as “electrical engineering, health, drug trade, cotton milling, banking, and mining”.<sup>59</sup> However, because these publications are considered as ‘specialized’ in that they catered to a specific audience rather than a general one, advertisements inside these publications were also relevant to the subject matter of the publication. As such, one would expect advertisements on mining equipment or mining

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<sup>58</sup> Carl Crow, “Advertising and Merchandising,” in *China Handbook*, Julean Arnold, and Carl Crow, eds. (Washington, Washington Government Print Off, 1926), 196.

<sup>59</sup> Carl Crow, “Advertising and Merchandising,” 198.

conferences in a mining trade journal; similarly, one can expect advertisements in a Christian evangelical journal to advertise books related to their evangelical ministry.

Advertisers dealing with general commodities such as cigarettes and pharmaceutical products however prefer not to advertise in these publications over the symbiotic reasoning that specific audiences also meant limited reach; in addition, Christian publications have “brought very poor returns” for the advertisers, who speculate the possibility of the “low purchasing power of the average convert to Christianity”.<sup>60</sup> One example of this would be the Chinese Christian weekly periodical, the “Christian Intelligencer”, which, similarly in 1927, had an estimated circulation of six thousand people. Advertisements in this journal, are “accepted only if it has a particular religious appeal”, and while it has “value as an advertising medium, it has a limited circulation”.<sup>61</sup>

### *Billboards, Paintings, and Signages*

Metal billboards, wall posters, and wall paintings were an important supplement to newspapers and other print publications. In the exterior of cities, large metal billboards were erected, which would have been advertisements for anything from cigarettes to soaps. Within the city’s interior, smaller posters and paintings were installed which would also similarly advertise kerosene lanterns, soap, cotton, or batteries for example. Metal billboards were also less common in rural cities which had less policing as the absence of “policing power to prevent the peasants from appropriating them for their own uses” discouraged advertisers from opting for such a medium.<sup>62</sup> In the cities, the poorer households also got involved in the process of advertising, offering the walls around their houses as advertising spaces. These walls were

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Edwin S. Cunningham, “Advertising media and methods,” NARA, General records of the Department of State, Consular Trade Reports, Box 257, 1927, 92

<sup>62</sup> Ernest J. Black, “Advertising in Shanghai,” NARA, General records of the Department of State (RG 59), Consular Trade Reports, Box 948, 1932, 37.

rented to businesses, and these households charged a standard fee for advertisement signs painted on their property; ultimately, this formed a win-win arrangement as these “poor householders were glad to earn a few dollars for the privilege of having signs painted on their homes”.<sup>63</sup> As such, while the people were not explicitly involved in the creative aspect of drafting an advertisement copy, they were just a prominent actor as the advertisers, businessmen, and publishers in the entire process of advertising in China.

A sibling media to these billboards are electric or neon signages which enjoyed popularity in Western cities in the early twentieth century. However, it is noted that this medium of advertisement was not popular in China and could only be found in major port cities such as Shanghai, where exposure to Western brands and modes of advertising was more common. Nevertheless, these outdoor advertising media were, like metal billboards and wall paintings, a part of the vibrant advertising network.

### *Calendars*

Calendars were a popular medium which offered a very good space for advertisers to showcase their products. Calendars had ubiquitous reach, being very affordable, and having a high demand. However, Crow mentions how in “considering the high cost of calendars, it is doubtful that their distribution is ever justified by the advertising results obtained”.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, these artefacts offer a good sample of advertisements – especially cigarette advertisements – for the historian to study, looking particularly at the portrayal of China and women in the advertisements. A greater study on calendar advertisements in relation to cigarette brands will be further explored in a later chapter.

### *Mail Advertisements*

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<sup>63</sup> Ernest Black, “Advertising in Shanghai,” 37.

<sup>64</sup> Carl Crow, “Advertising and Merchandising,” 200.

Circular letters were also an effective medium in which advertisers could use to advertise products as the cost of sending mail in China was very low. In addition, Blanchard mentions how these mail advertisements were confidential and more importantly, they were personal. This meant that in reading the advertisement (as one would a letter), the reader “is made to feel that the message is for him alone...and therefore takes a greater interest in it”.<sup>65</sup> The advertisements themselves would likely resemble those that were published in newspapers. While Blanchard was referring to advertisements in a Western context, these points made were fundamental aspects to advertisement strategy, and are applicable points in our study. Therefore, the major difference between the advertisements found through circular letters and the mainstream publication of newspapers and periodicals is the sense of direct communication these advertisements had to the audience. It was very likely that the products advertised through mail advertising were also specially catered to the demographic of the household in the neighbourhood, selectively targeting products at these audiences.

#### *Vehicle Advertisements*

Another medium of advertising in China were car advertisements. Also referred to as car signs or car cards, these advertisements could be found on buses and tramcars. According to Blanchard, street car advertising was advantageous because “all advertisers occupy the same space”, and therefore all have equal chance to get their message across and is also likely the “last advertisement [a person] sees when they go shopping are the street car cards”.<sup>66</sup> As such, this medium is an important factor in the advertising environment for urban societies.

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<sup>65</sup> Frank Le Roy Blanchard, *The Essentials of Advertising*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1921), 187.

<sup>66</sup> Frank Le Roy Blanchard, *Essentials of Advertising*, 178.

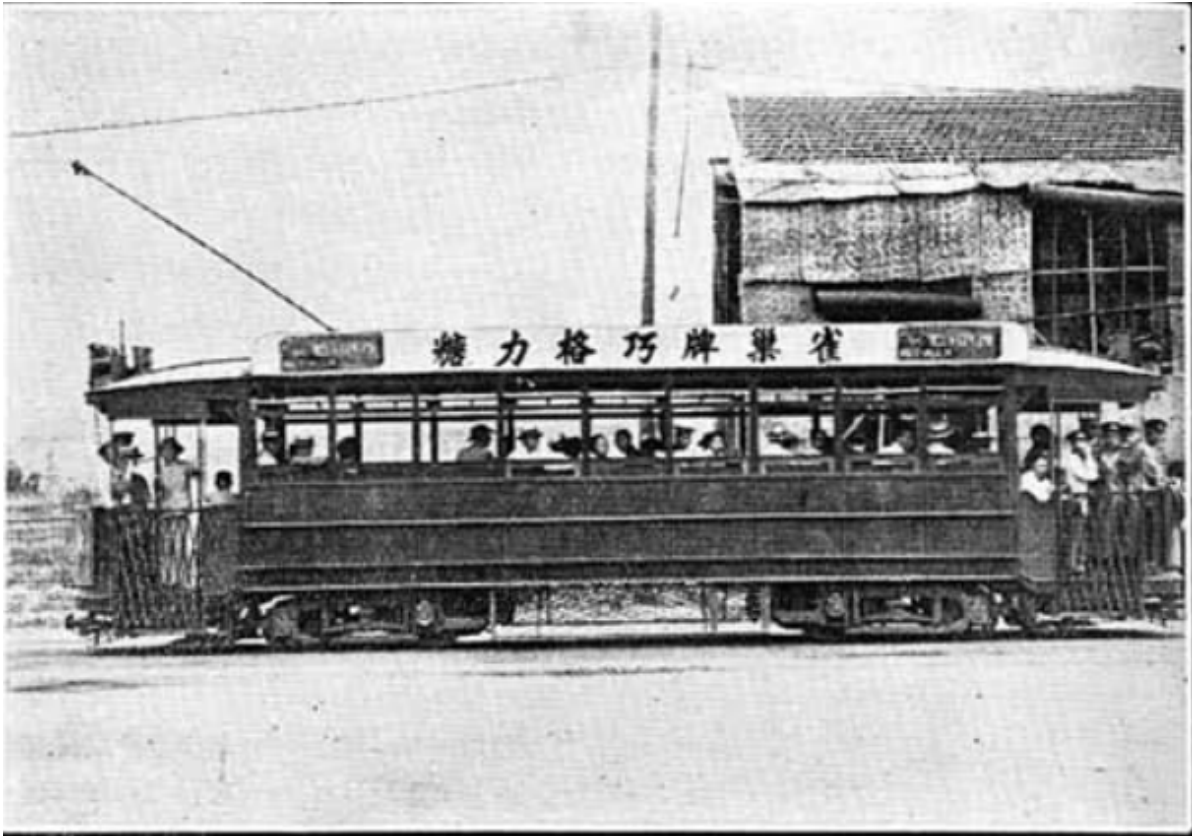


Figure 4: Advertisement of chocolate on streetcar in China.<sup>67</sup>

Figure 4 is of an advertisement on a streetcar in China, with a simple copy on a brand of chocolate. With the 'birth' of modern Chinese cities in the twentieth century, with the introduction of street cars and shopping centres, such an option might have been a huge possibility for the advertisers. However, this was only evident in urban cities such as Shanghai. Even so, such a process of urbanization was still in its teething phase and was also met with resistance. As such, it was not necessarily a choice option for them as motorcars and tramways were only a part of a growing mode of transport in China. In addition, rickshaws were also noted to be tried as advertising medium but was deemed as unprofitable. Therefore, vehicle advertisement's reliance on audience reach was not always secure, nor was it always cost-effective.

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<sup>67</sup> C.A. Bacon, "Advertising in China", *Chinese Economic Monthly* 5:3 (1929), 758.

### *Physical Products*

Products themselves were also an important consideration for advertisers. This took the primary form of product samples. People could, in reading the newspapers, exchange the coupon attached to the advertisement. This has been an effective way in introducing new, and especially foreign, products and brands into China. Samples are usually a supplementary medium that is utilized by advertisers alongside the newspaper counterparts as part of a broader advertising campaign to introduce the brand and generate greater brand awareness.

### *Radio*

Radio advertisements were not a popular medium for advertisers in the early twentieth century for two main reasons. The first had to do with the reach radio advertisements had. It is noted in the Black report that “the number of radio sets which have been sold to date is very small and the lack of broadcasting facilities in this country too great”.<sup>68</sup> This leads onto the second reason: that the necessary infrastructure to construct an advertising campaign across the radio medium was simply unavailable in the rural cities, and under-developed across urban ones. On the topic of infrastructure, Black notes that there were three major difficulties using the radio medium to advertise in China, first that there was a “lack of government regulations [making] it hazardous as there was nothing to prevent interference from another station on the same wavelength”; second, that there was a “scarcity of radio sets in China”, and last, that there were “poor programmes”.<sup>69</sup> This is therefore highly indicative that radio advertising, unlike its print counterpart, was not a widely used medium for advertisers. However, the report does note its rising popularity in terms of a growing demographic of radio set owners; as such, it could be expected that radio advertisements became more popular later into the twentieth century.

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<sup>68</sup> Ernest J. Black, “Advertising in Shanghai,” NARA, General records of the Department of State (RG 59), Consular Trade Reports, Box 948, 1932, 43.

<sup>69</sup> Ernest J. Black, “Advertising in Shanghai,” 20.

However, because of the limitations of surviving broadcast archives, it will not be possible in the scope of this research project to include broadcast advertisements into the study of advertising in twentieth century China.

## **Advertising Campaigns**

If the advertising medium is the skeleton of advertising, the campaign is its flesh and blood. An advertising campaign, according to Crow refers to “the preparation of the [advertising] copy”.<sup>70</sup> It is the creative and strategic process behind the creation of an advertisement, and it is also a reflection of the psychology behind the understanding of the social environment in which the seller is attempting to create buyers out of. An advertising campaign, unlike the medium, has less universal effects; that is to say, while a medium such as a newspaper might generate a similar advantage or response in an urban Western city as it might in an urban Chinese city, an advertising campaign does not necessarily have that sort of predictable result. In fact, Crow’s reflections suggest the opposite, where he stated that “the Chinese, with different tastes and different customs, will look at it from a different point of view”, and that “advertising does not meet the quick response in China that the American advertiser is accustomed to in his own land”.<sup>71</sup>

One can expect that most advertising campaigns in China were created locally, or at least they were not mere translations of English advertising campaigns used in the West. The Chinese are noted by Crow to “attach a significance to colours...to all-natural objects – which is not shared by Westerners”.<sup>72</sup> They also attach special significance to puns in texts, and as such, advertisers are known to utilize puns and wordplay in their advertising copy. Last, because a large proportion of the population were illiterate, advertisement campaigns were

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<sup>70</sup> Arnold, 194.

<sup>71</sup> Carl Crow, “Advertising and Merchandising,” in *China Handbook*, Julean Arnold, and Carl Crow, eds. (Washington, Washington Government Print Off, 1926), 196.

<sup>72</sup> Carl Crow, “Advertising and Merchandising,” 192.

conceived with the visual aspect in greater consideration, rather than ones that are text-heavy; in fact, Crow mentions how “the ideal advertisement would be one complete in its picture without one word of texts”.<sup>73</sup> This is especially evident in cigarette advertisements found in calendars, with the entirety of the advertisement being a colourful visual of a Chinese woman accompanied by the packet of cigarettes in a backdrop of the floral greenery of China.

Parallel to this, Gerth’s research in the Republican Era, also brings up how Chinese advertisement campaigns were more than just purposed to sell a product: they were selling a country. While this might be a nationalist reading that Gerth is presenting, the point to be made here is the fact that the everyday – in the form of advertisements became co-opted by elite-driven broader metanarratives such as nationalism. The advertisements Gerth studied were a part of the larger National Products Movement (NPM) and were primarily print advertisements, with them appearing on billboards, newspapers and pamphlets as conduits to the broader nationalist spectacle. For example, the brand Sincere presented their toothpaste in an advertisement as a cannon protecting China from the ‘foreign’ ships threatening the sovereignty of China. Gerth argues here that advertisements were a space where many of the NPM tensions had manifest: stating how it reflected first that “it was increasingly difficult to separate Chinese and foreign things”; and second, that there was “the persistent appeal of appearing foreign”.<sup>74</sup>

The above two illustrations demonstrate a few things about the advertising landscape in China during the Republican era. First, it shows that while the process of creation and distribution was orchestrated from the side of the advertisers, suggesting a top-down engineered process, with the consumers at the receiving end, these advertisers were creating

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>74</sup> Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia, 2003), 59.

advertisements with the philosophy of it being palatable to the tastes of the consumers – the everyday of society. While the general public was certainly not consulted with regards to how the advertisement should be arranged, or what the advertisement should say, it was with the public's consumption in mind that the advertisement was drafted. As such, advertisements become an everyday space where both consumers and admen constantly interact with the former reading ads and buying products, and the latter trying to sell their products. Advertisements I believe act as a neutral space where both parties illustrate their agency. The end product – a page in the daily newspaper, or a metal billboard erected along the side of a road – is an ironic dialectic creation; ironic because it is one-sided yet attempts to draw in both the advertisers and the consumers, and also because its success lies only in the hands of the public. The public become ultimate arbiters of whether an advertisement will succeed or fail in the city and will decide the advertiser's next steps. And so, while the advertisers devise new advertisements and campaigns, this very process suggests that advertisements are not a linear cultural product. Advertising, in China, and possibly in the rest of the world, was therefore both a proactive and reactive process, in which participants were from both camps – consumers and producers. To think of advertising otherwise, as solely a one-sided system of communication is to therefore misunderstand the entirety of its process.

Second, advertisements also go beyond a commercial purpose. As the case studies in Gerth's illustrations demonstrate, advertisement campaigns were co-opted into a broader narrative initiated by the government, where consumption was not merely for consumption's sake, but also to promote Chinese nationalism. The 'everyday' as Gerth presents it is therefore subsumed into something bigger. There was a purpose in consumption, a contribution that each individual was making in choosing something over another. This therefore illustrates how advertising, and in a broader sense, consumption, can be understood beyond the surface tension of necessity, or even for desire – which is what conventional narratives of advertising might

suggest. Undercutting these narratives are issues such as nation and identity which are linked to one's consumption. Such possibilities that have been expanded will be further explored in the later chapters which studies specific advertising campaigns.

## **Literacy in China**

A major point which deserves attention is the issue of literacy in Republican China. To be literate is to engage with, and to fully understand the medium of writing and of print. To be illiterate however, as demonstrated in Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* is, according to Walter Ong, similar to terms "'primitive' and 'savage'... [which are] weighted terms; they identify an earlier state of affairs negatively, by noting a lack or deficiency".<sup>75</sup> Ong cites a study conducted by Russian neuropsychologist A R Luria on literate and illiterate cultures. Luria argues that the illiterate people were in no instances judged to be less intelligent than their literate counterparts. On this note, Ong argues "to assume that oral peoples are essentially unintelligent, that their mental processes are 'crude', is the kind of thinking that for centuries brought scholars to assume falsely that because the Homeric poems are so skillful, they must be basically written compositions".<sup>76</sup> . Enough has been said about the outdated and inherently anachronistic linear-progressive model of comparison such that I will not spend too much attention on it. Instead, I would like to use Ong's study to advocate for a more layered understanding of our Chinese counterpart. This group of illiterates in Ong's study reflect a thinking and psychology fundamentally different from people from a literate culture, as the study shows their different worldview.

To be purely illiterate, one must exist within a culture or society that has no exposure with written or print cultures. As such, while a large proportion of Chinese society might have

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<sup>75</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), 170.

<sup>76</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, 56.

been labelled as illiterate, it did not mean that this part of society was unable to communicate with the advertisements. One can perhaps therefore term this vast proportion of people as a semi-literate group of people. A study on import trade in China mentions how the population of China was “90 percent illiterate”.<sup>77</sup> It is more possible to label these ninety percent as largely uneducated – and their inability to read did not necessarily block off all contact with advertisements and elements accessible only to the literate. As such, the suggestion of the term semi-literate would be appropriate: in the sense that it reflects a group of people who exist in a literate society and have a worldview and philosophy that is in most parts synchronous with their literate counterparts. In addition, with a wide variety of media in which advertisements were distributed within China, it was inevitable that the everyday illiterate person would encounter an advertisement. As mentioned earlier, these advertisements were circulated not only in newspaper and journal publications, but also on billboards and painted signs, as well as on cars, and mailers. It would have been virtually impossible for the Chinese person to not come across an advertisement. In fact, because a large proportion of the population were illiterate, advertisers also paid attention to the proportion of advertisements that were distributed as outdoor advertising.

This is important to establish as advertisements in twentieth century were written with the intention of it being seen by everyone: the literate and illiterate. Advertisers were selling a world that was appealing to both sides of the literate scale. Crow mentions how in devising an advertising copy, they make sure that “every advertisement [is] as complete as possible without the use of a word of text, in other words, to resort to the old device of picture writing”.<sup>78</sup> More than that, he mentions how there “are a great many illiterates who...own motor-cars and smoke

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<sup>77</sup> Arnold, 59

<sup>78</sup> Crow, *400 Million Customers*, (Hong Kong: China Economic Review Publishing, 2008; First published 1937), 137.

expensive cigarettes”.<sup>79</sup> This is also rather illustrative of the illiterate demographic in China. First, it refutes the otherwise obvious relationship between illiteracy and poverty, that the illiterate was always poor and had extremely low purchasing power; the illiterate people could enjoy a reasonable spending power, just as much as their literate counterparts could and would also exercise their spending power to buy goods. Second, the illiterate people were just as inclined to purchase the same cigarettes or pharmaceutical products, or motor-cars, as did the literate. This also suggests that the advertisements were able to reach both the literate and illiterate people. While there is no way to directly prove the point that the illiterate people in Chinese society saw advertisements which directly led to them purchasing goods, the advertisements did transform the society around them, and we can conclude that it did have at least, an indirect effect on the illiterate.

### **Unpacking the ‘Everyday’**

The next part of this chapter deals with advertisements that deal with everyday items: electrical appliances, new gadgets, new clothes and apparel that entered the lives of the Chinese people in the twentieth century. Everyday items are an important group to look at because, as the 1926 study below shows, they were a heavily advertised commodity in Republican China, and therefore are worth exploring as an introductory note to the advertisements of that era. Before examining some of the advertisements in the newspapers, it might be important to consider what “everyday items” mean. In the previous chapter, I have discussed what the everyday meant within the context of general scholarship; in that section, the everyday that was explored refers to a way of looking at people – of conceptualizing the kind of history that we write based off the angle that we choose. In addition to that definition, we can also think about

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<sup>79</sup> Crow, *400 Million Customers*, 138.

the everyday in relation to commodities: as “everyday items”.<sup>80</sup> However, it should be made clear that the term everyday that is used as a frame of analysis refers to a space to account for the elite and non-elite, while in this chapter, the idea of everyday items refer to a category of commodity that can be analyzed. The question then follows: how do we define an everyday item? And were the products advertised in newspapers considered as everyday items? There are a few interpretations that might provide answers. The first comes from the 1926 study of advertisements in newspapers in *The Chinese Economic Monthly*, which classifies advertisements accordingly: “a) Education Items; b) Amusement Items; c) Daily Necessity Items; d) Economic Items; e) Luxury Items; f) Patent Medicine Items; d) Miscellaneous Items”.<sup>81</sup> Under the category of daily necessities, the study includes clothing, furniture, food, and other miscellaneous items. Using this classification as a baseline, it is possible to equate daily necessity items to everyday items; although the term everyday should not be solely limited to daily necessities and can include other goods as well. Nevertheless, this baseline is useful in helping us unpack what everyday truly means in Republican China.

On the other hand, the diary written by trade commissioner Julean Arnold living in China might tell us a different story on what everyday items might have meant to him. In his diary, Arnold writes about how in his visits to the shops, he saw goods such as “German harmonicas, toilet soaps, locks, lanterns, shoe polish, milk, Carnation milk, imitation diamond brooches, garters, rubber balls, flashlights, bicycles, clocks, watches (Swiss and German), tinned meats and fruits, sugar, butter, cutlery, mirrors, and medicine”.<sup>82</sup> In his personal life, Arnold is seen to be able to enjoy “nice pork loin from America, roasted and delicious

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<sup>80</sup> This is not meant to be another path in which the everyday is explored, and while we use the expression everyday items to categorize a group of commodities, this expression is not directly related to our earlier discussion on the everyday as a category of historical analysis.

<sup>81</sup> “An Analytical Study of Advertisements in Chinese Newspapers,” *Chinese Economic Monthly* 3:4 (1926), 139-140.

<sup>82</sup> Julean Arnold, “Diary”, Hoover Archives, Julean Arnold Papers 1, 29.

strawberry short cake with whipped cream” for dinners, as an example;<sup>83</sup> more than that, he was able to afford to “drive to [his] office in taxi”,<sup>84</sup> or otherwise have his own car that he could use. Arnold was an individual who leisured in country clubs, travelled around in cars, and enjoyed a lavish lifestyle; this was his ‘everyday’. As such, we can already see a bifurcation in what can be normally defined as ‘everyday’. The everyday as observed by Arnold might be markedly different from the everyday that is lived by the Chinese people around him. This example is just a microcosm of the multiple ‘everydays’ that might exist within Republican China, across different social groups of Chinese people.

What this presents us with is the possibility that multiple ‘everydays’ exist for different groups of people within Republican China. In Lu Hanchao’s seminal work *Beyond the Neon Lights*, he talks about Shanghai as a space where “dragons and fishes are jumbled together”.<sup>85</sup> This of course refers to the idea that within Shanghai, the elite, petty urbanites, poor, and those living in poverty, often shared a similar space. While each stratum might have led lives that went off completely different tangents, the space and time that they operated in often had multiple overlapping instances. A term such as ‘everyday’ aimed to encapsulate a group of goods might therefore exclude and obscure more than it might demonstrate. This does not mean that the term is useless for academics. It just suggests that the term everyday needs to be reconsidered as a space in which both the elite and non-elite exist in, rather than one where only the non-elite exist and operate in, and while their definition of everyday might not be identical, there are overlaps, differences, and points of intersection in which the various strata can exist together. As such, it is important to consider how these goods were advertised to the

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<sup>83</sup> Julean Arnold, “Diary”, 77.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>85</sup> Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 55

Chinese public, and how the everyday interacted with these advertisements for everyday products.

## **Everyday Items Advertisements**

This section deals with everyday items which, as opposed to the idea of the everyday that I have been discussing as a category of analysis to account for both the elite and non-elite, refers to a category of items that were used by people on a daily basis, and were usually household essentials.

### *Things you wear*

Before fully diving into the advertisements, it is worth noting that advertisements from these companies in this chapter represent what was commonly advertised in newspapers; considering also the limitations of this dissertation, it is impossible to demonstrate quantitatively how common these advertisements were. The advertisements and their respective companies were not selected based on any social or economic significance, but based on the ubiquity of the products that were advertised during the Republican period – that is to say, items which were commonly advertised throughout the different decades.<sup>86</sup> Everyday objects that were advertised in newspapers were common. For example, spectacle advertisements presented their information very plainly. The advertisements for Mingming Spectacle Company and the China Lean Spectacle Company are illustrations of this. These advertisements caught the attention of readers with the large image of the spectacles placed in its center. There were very little accompanying illustrations, apart from simple graphics, (like eyes), or an abstract border design, to fill the advertisement visually; the rest of the advertisement was therefore textual. The spectacles depicted in the Mingming advertisement

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<sup>86</sup> An additional note on this is the use of secondary material, in particular Dikotter's *Things Modern*. While Dikotter has analysed the materiality of the goods in relation to Republican China, this chapter adopts a different approach in choosing to focus on the advertisements. As mentioned earlier, it aims to complement Dikotter's work by looking at the same objects, through a different angle.

were what Dikotter describes to be cheaper, which were usually “round, wire-rimmed and tinted”.<sup>87</sup> It is possible that these were spectacles were aimed as being suited for the more ordinary citizens.

The content of the text varied according to advertisement. As evident in the Mingming Spectacle Company advertisement, the advertising copy was simple: to the point information about where the company was located, the scientific nature of the technology used to manufacture the spectacles (keluo kesi kexue jingpian),<sup>88</sup> and a general endorsement from the local government (nongshang buzhu cu ai deng jiangli).<sup>89</sup> Unlike Mingming, China Lean had an extensive accompanying advertising copy, which discussed the nature of the spectacles for example, stating that the technology was from an American graduate optical family (mei3guo2 bi4ye4 guang1xue2 zhuan1jia1).<sup>90</sup> It also goes into some detail about the optical technology (zhuan1men2 ji4shu4)<sup>91</sup> and machinery that is used in the manufacturing of the spectacles, and the benefits these spectacles have for the user.<sup>92</sup> In a very convincing fashion, China Lean’s advertisement encouraged readers to buy into the idea of consuming an advanced Western technology.

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<sup>87</sup> Frank Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 215

<sup>88</sup> 克羅克司科學鏡片

<sup>89</sup> 農商部註冊優等獎勵;

“Mingming Spectacles advertisement,” *Minguo Ribao*, 21 March, 1919, 5.

<sup>90</sup> 美国畢業光学專家

<sup>91</sup> 專門技術

<sup>92</sup> “China Lean Spectacles advertisement,” *Minguo Ribao*, 21 March, 1919, 12.



Figure 5: Advertisement for China Mingming Spectacle Company<sup>93</sup>



Figure 6: Advertisement for China Lean Spectacles Company<sup>94</sup>

Dikotter mentions how spectacles existed both as a tool for seeing, and as a fashion accessory, citing a poem in 1909 stating how “spectacles are such an ingenious invention,

<sup>93</sup> “Mingming Spectacles advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 21 March, 1919, 5.

<sup>94</sup> “China Lean Spectacles advertisement,” 12.

helping the eyes to have a rest and see more clearly”, but also “to make their eyes dazzle”.<sup>95</sup> As a fashion accessory, it was not merely meant for people to look good, it was also meant for them to portray a better social standing, where late Qing Beijing men would fake their short-sightedness and wear spectacles so that “people would regard them as scholars”.<sup>96</sup> As a feature of the everyday, as spectacles became progressively cheaper, more people could afford to purchase them – including the supposed non-elite, as is noted that spectacles were also sold in rural marketplaces, presumably bought by people who similarly wanted to imitate the look of the elite. Without speculating too much into their intentions, it is indicative that the purchase and use of spectacles was not limited to the elite, as the above anecdote would suggest. While these advertisements might have been consumed by the elite, the use of these objects were clearly shared by everyone.

Other advertised everyday items included clothing such as shoes as seen below. An advertisement for a leather boot company plainly states how their company specializes in female shoes (ben gongsi zhuanzhi shinü shi se pixie),<sup>97</sup> and in addition, indicated that their goods were of good quality, and they were charging fair prices (ji yong pi jiang ge dai jing naijiu jiamu gongdao bao tui bao huan gejie shi nü qing jialin).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Frank Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 215.

Original Source: *Tuhua Ribao* vol 2, 68.

<sup>96</sup> Frank Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, 214.

Original source: Yang Jingting, “Dumen zayong (Miscellany verses on Beijing)” in *Zhonghua zhuzhici* vol 5, 3676.

<sup>97</sup> 本公司專製士女時色皮鞋

<sup>98</sup> 及用皮件各貨精耐久價目公道包退包換各界士女請駕臨  
“Leather Shoe advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 21 March, 1919, 9.



Figure 7: Advertisement for Leather Boots Company<sup>99</sup>

Like the spectacle advertisements, this advertisement from the leather shoes company had minimal visual elements, except for a drawing of a leather boot in the middle of the advertisement, drawing the reader's attention towards the advertisement, and to the product the company was selling. Readers of newspapers would have immediately been drawn to the image in what was otherwise a sea of words. In sum, the advertisement offered little to the imagination of the reader and was not trying to do more than to convince potential women customers to buy their shoes. What is worth talking about however, is the fact that this advertisement was even published. Taken from the *Mingguo Ribao* in 1919, this advertisement would have been unimaginable if it was published ten years before. Leather boots were a major introduction into Chinese markets during the republican era. However, it is even more interesting that these were leather boots designed for women. Previously, women in Qing China and before had bound feet. At the end of the empire, and the beginning of the Republican era, women were

<sup>99</sup>“Leather Shoe advertisement,” 9.

progressively unbinding their feet, as a sign of their modernity and freedom. This also meant that they could begin to choose to wear a wider variety of shoes imported from foreign markets. Leather shoes therefore became a popular choice amongst the young Republican Chinese women, not only as a sign of their affluence, but a sign of their freedom and modernity.<sup>100</sup>

### *Things you use*

Part of the landscape of these everyday advertisements were new electrical appliances that were sold and advertised as part of a new wave of technological imports into China. These included, but were not limited to, lightbulbs, torchlights, and electric fans. Advertisements for these everyday appliances were increasingly common in newspapers and therefore also meant that more and more homes were seen using such new electrical gadgets.

Lightbulbs – electric bulbs to be more specific – were widely advertised in newspapers. Seen as the technological successor to the kerosene lamp, lightbulbs were not immediately used by all within Chinese society when they were introduced; however, in general, a large proportion of Chinese society readily embraced the use of electricity and its constituents the lightbulb, or the flashlight. Dikotter’s study on electricity and lighting in China concludes two main points about Chinese society’s interaction with it. Culturally, the idea of light was itself was an extremely important aspect in Chinese life, used traditionally to “ward off evil spirits”; additionally, because there was already an existing culture of illumination, through the display of lanterns carried on bamboo poles at traditional festivals and important social occasions”, lighting in itself was a largely accepted part of Chinese culture.<sup>101</sup> This was then complemented by the fact that within the socio-economic environment, electricity was increasingly used “extensively to mark particular occasions”, or “in large public events”.<sup>102</sup> Dikotter also points

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<sup>100</sup> While modernity is mentioned here, it is not meant to be seen as the main narrative.

<sup>101</sup> Frank Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 140.

<sup>102</sup> Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, 140

to the fact that “electric light enthralled local people...” such that “every afternoon the teahouse in front was filled with customers eager to see the lights come on, some even applauding and cheering as if at a fair”.<sup>103</sup> Essentially, the Chinese society warmly accepted the introduction of electricity and electric lighting, appreciating not only its functional use for illumination, but also for its aesthetic and cultural qualities. Many of the advertisements advertising for lightbulbs and torchlights reflected such sentiments.

The advertisement below from Brilliant Lightbulbs (Figure 8) mentions how the use of their lamps will enable cost savings on the family’s electricity bills; in addition, it also encourages people to embrace the use of electricity and electric bulbs. It would be, as the second Brilliant Wire Lamps advertisement claims, something that is welcomed by both adults and children. Regarding the visual elements of the advertisements, there were included depictions of people inside – and in the case of the first one, a rather abstract depiction of people with light-bulb shaped heads. These people seem to be dancing, with the main character of the advertisement even sporting a “thumbs-up”, possibly in allusion to his endorsement of the brand of lightbulbs. This of course also suggests that these bulbs came in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and it meant that people could personalize the kind of lighting they wanted in their home. There was perhaps the celebration of choice and individuality that was more common in the Republican era, and the advertisement enforces this idea. As such, when considering this within the context of the everyday, these lightbulb advertisements are examples of how liberal ideas were made available and accessible to non-elite as well as elite Chinese people.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



Figure 8: Advertisement for Brilliant Wire Lamps<sup>104</sup>

A second advertisement (Figure 9) similarly supports this idea. It features a man dancing; his expression is cheerful, and just like the man in the previous advertisement, he has his hand in the thumbs up sign. Happy faces were a common depiction in these advertisements, although this in itself does not say anything about the product or the people, since it was a common advertising technique to associate happiness with the product. Nevertheless, the dancing and joy seen in this man alludes to some sort of freedom; coupled with the accompanying copy, which states how “everyone welcomes it, and that it brings children joy (renshi huanying haitong xiyue)”,<sup>105</sup> we can expect that the dancing man was also a symbol for the happiness felt by both adults and children.

<sup>104</sup> “Brilliant Wire Lamps advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 22 March, 1919, 4.

<sup>105</sup> 人士歡迎, 孩童喜悅



Figure 9: Advertisement for Brilliant Wire Lamps<sup>106</sup>

On a similar tangent to these lightbulbs were advertisements for torchlights and fans (pictured below, Figure 10 and 11). These advertisements varied in complexity, with the electric fan advertised as having American origin, and only giving key information such as the location of the shop, the contact number, and the price for each fan unit. The advertisement for

<sup>106</sup> “Brilliant Wire Lamp advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 21 March, 1919, 4.

the torchlight below on the other hand, was a more complicated advertisement, with a lot more effort put into the copy, almost as if it were a newspaper article. Primarily, a large proportion of the advertisement is the advertising copy, which is titled “The road to light (guangming zhilu)”.<sup>107</sup> The rest of the copy is difficult to completely translate because of the quality of the source; nevertheless, one can make out how it states that the use of torchlights brings convenience and is something that should not be lacking in every household; it also states that while the effectiveness of the torchlight is limited, it encourages people to still use it. From what is legible from the advertisement that we can translate, similar to the advertisement for the electric fan, there is the basic information on the price of each unit of torchlight, the location of the electronic shop which sells these products, and a simple picture of the said torchlight.



Figure 10: Advertisement for Yibade Electric Company, 1922<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> 光明之路; “Torchlight advertisement,” *Shi shi xin bao*, 29 February, 1932, 3.

<sup>108</sup> “Yibade Electric Company advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1922, Page 9.



Figure 11: Advertisement for flashlight<sup>109</sup>

Based on this advertisement, we can sense that the torchlight as a product was perhaps a more optional commodity, even in the thirties when this advertisement was published. Nevertheless, Dikotter mentions how “flashlights were extremely popular devices in China, in particular in the countryside”.<sup>110</sup> Therefore in some minor ironic twist, it was the rural peasants who were more likely to own these torchlights, as compared to their urban counterparts. And so while most rural households did not necessarily need a torchlight in their home, they might

<sup>109</sup> “Torchlight advertisement,” *Shi shi xin bao*, 29 February, 1932, 3.

<sup>110</sup> Frank Dikotter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 143

have owned one because it was one of the more affordable foreign technologies to own: it still had a practical use, families could afford it, and it gave households a sense that they were participating in the immediate material culture.

It is important to note at this juncture that while the advertisements surveyed in this chapter appear as very modern products, it is not the case that these were only selected *because* they were modern; rather, they were selected on the basis of how common these advertisements were. There is bound to be an overlap when one thinks about the modernity these products would bring, as Dikotter has argued, as well as the prevalence of such goods in the market and their respective advertisements in the newspapers. When looking at the entirety of this project, which includes the next two chapters, this study accounts for advertisements from the most heavily advertised products.

### **Advertisements and the Everyday**

As advertisements for everyday items, based on the design of the advertisements being primarily wordy, they appear to be specifically directed at a specific demographic of society – the literate lower to middle class. Most of these advertisements studied here were wordy, and one might expect to only find them while reading newspapers. There were others which contained as minimal information as possible – only providing an address to the shop, and the price of the goods that was being advertised. While it is probable that the target audience was the literate lower to middle class people – a group that had some spending power to purchase beyond their daily necessities once in a while. As evident from the way the poor illiterate also purchased these everyday goods, it did not mean that the poor illiterate might have been completely excluded from interacting with these advertisements. This means that both the elite and non-elite were active stakeholders within this category of the everyday in the consumption of everyday items.

The circulation and existence of these advertisements allude to two things. The first is the actual use of these new items. As discussed earlier, Republican China's burgeoning material economy had brought about an increased consumption of goods. As more households were able to afford these goods, it also suggested an increased standard of living amongst the Chinese urbanites. This therefore translated to an increase in advertising in newspapers alike. However, one should be careful to assume this was an improvement across all of China. Nevertheless, these advertisements provide us with a better understanding of the growing material culture within Chinese households.<sup>111</sup> On the streets, people were sporting new fashion, with an increased popularity of Western clothing. Of course, this did not mean that the traditional was replaced. Instead, this new fashion was often a hybrid between Chinese and Western outfits. Women, with feet now unbound, were now seen wearing fashionable leather boots freely, both as a fashion statement, but also an icon of the existing socio-cultural zeitgeist that was sweeping across China. Electricity began flowing into homes and businesses as lightbulbs began to slowly replace kerosene lamps as the primary source of light in these establishments. One can construct a three-dimensional world from these two-dimensional advertisements.

The next point that can be made is in relation to the advertisements themselves. Considering how many of these advertisements in this chapter featured ideas that were largely similar it would be prudent to pay attention to how accepting these advertisements were of Western ideas and technologies. In many instances, 'Western' was often a positive label that these products could be associated with that could make them more attractive to potential buyers. However, what is ironic is the fact that many of these Western labels were placed on Chinese goods. If this was how the advertisements were created, it also informs us of how the

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<sup>111</sup> While this is no different from what Dikotter has argued in *Things Modern*, this point is still worth noting here.

people consumed. These messages were common in advertisements because these messages worked – that is to say, consumers were not only buying the product, but they were buying into the idea of the product having some form of Western origin.

To conclude, how then can we make sense of these advertisements of everyday items that we have just seen? Returning to the quote from Chen Duxiu at the beginning of this chapter, if we consider more deeply what Chen had argued about advertisements in the context of what has been studied here, we realize that he is only half correct. In some advertisements like that of the leather shoes which promoted Western modernity and freedom, Chen was indeed accurate in his criticism. Other advertisements however may not have been trying to sell anything more than their product; thus, Chen's nefarious impression of advertisements did not surface all the time. What this might suggest is a spectrum in not only the medium in which advertisements would appear in, but also the content within the advertisements, ranging from the simple where the advertisement was merely trying to sell a product, to the complex, where, as Chen bemoans, advertisements co-opted many popular expressions to sell not only a product, but multiple layers of ideas as well. Not all advertisements were pushing for an ideology; certainly, the use of existing ideology or politics within the advertisement might have been useful in creating a connection with the consumer, but to some, there were other important considerations as well in the design of an advertisement. It would suffice to say that the advertisements in China were simply not a monolithic cultural product: just as the products advertised catered to different groups of people, the style and depth of the advertisements also varied.

## **Looking Ahead**

The next two chapters will therefore go deeper into specific commodities that were part of the everyday: cigarettes, and patent medicine respectively. These two commodities represent

the most heavily advertised groups of products in the advertising landscape in Republican China, and therefore will be analyzed as stand-alone commodities. As such, while it might be ironic from a systematic standpoint to consider them as separate from the everyday items listed above because these items were also a part of the everyday – and in fact were more heavily advertised, it would simply be impossible to have a single chapter dedicated to everyday items which would include both cigarette and patent medicine advertisements. As such, these commodities are evaluated independently. It also does not mean that consumers interacted with these advertisements completely differently, although we will discover that the advertisements that follow in the next two chapters are visually more striking, and it naturally suggests that the advertisements were more accessible to illiterate audiences as well, thereby reaching a larger audience.

## Chapter 3 Patent Medicine Advertisements in Republican China

The term patent medicine refers to a specific group of pharmaceutical products that was very common in the nineteenth and early twentieth century – lotions, ointments, pills, and other consumables – that anyone could purchase in stores without a prescription. As the name also suggests, the recipes to these medical remedies were trademarked and owned by the respective pharmaceutical companies that were producing them. These patent medicines were extremely popular in society for a few reasons. The first was because access to professional medical help was limited: doctors usually worked in urban areas, and even then, only the rich could afford to seek treatment from doctors. Second, the medical profession itself was still extremely unsettled. In the eighteenth century when the use of patent medicine first started, ideas of what caused sickness (and conversely, what cured them) were still hotly debated. As such, many people still relied on their own recipes for medical remedies to cure their illnesses. It is with this foundation that the widespread use of patent medicine was eased into society. Of course, it was with the help of the printing press that truly catalyzed the popularity of patent medicine in society. With the spread of newspapers and other print material, patent medicine companies could advertise their latest medicinal product, a new and exciting formula that could promise a cure for essentially anything and everything. Patent medicine is an important feature in the everyday. And its corresponding advertisements were just as important for us to understand how patent medicine was positioned in Chinese society.

According to the report by the American Consul-General to Shanghai, Thomas Sammons on proprietary medicines and ointments, there were “as many as six American and English patent medicine houses and one Japanese house established in China”.<sup>112</sup> To the Americans, this meant “no more than a foothold in China”, so much so that “the receipts of the

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<sup>112</sup> Sammons, Thomas, “Proprietary Medicine and Ointment Trade in China,” Special Consular Report no. 76, Hoover Archives, Alonzo Bland Calder Papers, 24, 1918, 1-2.

Japanese concern are estimated to be nearly equal to those of all the other foreign firms combined”.<sup>113</sup> However, this did not necessarily mean that the patent medicine industry in China was small. In fact, a study conducted by the Qinghua Survey for the Chinese Economic Monthly in 1928 concluded that patent medicine advertisements occupied the largest proportion of advertising space in newspaper and periodical publications, representing approximately one-fifth of all advertisements in Shanghai newspapers.<sup>114</sup>

This chapter is an investigation into patent medicine advertisements in China during the Republican era. What ideas were being presented in these patent medicine advertisements? In what way was the everyday related to these patent medicine advertisements? Were there any concerns or anxieties that these advertisements reflected? We know that in looking at the advertisements, because of the nature of advertisements as addressed in the earlier chapter, we can get an approximation over what Republican Chinese people were thinking, and how they were feeling. In patent medicine advertisements, we come across several big ideas: the broad structures that make up the foreign and the local, the idea of health and vitality, and the presentation of women. In patent medicine advertisements we see a reflection of the rise in national consciousness, which as central a thread can be broken down into sub-narratives or tropes such as the foreign-local divide, the idea of a healthy body and nation, and the increasing prominence of women. Taken together, these different ideas represent the ways in which patent medicine advertisements spread ideas to the everyday.

Thinking about the everyday allows us to connect otherwise disparate elements and actors within a cohesive and tight frame. It might not necessarily be a single narrative, but it is a narrative that accounts for a more truthful reconstruction of the past. Advertisements were an

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<sup>113</sup> Sammons, Thomas, “Proprietary Medicine and Ointment Trade in China,” Special Consular Report no. 76, Hoover Archives, Alonzo Bland Calder Papers, 24, 1918, 2.

<sup>114</sup> Qinghua Survey, 141

important medium in the world of patent medicines and this chapter aims to demonstrate this. The chapter will end with a synthesis of what has been discussed, especially concerning how we understand the everyday. In addition, I also explore how advertisements can better inform our writing of history.

## **Local, Foreign, and the Everyday**

The idea of a national consciousness is the first aspect that we can unpack within the context of the everyday seeing that it is also the broadest. According to Karl Gerth, one can trace the origins of this national consciousness from “direct exposure to Western peoples and ideas... [as well as] indirectly from exposure to Western material culture”.<sup>115</sup> Gerth’s observations, which started from the late Qing, and marking milestones in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, observes a steady escalation of such a national consciousness, paralleled with the steady increase of foreign presence in China, which he measures a jump of over 150,000 foreigners from 1911 to 300,000 in 1927. While on the one hand, the everyday person in port cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou might have encountered an increase in contact with and exposure to foreign individuals, the material goods that came with them had a more pervasive way of sneaking into the lives of the Chinese individual. It is this ubiquitous exposure to foreign goods that makes up a part of the everyday experience that the Chinese people encountered in the Republican era. This national consciousness became the crux of Gerth’s researched National Products Movement, which was a state and elite-driven movement to get Chinese people to consume local products. A consistent narrative within this is the division between foreign and local products; and this will be evident in the next chapter as we explore cigarette advertisements, as there were clear market leaders in the cigarettes industry: BAT and Nanyang Brothers. Patent medicine companies on the other hand did not operate such that a clear market

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<sup>115</sup> Karl Gerth, 33.

leader would emerge, and therefore pose a problem if one were to attempt to identify dominant market leaders in the industry to analyze and compare. Nevertheless, many of these patent medicine advertisements had contained evidences that pronounced a difference between the local and foreign; this became a real part of what made up the everyday, and it is where we begin the analysis.

Historians such as Sherman Cochran have chosen to approach this line of analysis through the use of business histories. Cochran's work on *Chinese Medicine Men* is an important contribution to the field of patent medicine in China. Of particular interest is Huang Chujiu – who used print advertising as a primary strategy in marketing his medicine to the Chinese market. Huang was a dropout from school who received very little formal education – a non-elite in the books of Cochran. As a businessman, Huang employed artists to transform the portrayal of women in advertisements, publishing seminude paintings in calendar posters which had advertised his medicine; Huang also sought to brand his Chinese medicine with Western ideas, marrying two messages into a single product, even though his Ailuo Brain Tonic was a purely Chinese medicine; last, he successfully used nationalist rhetoric to position his medicine against Japanese goods, co-opting much of what the intellectual elites were advocating at that time. It is important to note here that while Cochran was referring to the early period of the Republic, anti-foreign – and in this scenario, anti-Japanese sentiments was a recurring theme throughout Republican China's history.

All this points to what Cochran argues as an individual who “poached on the Chinese intellectual elite's discourse”.<sup>116</sup> This suggests a middle-man position in which businessmen like Huang operated within Chinese society, influencing not only Chinese consumption but the broader Chinese conception of culture and ideology. More importantly, this work is rather

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<sup>116</sup> Sherman Cochran, *Chinese Medicine Men Consumer Culture in China and Southeast Asia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 62.

telling of how the elite in Chinese society communicated with the non-elite: the writings and publications that these intellectuals such as Liang Qichao had published and circulated were not necessarily always consumed by the non-elite in the same medium in which they were produced. Essentially, “Huang devised an advertising campaign using ideas and images that had been introduced by members of China’s intellectual elite”.<sup>117</sup> In intellectual history, there is always the notion that broad ideas that were published by the intellectuals were only read by their contemporaries. Individuals such as Liang published journals and newspapers in cities such as Shanghai, but these big ideas and grand plans on the future of China was only received by their fellow intellectuals. Others like Lu Xun might have therefore bemoaned the apathetic masses. However, if these advertisements are a reasonable representation of the everyday, hence the masses, we can say that such ideas did interact with the everyday, and the everyday were in fact participants in this discourse. This therefore challenges the notion that intellectual elites and their publications were isolated from the non-elite. Cochran demonstrated how within China, there were “numerous historical agents – corporations acting from the top down, consumers participating from the bottom up, brokers mediating in between – all promoting the spread of consumer culture”.<sup>118</sup>

Cochran’s example of Ailuo Brain tonic was not unique. A local patent medicine company called the Anglo-Chinese Dispensary produced a medicine called the Health Hormone, “yangsheng su”,<sup>119</sup> in 1914. In the advertisement below (Figure 12), it is divided into two main portions, the banner at the top with the brand of the patent medicine and other

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<sup>117</sup> Sherman Cochran, 72

<sup>118</sup> While Cochran does state this, it is evident the driving point that he tries to make is emphasis on the middle ground; mention therefore, of the top and bottom are often in relation to the core of his argument who are the non-elite brokers. This thesis evidently draws on what Cochran has argued, but unlike Cochran, places emphasis on the advertisements, rather than the people, as grounds to argue for a rethinking of what the everyday meant. Furthermore, Cochran does not explicitly associate this idea to the everyday, and I see this thesis as an attempt to draw these ideas together.

See: Cochran, *Chinese Medicine Men Consumer Culture in China and Southeast Asia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 164.

<sup>119</sup> 養生素



The immediate thing that stands out in the banner is the first statement, which states how this is a medicine a new arrival from America; and in addition, also states how it is a cure for everyone: boys, girls, the old and young, and that it is a cure for hundreds of diseases. The banner gives other short information about the medicine as well: noting how it can improve your body, give you long life, and even improve your sexual performance. Based on the top banner alone, one can already see that this is a medicine that has multiple purposes, and one that is meant for people from all walks of life.

The main body of text builds up on what is mentioned in the banner, stating how the product, from the West, has captured the skill of Western professionals. It mentions how the American system of medicine is able to create medicine that can lead to a long life and prevent all diseases from occurring in the body; the medical research that has been ongoing in America that has resulted in the creation of this drug. We learn from the advertisement that the entire process from invention to shipping of the medicine to China was a demanding and precise process, that there were many people involved to get the product from America to China. The entire advertisement does not make any reference to the Chinese-ness of the product, even though we know that Anglo-Chinese Dispensary was a Chinese patent medicine firm. In fact, the advertisement, on multiple attempts, tries to show the medicine's foreignness, in stating how the products are already famous in Europe and America, and is still yet untested in China,<sup>121</sup> which allude to its supposed foreign origins.

The next part of the advertisement informs the reader about how the medicine can directly help your body: in many ways such as the brain, the lungs, and the blood. It mentions how in consuming one or two bottles, one can get a good night's sleep, thus ensuring that they can wake up early and feel good; this is then linked to the consumer having strong bones and

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<sup>121</sup> From the advertisement: 品雖風行于歐美而中華士人未經嘗

a healthy brain. Through the nourishing of the blood, the lungs will get stronger and one will have a stronger respiratory system, which would reduce problems such as cough, asthma. Within this context, it also mentions how other products such as cod liver oil is not as good as Health Hormone is. The advertisement then goes into some detail towards the ways in which the body would respond to the medicine, including how the organs would replenish *qi*, and how through the improvements in the blood, the heart can also become stronger. It is uncertain in this instance whether or not the reader – even the literate middle-class individual – would have understood the implications of the effects. It might be so that such an extended explication was meant as a marketing device to demonstrate the professionalism and technical expertise of such a foreign and exciting product. Nevertheless, the advertisement therefore exists almost with two identities: a scientific report, and an advertisement itself.

Beyond its medical benefits, the Health Hormone is also stated to “provide rejuvenation to the face and body, where dry faces can be turned into rosy and beautiful ones”; it also promotes weight gain, with a reported gaining of three to five pounds after consumption.<sup>122</sup> The idea of weight gain here is also interesting to consider, and would encourage the idea that plumpness or of stoutness were desirable markers of one’s good health – that perhaps weight was a good indicator of one’s ability to afford to eat, and therefore an allusion to one’s wealth. Last, it also mentions how one can become fairer and more beautiful from the consumption of this patent medicine. It is clear here that the idea of beauty is tied to Western standards of fairness and rosiness. One can go beyond the celebration of Western science and medicine made explicit in the advertisement and consider how this advertisement is also a celebration of Western cultural standards of beauty. It appears therefore that more than just science, the Chinese were increasingly exposed and attracted towards Western versions of ideas in terms

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<sup>122</sup> “Anglo-Chinese Dispensary for Tianjin Yanhang advertisement”, *Shenbao*, January 7 1914.

of beauty, femininity and hygiene. These spheres intersected with the way they consumed products. Local products such as Health Hormone were caught in the middle between the allure of certain Western aspects such as Western science and Western methods, and the existing local producers and medical practitioners.

It is also important to consider the context in which the Chinese understood such tropes. The Chinese, according to Cochran, “thought of their medical options not dualistically in Sino-Western terms but eclectically in a framework of “medical pluralism”,<sup>123</sup> which Cochran, in quoting Sivin, describes how “most of them have been eradicated as superstitious, and the pluralism of the past has given way to the dualism of traditional and modern medicine”.<sup>124</sup> It is therefore interesting to consider Sivin’s statement within the context of this binary. What Sivin observes as a transformation in people’s perception of choice between traditional and modern medicine can very much parallel the argument here concerning their perception between local and foreign. If so, then the local and foreign in the instance of patent medicines were not to the everyday an impermeable wall which divided two choices. Instead, it became a selection in which the everyday individual would decide what was preferred. As such, while on the one hand it is possible to acknowledge the existence of such a binary within the context of Republican China, it would be too simplistic to state that this binary was totalizing, and as the study of patent medicine advertising reveals to us, something that divided one from the other, or defined one against the other. The everyday greyed the line between the two, and the foreign and local existed and operated together.

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<sup>123</sup> Sherman Cochran, in *Becoming Chinese, Passages to Modernity*, eds. Wen-Hsin Yeh.

<sup>124</sup> Cochran, 67

Original Source : Nathan Sivin, *Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China*, (Ann Arbor: Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987), 195.

Through the main text body of the advertisement, key words are made bigger as to stand out from the rest of the exposition. It is interesting to note that “mei guo”<sup>125</sup> is one of the more heavily emphasized words in the advertisement, reminding the audience of its supposed ‘American’-origin; the strength of the medicine is therefore embedded in the nature of its American roots. This therefore reflects the social milieu concerning attitudes towards American products specifically, and perhaps Western products in general. It is clear therefore that there is a perceived trust in Western medicine and technology – that a medicine produced through Western methods is something that is not only effective, but trustworthy as well. Other words that are in bold often are related to the medical effects of the medicine, or the problems that this Health Hormone promises to fix. For example, words such as “chang sheng”, “chu si3 ru sheng”, “zhuang xin”, “bu si yao zhi”,<sup>126</sup> all allude to some form of immortality or strength that the pill can provide, and someone who is glancing through an advertisement might just notice these expressions without having to go too in depth into what the advertisement is saying. These themes were a clever marketing technique in part of the advertisers to communicate ideas across to the consumer in as effective a way as possible. Reading the two together, it is possible to argue that the advertiser was also trying to marry ideas of immortality with ideas of the West, allowing the consumer to consider how Western products were in essence, powerful and indestructible.

There is limited depiction of the visual, or graphical elements, behind Anglo-Chinese Dispensary’s advertisements. Instead, the advertisements were very heavy in text. Otherwise, most of their advertisements relied heavily on a narrative or testimonial relating to the strengths of the medication. This immediately tells us that the advertisements were directed towards the literate populace of the city, and therefore it was the elite who were purchasing such

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<sup>125</sup> 美國

<sup>126</sup> “长生”, “出死入生”, “状心”, “不死药之”, respectively.

pharmaceutical products. Was it only the elite that cared about their improving and protecting their body? It is hard to say based on these advertisements. However, it can be clear that the immediate demographic that would have understood these advertisements, and therefore the immediate customers, would have been the middle to upper class of society.

It would be prudent to also discuss the social context of consumers who had interacted with these advertisements. According to the advertisement, a small bottle of the Health Hormone costs about 1.2 yuan, with the big bottle costing 2.2 yuan. According to the study done by Allen et al., and a review of Chinese laborer wage in the early twentieth century by Debin Ma, the average laborer in urban Beijing would have been about twenty-two cents a day, while his Canton equivalent would have been about twenty-seven cents.<sup>127</sup> A small bottle of this might have cost about a week's wages for the unskilled laborer. Was this expensive for a patent medicine? Without any point of reference, or any indication from the ordinary laborer on their opinion on the price, it would be difficult to argue with certainty. Nevertheless, the Health Hormone, as one would have expected, was targeted towards the middle and upper milieu of Chinese society; it was certainly not a household necessity, nor was it a product like cigarettes where the low price made it almost a lifestyle necessity for many laborers. If it was true that only the middle and upper class consumed such a product, and it was so that the middle-upper class society had a strong regard for Western made products, then what does this tell us about the lower-class: the laborers, unskilled workers who did not purchase such patent medicine? Did they care about the superior Western technology as much as their middle- and upper-class counterparts; were they at all part of the conversation?

There might therefore be a stratification of consumers based solely on the advertisements – where the low-income class of society would be restricted from being able to

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<sup>127</sup> Allen et al., "Wages, Prices, and Living Standards in China, Japan, and Europe, 1738-1925." *The Economic History Review* 64 (2011).

purchase and afford products from Anglo-Chinese Dispensary. However, this does not mean that these low-income people were completely alienated from the ideas and messages that the Anglo-Chinese Dispensary advertisements were circulating. In Frank Dikotter's study on Chinese material culture in the Republic of China he comments on new objects that were introduced into Chinese markets, he states that "even if more expensive objects remained beyond the reach of ordinary people, they were rarely beyond their sight".<sup>128</sup> That is to say, while the low-income Chinese people might not have been able to afford or consume the patent medicine produced by Anglo-Chinese Dispensary, their daily interactions with such advertisements meant that they were not excluded from the circulation of ideas and knowledge that was found in the advertisements produced. Consumption, in this regard, does not have to be limited solely to the commodities themselves, and we can expand our ideas of consumption to include the cultural bi-products found in advertisements or word of mouth communication that would therefore include low-income Chinese people into the conversations started by these patent medicine companies.

As such, the foreign-local divide is a useful line of analysis to consider the everyday – not only because it appears consistently in many of the patent medicine advertisements of the Republican era, it also happens to be a strong trope across other historical fields of inquiry when dealing with Republican Chinese history. In itself, the foreign local divide is too simple a binary to thrust any analysis towards; there are many variables in which this binary can manifest itself – the traditional versus the modern, the national versus the outsider – that would warrant further exploration. To wrap this section up, one can see that the foreign local divide, as illustrated in the previous chapter is one such way in which one can illustrate how the everyday worked and understood these broad structures. While this section has looked at how

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<sup>128</sup> Frank Dikotter, "The Dissemination of New Objects," *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 71.

the invigorated sense of national consciousness had resulted in the drawing of a line between national and foreign, the next section further explores how this national consciousness manifested itself in an advocacy for strong citizens, which in itself was a recurring theme in most patent medicine advertisements. How these ideas manifested themselves within the realm of the everyday is what is being explored in the following sections.

### **A Healthy Body, A Healthy Nation**

Another prominent feature of the everyday, that was especially pertinent in patent medicine advertisements, was the idea of strength, vitality, and good health. Of course, this was an easy association to make, considering how patent medicine itself was a product meant to improve one's health one way or another; nevertheless, the point should not be ignored. According to Lean, "by the 1910s, the modern pill teemed in meaning with previously unknown connotations of national strength".<sup>129</sup> That is to say, even with the 1915 national boycott of Japanese goods in retaliation to the Twenty One Demands, and subsequent boycotts in the twenties against foreign goods due to events such as the May Thirteenth, and increased Japanese imperialist pressure in Manchuria, the idea of nationalist sentiments, or national strength, was not a result of some great nationalist drive by the government in reaction to foreign threats, but also a creation from the everyday through advertisements. The supposed divide between local and foreign was thus intricately linked to the sense of national strength.

One of the earliest examples of a Scotts Emulsion advertisement (Figure 13) from 1914 features a man running in the rain, with his arms protecting his head, presumably running for/towards shelter. This scene reminds the reader that exposure to the elements of the environment is a definite way to fall sick – something that was unpleasant, yet extremely common in China. The main caption itself describes how the drug can be used to provide relief

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<sup>129</sup> Eugenia Lean, 77.

for coughs, and other dangerous illnesses such as “lung inflammation (fei bu yan zheng), pleurisy (xiong mo yan zheng) , bronchitis (qi guan yan zheng), lung disease (fei bing), and laryngitis (hou zheng shen)”.<sup>130</sup> More interesting however, is the following paragraph which talks about how there are other “profiteers” (jian shang) who might “make counterfeit products”, and that customers should be warned against these people.<sup>131</sup> As such, the advertisement makes an appeal to customers to look for the label of the fisherman with the cod to ensure that they are purchasing the correct brand of cod liver oil and reinforces that by stating that a lack of such a label is an indication of not only a fake product, but a lesser one at that. Put together, the entire advertisement pushes Scott’s Cod Liver Oil as a protection not only against the disease, but against one’s unfortunate brush with foul weather, that perhaps consuming the authentic Scotts medicine would ensure that you would not find yourself in a situation similar to the man in the drawing.

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<sup>130</sup> 肺部炎症; 胸膜炎症; 氣管炎症; 肺病; 喉症甚, respectively.  
“Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 7, 1914.

<sup>131</sup> 奸商

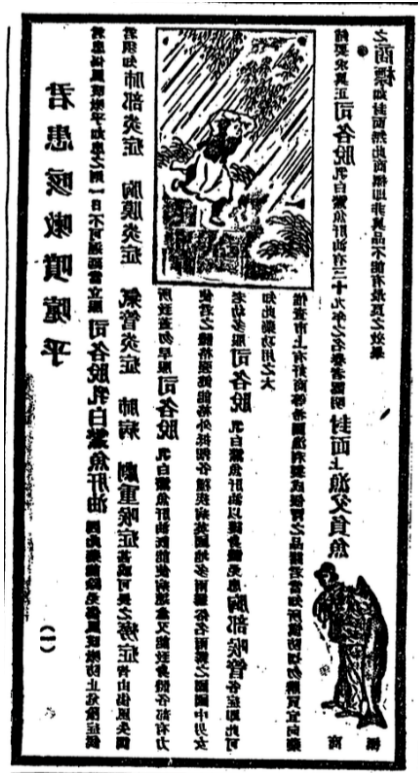


Figure 13: “Advertisement for Scotts Emulsion”<sup>132</sup>

Such a manner in which Scotts sold their medicine was consistent across their other advertisements. In another advertisement pictured below (Figure 14), the copy asks: “What is the joy of having a strong child?” The main body of text reads how Scotts wants to make “your children strong and healthy”.<sup>133</sup> Unlike the previous advertisement, the copy for this mentions not only the diseases that it can help prevent, but the benefits that it can provide to the body. It mentions how Scotts as a strengthening product can help the body, the lungs, the teeth, and your intelligence. Of course, it also mentions how it cures cough, lung disease and yellow fever. Together, the advertisement positions Scotts not only as a supplement to boost your personal vitality, but as a protection against disease. Again, the advertisement also tells the reader to check for counterfeit products, reminding them that products which do not contain the trademark label are fake, and that one should not purchase or consume those products; however,

<sup>132</sup> “Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 7, 1914.

<sup>133</sup> “Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 7 1914.

unlike the previous advertisement, there is an appeal in this advertisement to “care for the children” and not consume the counterfeit products. There is a clear difference in the intended audience and function in this advertisement as compared to the previous one, where it seems like the intended consumer of Scotts is not the adult, but their children.

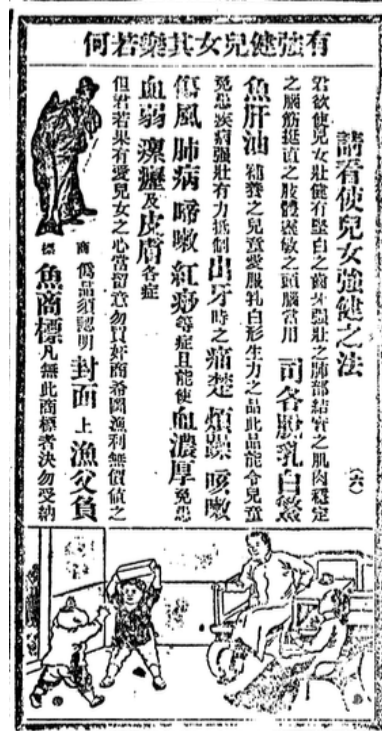


Figure 14: “Advertisement for Scotts Emulsion: What’s the joy of having a strong child?”<sup>134</sup>

The image attached to the copy differs from the Figure 14’s, featuring what appears to be a happy family inside their home, with the children playing with toys while their parents are looking at them. It is also interesting to note that the family live in a house which is well furnished, as the male figure in the image is seen to be sitting on a grand Chinese wood sofa. The children look lively and energetic – a sign of health and strength. This connotes the idea

<sup>134</sup> “Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 5 1914.

that Scotts is more than just a medicine for the sick, it is something that can be consumed by everyone, and it should be – if you desire a happy and healthy family.<sup>135</sup>

Considering the image together with the accompanying copy, the message that Scotts is trying to put forward is clear: consuming their product will not only lead to a healthy body that is free of disease, but it will also lead to a happy and healthy family – one that is successful and wealthy. On a deeper level, the consumer is also reminded that success and happiness is also situated in the possession of a family, that the family unit is what will drive health and success. In associating happiness, the family, and health with the consumption of Scotts' medicine, the advertisement also placed greater agency on the individual to make decisions that would affect their health. Considering how the advertisement shone a light on children specifically, which from the title itself asking “what’s the joy of having a strong child”, it was likely that this was targeted at women, more specifically young mothers, who were given a much bigger role in the upholding of care for the family. While Lean, in her study of patent medicine in China, argues that “ads started to address and target individual consumers rather than the full household after the 1910s”,<sup>136</sup> ads such as Scotts' seem to straddle in a middle ground where the advertisement was targeting the individual consumer, presumably the mother, yet at the same time invoking the full household in the message. Perhaps this was a way for advertisers to transition between advertising styles – where messages were mixed – in order for audiences to better relate to the messaging.

The advertisement for Anglo-Chinese Dispensary's Strong Blood Pills taken from the *Shenbao* in 1914 (Figure 15) is one such example. Pills in general were an extremely common product, with different pharmaceutical companies and dispensaries owning their own ‘wonder’

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<sup>135</sup> The idea of health and strength is then tied to the idea of material wealth and success, that a healthy body is crucial and foundational to the attainment of monetary wealth and status.

<sup>136</sup> Eugenia Lean, “The Modern Elixir: Medicine as a Consumer Item in the Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Press,” *UCLA Historical Journal*, 15 (1995), 79.

drug – Anglo-Chinese Dispensary’s Strong Blood Pills is no different. The advertisement puts very clearly in its title that it can provide “recovery after illness”.<sup>137</sup> The main body of the advertising copy discusses how long-term diseases can be detrimental to the vitality of the body, especially if the root of the problem is not addressed. That is to say, while people who suffer illnesses recover from them, the underlying issue – the weak blood – might still remain unaddressed and this would still bring harm to the body. As such, the Strong Blood Pills act as a long-term solution to the weakness of the body. In addition to that, the advertisement also names four problems: blood loss, malaria, cough, and opium addiction which, according to the advertisement, are “the most difficult to cure without the correct medication”.<sup>138</sup> The Anglo-Chinese Dispensary’s Strong Blood Pills therefore act as the best solution in ridding of these ills. While issues such as cough, malaria and blood loss are not uncommon problems that these advertisements would include in their advertising, in including opium addiction in the list of problems it aims to address, it might also suggest how the Strong Blood Pills are a means to achieve a national vitality

Opium addiction was a significant aspect within Chinese societal discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth century and was often associated with the weakness of the country, as quoted by James Hevia in his paper from writer Qing Rongguang, “the opium pipe is a gun that kills bloodlessly; the tiny fire in the bowl can scorch an ocean dry. It melts away one’s capital and sucks up the spirit, weakening the people, impoverishing the nation, and speeding China’s demise”.<sup>139</sup> It is clear that opium, and in larger strokes the opium addiction problem in China, “polluted social and economic relations from the top to the bottom of Qing society and transformed China into the sick man of Asia”.<sup>140</sup> The fact that opium addiction was a weakness

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<sup>137</sup> “Anglo-Chinese Dispensary advertisement”, *Shenbao*, January 7 1914.

<sup>138</sup> “Anglo-Chinese Dispensary advertisement”, *Shenbao*, January 7 1914.

<sup>139</sup> Alexander Des Forges, “Opium/Leisure/Shanghai: Urban Economies of Consumption,” *Opium Regimes*, Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 178.

<sup>140</sup> James L Hevia, “Opium, empire and modern history,” *China Review International* 10:2 (2003), 318.

highlighted in the advertisement suggests that one, it was still an extremely prevalent discourse that concerned the everyday; second and more importantly, that opium addiction was also something that the individual had agency over, and that if one did not take steps to control their addiction, then the consequence was the individual's responsibility to bear.



Figure 15: “Anglo-Chinese Dispensary Advertisement: Strong Energy Blood Pills.”<sup>141</sup>

The everyday was therefore presented in these advertisements in multiple scenarios in which the individual could identify themselves in – whether it was someone trying to escape the rain, or a mother taking care of her family. And in tethering the health and strength of the individual to that of the nation, these patent medicine advertisements connected the everyday to the nation.<sup>142</sup> The nation was now, according to the advertisements, in the hands of the everyday. This might not say anything about the lived reality of Republican China, and whether the everyday citizen had greater autonomy in deciding the country's fate; however, it is very telling of the perceived reality that was created through the advertisements that the everyday got to experience. Thus, the everyday as a stage was presented as important and integral to the health of the nation. Considering this, our exploration of patent medicine advertisements brings us to

<sup>141</sup> “Anglo-Chinese Dispensary advertisement”, *Shenbao*, January 7 1914.

<sup>142</sup> To be clear, while I am talking about the nation here, the narrative is about reading the nation through the lens of the everyday, and as such, is about how the everyday interacts with ideas such as nationalism.

the discussion of the presentation of women in advertisements. Beyond narratives that revolve around the focus on national strength and vitality, many advertisements engaged with having an increased role of women in Chinese society. The role of women rose to importance in relation to the increased association between the health or strength of the individual and that of the nation.

## **Women and the Everyday**

In Wu's study of advertisements in the Republic, "the image of 'new woman' or 'modern woman', who was 'politically aware, patriotic, independent, and educated', was introduced into Chinese public discourse by intellectual reformers as an attack on Confucian China in the New Cultural Movement in the mid-1910s"<sup>143</sup> Women were regarded in intellectual circles as a vital actor in re-forging Republican China's new identity. The identity of China, as something strong therefore resulted in the close relations between strong individuals, families and the idea of women, which was then manifested in advertisements. Many advertisers tied the idea of the strength of the family or that of the nation to the role of the woman: it was now the responsibility of the mother to ensure that her children and her family were fit, and it was only possible through the patent medicines advertised. In so doing, the woman became an icon for patent medicine. In addition, "By the 1910s, urban China's consumer culture started to flourish and the commodity grew"<sup>144</sup> Women were therefore positioned in this rapidly changing social context, and advertisements were both a reflection and a catalyst of this change.

Having said that, before analyzing the advertisements, it should be noted that not every advertisement that featured women directly addressed them. For example, the advertisement

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<sup>143</sup> Huaiting Wu, "The Construction of a Consumer Population in Advertising in 1920s China," *Discourse and Society* 20:1 (2008), 150.

Original source: Louise Edwards, "Policing the Modern Woman in Republican China." *Modern China* 26:115 (2005), 47.

<sup>144</sup> Eugenia Lean, 69

(Figure 16) from Morishita Jintan company, producing Ever-Ready Pills, features a group of women holding musical instruments, presumably performing, seated around a table of food. The copy itself does not deal with the image of the women, as it discusses the benefits of the medicine: the kinds of illnesses it can cure, and a general statement on why one should consume Morishita Jintan's pills.<sup>145</sup>



Figure 16: Advertisement for Morishita Jintan<sup>146</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Just as important to consider was the trademark of Morishita Jintan, which featured a man sporting a moustache dressed in a feathered hat. According to Cochran, the trademark for Morishita Jintan was extremely iconic such that many Republican men were seen sporting the moustache, and that the moustache has left a pseudo-cultural legacy in the form of the description ““Humane Elixir Moustache”, [which] continues to be used to describe moustaches worn by Chinese men in China”.<sup>145</sup> Such an illustration demonstrates the effectiveness of the visual on the everyday, and that advertisements did have a profound effect in changing the ways the everyday citizen consumed commodities.

<sup>146</sup> “Advertisement for Morishita Jintan,” *Shenbao*, January 1 1915.

Other patent medicine advertisements that brought the woman into the sphere of the everyday. As observed in Chapter 2, women were increasingly becoming a market for companies to sell their goods to, and patent medicine was no exception. Another advertisement taken from Shenbao in 1914 (below in Figure 17), is also by Morishita Jintan which features a woman together with a man. It is interesting here to consider the depiction of the woman, who is seen in the foreground of the advertisement, and is seen wearing spectacles. As discussed in Chapter 2, spectacles were a way of conveying status and education during the Republican era. While it was worn by the educated and the elite of status, it was also worn by ordinary people who might have desired to imitate the look of the elite. The foregrounding of the woman also attests to the argument that women were increasingly becoming the target of businesses as part of the new consuming woman. The rest of the advertisement deals with the idea of convenience if one were to travel, where carrying a packet of Jintan pills would provide the person with the comfort and assurance to enjoy their leisure. Indeed, this advertising copy attests to a luxury that was not accessible to everyone. However, I argue that it is not so much about the actual use of the product as suggested in the advertisement, but the lifestyle and comfort that one can enjoy that can be enjoyed by everyone, including people who might not have been able to afford going on leisure holidays.



Figure 17: “Morishita Jintan: Towards a season of leisure.”<sup>147</sup>

Scotts Emulsion advertisement in 1924 (Figure 18) titled, “The baby lives on the health of the mother”. Made explicit is the directed message towards women in this advertisement, where the health of the baby is now tethered to that of the mother. The copy of the advertisement itself confirms that the target audience of this advertisement are for mothers, stating how “if you are breastfeeding, then it is especially important to nourish not only your baby, but yourself”.<sup>148</sup> It states how the “cod-liver oil is good for the body”, and it therefore encourages mothers to “eat the cod liver oil before breastfeeding to ensure that her child will be lively and healthy”.<sup>149</sup> Last, the advertisement also makes a statement separate from the advertising copy regarding the fact Scotts has been carried by major pharmacies for over fifty years. This might allude to the strength of the brand in Chinese society, and the general trust that Chinese people place on the quality of the product. The image in the advertisement does

<sup>147</sup> “Morishita Jintan advertisement”, *Shenbao*, January 7 1914.

<sup>148</sup> “Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 3 1924.

<sup>149</sup> “Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 3 1924.

not deviate too far from the copy, with depicts a mother facing her baby, in a pose that seems instructional. The baby is drawn and depicted as rather plump – a sign that suggests the baby is getting enough to eat. The other graphical element of the advertisement is the classic logo – the fisherman with the cod on its back, which once again would remind readers of the Scotts brand.

There are a few points that can be made from this advertisement. The first, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, is that there was a clear target that the advertisement was aiming towards: women, and more specifically young mothers. The second point, which builds on the first is that women were therefore seen as being more directly responsible for the health of the family: that they were now tasked with consuming Scotts so that their children could indirectly enjoy the health benefits that the cod-liver oil could provide.



Figure 18: “Scotts Emulsion Advertisement”<sup>150</sup>

<sup>150</sup> “Scotts Emulsion advertisement,” *Shenbao*, January 3 1924.

This is especially important to consider within the context of the Republican Era. The role of women went beyond just being caregivers to families. Barbara Mittler's study on newspapers during the late Qing era demonstrated that the "construction of 'woman consumers' was related to certain products that dominated advertisements at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>151</sup> The idea of consuming emerged as early as the nineteen-tens and twenties with the National Goods Movement, which Fraser states, was meant to "bolster domestic industries and save the nation from destruction by foreign imperialism".<sup>152</sup> From there, it should be noted that the "consuming woman entered most majestically and came to reign in the late 1920s and 1930s".<sup>153</sup> This "Consuming Woman" was one that either represented the urban family, or one that was single and independent. It demonstrates the continuity of consumption as a narrative that perpetuated within the everyday of Republican China. The Consuming Woman was one of the tropes that was attached to this discourse of consumption. The everyday was therefore a stage which encouraged and empowered people to consume, where they become masters of their own decision and, in some sense, saviors of their nation. This is also important as the everyday changed the position of the consuming citizen, which was initially a creation of "a tiny handful of elite intellectuals", into an identity that was created and transformed by the everyday person.<sup>154</sup> The increasingly prominent identity of this consuming woman was thus tied intimately with the everyday, and was transferred from the hands of the elite to the everyday citizen. It is of course lopsided to attribute such an increased representation of this consuming woman solely to the ordinary people, and it would thus be fairer to think of this trope as a byproduct of a shared responsibility from both the elite and the non-elite. The

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<sup>151</sup> Barbara Mittler, "Gendered Advertising in China: What History do Images Tell?" *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 6:1 (2007), 13.

<sup>152</sup> Huaiting Wu, "The Construction of a Consumer Population in Advertising in 1920s China," 157. Original Source: D.E. Fraser, "Smoking out the Enemy: The National Goods Movement and the Advertising of Nationalism in China, 1990-37," PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 1999.

<sup>153</sup> Eugenia Lean, 80.

<sup>154</sup> Eugenia Lean, 82.

everyday is therefore this very dialectic between the elite and non-elite and should be understood as such. However, it might be interesting to think also, that the advertisement was positioning women as a sort of “product’ that these young Chinese could consume. As food producers, these women were a part of a broader supply chain which began with Scotts and ended with the penultimate consumer: the male Chinese baby; the women therefore fit in the middle, as both conduit and provider to ensure that their babies were healthy. Expanding on this, women were therefore positioned in this advertisement as being directly responsible for the health of China. While patent medicine products like Scotts provided the necessary nutrients, it was the women who were responsible for the feeding and the health of the babies.

Women were, as Judge has shown extensively in her study on the presence of women in Republican Chinese periodicals and print culture, increasingly vocal and prominent in the public, as she mentioned how contributors to periodicals discussed the “newly enlightened public women” and contested their publicness surrounding their role in society.<sup>155</sup> The presence of women in these advertisements is a key illustration and angle to analyze the everyday as it speaks to the growing importance of their role in society. This is significant because an increased presence was, according to Judge, a representation of “institutional, social, cultural and sexual change”.<sup>156</sup> They were icons for the new Republic, and their presence in advertisements was meant to express this importance. In turn, this allows for us to better understand the growing dynamic of women in Chinese society.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Joan Judge, *Republican Lens*, 61.

<sup>156</sup> Joan Judge, 57

<sup>157</sup> And while it is not within the parameters of this thesis to demonstrate this point empirically, there was a steady increase in the presence of women in advertisements from the Qing period to the Republican era.

## Thinking About the Everyday

The advertisements presented here in this chapter have sought to examine the everyday from the lens of the patent medicine commodity. The most immediate takeaway from the above discussion are the implications for how we term the “everyday”. In the study of patent medicine advertising, the “everyday” demonstrate how ideas are not always accepted top-down. Consumers and companies also participate in the conversation of where and what China should do. As pointed out in Chapter 1, while one cannot adequately understand how the ordinary consumer might have received the advertisements, the nature of advertisements has demonstrated that one does not necessarily have to ‘hear’ the consumers to know what they were thinking. As Kenley argues, “advertisers respond to the needs and demands of their audience”;<sup>158</sup> advertisements are therefore a reflection of this voice from the audience.

This also offers further adds questions on what top-down truly entails. If the everyday were creating and deciding their own version on what an ideal life would be, manifested through the consumption of the patent medicine, they were also creating and deciding what an ideal China should be. And so, even if such ideas originated from the elites, the point to be made here is first that ideas are never accepted linearly nor plainly and is instead negotiated within the level of the non-elite. An alternate implication is that the ideas that were supposedly coming from intellectual origins were also being circulated at the ordinary consumer level. One of the earlier questions that I had asked in the introduction was how the non-elite and the intellectual elite would communicate – if they would at all be in conversation – since the intellectual elite’s usual medium was through text. Having examined the advertisements, we can observe that there are similar, albeit not identical, lines of ideas about what it meant to be Chinese, that the everyday consumer were party to. As such, we can see better understand the

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<sup>158</sup> David Kenley, “Advertising Community and Singapore’s Vernacular Public Sphere”, 584.

social milieu in China, where the everyday and the elite all were part of a conversation together, and it was never a simple linear flow of knowledge and information from the top to the bottom.

Next, I have observed that these advertisements suggest that they were targeting a similar demographic in the Chinese community: the educated, middle-class similar to a few of the commodities examined in the previous chapter. This is so because first, the advertisements were usually text-heavy, indicating that the advertisement was already focusing on a literate group of consumers. Next, patent medicine itself, unlike cigarettes which will be explored in the next chapter, were expensive, with a small bottle costing about a week's worth of wages for the unskilled laborer. I find it relevant here to consider more deeply Dikotter's argument. One of the key arguments put forward, expressed very briefly and simply here, is the challenge of a "dual economy", in which there exists two economies: one for the poor and the other for the rich elite. He challenges the dual economy theory when reflecting about to the material consumption of the people of China, where the preconceived notion that the "rural economy in Republican China remained relatively isolated from global flows, as market forces were confined to the cities along the coast",<sup>159</sup> is something that is not necessarily true; the poor were able to be exposed to goods and commodities just as much as the rich, albeit in a lesser magnitude, but not completely kept out of it.

I have opted in this chapter for a deeper and closer reading of the advertisements, to draw as much as possible from each advertisement; second, the advertisements that have been chosen to be the focus of the study can be said to be representative of the advertisements that are not covered within the span of this research; that is to say, there is minimal deviation from

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<sup>159</sup> Frank Dikotter, "The Dissemination of New Objects," *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 218.

what and how other patent medicine advertisements were advertising their products during the Republican period concerning the issues that I have discussed.

## Chapter 4 Cigarette Advertisements in Republican China

The previous chapter has presented the everyday of patent medicines and demonstrated the importance of advertisements in presenting the various themes that stood out to the everyday. I have underlined issues such as a rising local-foreign divide, a desire for personal strength, and the rising prominence of women in advertisements as themes that affected the everyday within the milieu of patent medicine advertisements. This chapter adopts a narrower approach in dealing with the everyday by considering in particular one of the themes raised in the previous one: on the local-foreign divide and explores how this theme might have manifested itself within cigarette advertisements. The local and foreign divide is particularly prevalent in the context of the cigarette industry in Republican China because of the dominant brand presence of big companies such as British American Tobacco, Nanyang Brothers Tobacco and Huacheng Tobacco Company. As such, the very structure of the tobacco and cigarette industry in Republican China is one that accentuates a local-foreign competition.

Cigarettes as a commodity is regarded largely as a part of the “modern globalized mass consumer culture that ultimately emerged along with industrialization”.<sup>160</sup> In her book *Golden-Silk Smoke*, Carol Benedict states that while one might not be able to accurately pinpoint “when and how tobacco first entered China”, tobacco can be said to have entered China around the sixteenth century, riding along its global spread to Africa and other parts of Eurasia.<sup>161</sup> The period which is more important to us, the nineteenth century onwards, has since saw the local industry, businesses and consumers alike, growing to become familiar with tobacco, rolling their own cigarettes or cigars, or chewing tobacco. However, pre-rolled tobacco was not cheap

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<sup>160</sup> Carol Benedict, “The Emergence of the Chinese Cigarette Industry, 1880-1937,” in *Golden-Silk Smoke: A History of Tobacco in China, 1550-2010*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 133.

<sup>161</sup> Carol Benedict, “Early Modern Globalization and the Origins of Tobacco in China, 1550-1650”, in *Golden-Silk Smoke: A History of Tobacco in China, 1550-2010*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 15.

and was considered an “expensive luxury item produced exclusively for wealthy consumers”.<sup>162</sup> People who wanted to smoke cigarettes had to learn to roll their own tobacco. Alongside tobacco, the Chinese had their encounter with opium in the middle nineteenth century, thereby rendering the act of smoking as commonplace and familiar. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, tobacco use increased, and was extremely prevalent in major Chinese port cities such as Canton and Shanghai with the introduction of machine-rolled cigarettes. Because many Chinese were habituated to tobacco, it was easy for the mass-produced, factory made cigarettes to become an everyday commodity in Chinese society. And it is these cigarettes and their advertisements that we turn our attention towards.

While a study of cigarette smoking in Republican China should not be reduced to just a study of the two or three big cigarette firms, any meaningful history of cigarette consumption in Republican China would usually revolve around the companies that are the subject of this chapter. Nanyang Brothers and British American Tobacco were the second and first respectively in terms of market share in the Republican era. To elaborate, Cochran’s study has described how British American Tobacco had an essential monopoly in the Chinese cigarette market during the late Qing to the early Republican era, until 1915 with the entrance of Nanyang Brothers into the market. This duopoly existed till the mid-twenties where their duopolistic dominance diminished with other cigarette companies seeking a share of the market. Nevertheless, it was a period where BAT and Nanyang Brothers cigarettes, and to a slightly smaller degree Huacheng, were ubiquitous in China, and the presence of other cigarette brands did not reduce their presence.

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<sup>162</sup> Carol Benedict, “The Emergence of the Chinese Cigarette Industry, 1880-1937,” in *Golden-Silk Smoke: A History of Tobacco in China, 1550-2010*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 133.

Having said that, it would be prudent to also consider how other smaller cigarette companies, both local and foreign, advertised their goods. This is done for two reasons: to expand the discussion beyond just the oligopoly of BAT and Nanyang Brothers and Huacheng, and also because an inclusion of smaller cigarette brands will result in a bigger picture of what the everyday encompassed. Smaller cigarette brands had, according to Benedict, sold their cigarettes at a cheaper price, which included “workshops that manufactured cheaper brands [and] had likely provided the bulk of inexpensive cigarettes to city residents”,<sup>163</sup> and therefore this meant that they were comparatively more affordable than cigarettes produced by BAT for example, which was considered a ‘premium’ brand of cigarettes. This chapter investigates cigarette advertisements in Republican China – specifically print cigarette advertisements in newspapers, and other publications.

## **Local and Foreign**

As is discussed in the previous chapter, in looking at the idea of national consciousness in patent medicine, one of the tropes that arose from that national consciousness was that of a firmer definition that was drawn between the local and the foreign. Weipin Tsai’s chapter in *Creating Chinese Modernity* looks specifically at Tobacco Advertisements in the *Shenbao* newspaper from the May Fourth era to the pre-war period of 1937. Choosing specifically to study advertisements from the Nanyang Brother’s Tobacco Company, Tsai identifies nationalist and commercialist ideologies that were connoted within these advertisements. Furthermore, the presence of women, together with the domestic space “rapidly became a public issue and more importantly, through the physical exposure of the home to the reading public, publicized”.<sup>164</sup> It is worth recalling how the previous chapter discusses the role of

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<sup>163</sup> Carol Benedict, 170.

<sup>164</sup> Weipin Tsai, “Having it All: Patriotism and Gracious Living in Shenbao’s Tobacco Advertisements, 1919-1937,” in *Crating Chinese Modernity: Knowledge and Everyday Life 1900-1940*, ed. Peter Zarrow, (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 136.

women, in the presence of patent medicines, and while this chapter does not touch on that topic, it is important to note that women were also an important feature in Republican Chinese cigarette advertisements. Ultimately, Tsai argues that “cigarette advertisements in *Shenbao*...developed a consumer culture that successfully combined nationalism and commercialism: urban life became mixed with new ways of understanding – and living – modernity”.<sup>165</sup> While Tsai’s work is extremely important in highlighting how advertisers in China – companies such as Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company – were an active participant in Chinese cultural production, absorbing existing cultural ideas and presenting them in its advertisements, as well as strongly engaging with the commercial art world in the creation of such images, it is worth noting her point on nationalism: that many advertisements utilized nationalism to promote the selling of their goods. This nationalism in the advertisement that Tsai references can often be linked to the broader narrative of local versus foreign, where this nationalist narrative is pegged to the idea of a consumption of local products, often in juxtaposition to the enemy’s foreign products – this will be explored later in this chapter.

As evident from the previous chapter, Gerth’s work on the National Products Movement provides good context on one angle of the local-foreign theme within Republican China. According to Gerth, one can identify the beginnings of this division institutionally in the early days of the Republic where “Chinese reformers and leaders of new Chinese-owned industries became vocal proponents...of the notion that “foreign presence” equalled “foreign domination”.<sup>166</sup> The commercial war, as Gerth observes, came as early as 1862 with ideas by Zeng Guofan on the “concept of commercial war”.<sup>167</sup> While an ‘us and them’ mentality had already existed in the late Qing era, many of these leaders accepted the need to use Western

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<sup>165</sup> Weipin Tsai, “Having it All: Patriotism and Gracious Living in *Shenbao*’s Tobacco Advertisements, 1919-1937,” 145.

<sup>166</sup> Karl Gerth 57.

<sup>167</sup> Karl Gerth 59

technology to improve on Chinese science and technology – a process also known as self-strengthening. At the same time, as commerce increased in China, which meant an increase in the importing of goods, the sphere of commercial war between us and them came to include these consumer goods as well. The institutionally driven and supported National Products Movement which Gerth primarily featured was therefore a successor to this rapidly growing snowball of us and them sentiments that have been building since the late Qing.

This above narrative, which Gerth paints of Republican China has been told from the angle of the intellectuals and from an institutional level. The following analysis that this chapter presents aims to examine this narrative further but from the angle of the everyday, specifically through the lens of advertisements. What can the everyday tell about this local-foreign theme? What techniques did these advertisements employ to demonstrate this message? Did this theme manifest itself differently from the ways in which the institutions and intellectuals had discussed them? Was there one common narrative that flowed through the everyday or will there be a layering of multiple narratives? In this instance, the everyday refers both to the demographic of people comprised of both the elite and non-elite, as elaborated in the previous chapter. These questions seek to contribute to the broader understanding of how producers and consumers both met at the arena of advertisements, and to understand how cigarette advertisements contributed to the broader context of twentieth century China. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, advertisements act as a site of interaction in which one serve as a space to better understand both the elites in the form of businessmen and intellectuals, and that of the often-unheard voices of the ordinary consumers, who were smoking these cigarettes.

### **British American Tobacco**

A good place to begin our analysis on cigarette advertisements is with the arguably biggest cigarette brand in Republican China, British American Tobacco Company (BAT

henceforth). The BAT) was established in 1902 with two headquarters in New York and London, borne from the previous Imperial Tobacco Company and American Tobacco Company.<sup>168</sup> Cochran notes that the BAT, like other Western corporations, started out in China with its “Western style corporate hierarchies”; but unlike the other Western corporations, “shifted a large measure of responsibility from the hierarchy to the networks”.<sup>169</sup>

It should be stated first that not all advertisements from the BAT engaged explicitly with themes of local-foreign. The advertisements below (Figures 19 and 20) are Pinhead Cigarette (pin hai pai xiang yan)<sup>170</sup> advertisements for the BAT. The former one has a simpler design compared to the latter, with just the packet of cigarettes in the centre of the advertisement, and an accompanying copy stating how Pinhead Cigarettes have been extremely popular (jiu yi kuai zhi ren kou).<sup>171</sup> Figure 20 has more graphics, with a similar Pinhead Cigarette box in the centre foreground of the advertisement, and a background of Earth, with an accompanying caption stating how its popular globally (quan xiu feng xing)<sup>172</sup>. The difference of approximately ten years between the two advertisements did little to alter the general idea of the advertisement in relation to the product: popularity. However, the latter advertisement does invoke the idea of the global, which might suggest therefore a heavier weight or emphasis on international influence where the idea of this ‘international popularity’ or international consumption gave the product some form of credibility in Chinese markets. One thing worth noting about Pinhead Cigarettes is the box itself, which mentions “North Carolina Leaf”, which speaks of the manufacturing process of the cigarettes, that the tobacco

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<sup>168</sup> “British American Tobacco – Early Years: 1902 – 1932,” last modified February 2009, [https://web.archive.org/web/20090209050411/http://www.bat.com/group/sites/UK\\_3MNFEN.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DO5DTGBV?opendocument&SKN=3](https://web.archive.org/web/20090209050411/http://www.bat.com/group/sites/UK_3MNFEN.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DO5DTGBV?opendocument&SKN=3).

<sup>169</sup> Sherman Cochran, “British American Tobacco Company,” in *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-37*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 68.

<sup>170</sup> 品海牌香烟

<sup>171</sup> 久已膾炙人口

<sup>172</sup> 全球风行

for the cigarettes were American, and accentuates a “Made in America” idea for this brand of cigarettes. Of course, this was not unique of Pinhead cigarettes, nor does it suggest any relation to the local-foreign narrative. However, this does suggest that there was a popularity and prestige attached to this extremely foreign product. The “foreignness” of Pinhead Cigarettes was therefore almost used as a selling point in Chinese markets. However, foreignness as it appears, was a label that could easily be displaced.

● 版 一 第 張 後 張 一 第 報 申 ●

西曆一千九百十一年  
十一月三十號  
行號四

# 申報第一張後幅

辛亥十月初十日  
出版共二張

老牌香煙  
久已  
膾炙人口



Figure 19: Pinhead Cigarette Advertisement in November 1911<sup>173</sup>

<sup>173</sup> “Pinhead Cigarette Advertisement, *Shenbao*, 1911



Figure 20: Pinhead Cigarettes Advertisement in 1922<sup>174</sup>

The company also produced monthly magazines with the intention of “placing at the disposal of employees, all classes of dealers, and friends of both...information concerning the production of tobacco leaf, the manufacture of cigarettes, and the marketing of the Company’s products in China”.<sup>175</sup> Within the magazine, the company claims that “local tobacco farmers are also profiting from the manufacturing the BAT has introduced in China”. This statement was probably in direct response to the existing trade tariffs and resistance towards ‘foreign

<sup>174</sup> “Pinhead Cigarette Advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 27 May 1922.

<sup>175</sup> *British American Tobacco Magazine*, 1925, 1.

products’; as such, it can be understood as BAT’s attempt to convince their Chinese readers that such a text on foreign goods was in fact hurting the local economy – which meant that it was mutually detrimental. In addition, the journal also gives an indication of the demographics of BAT consumers, stating that “people from all walks of life” smoke their cigarettes, further suggesting how ubiquitous BAT cigarettes were in twentieth century China. While this might be propagandistic in nature, considering the context of this statement, secondary research from Cochran or Benedict have similarly indicated their prevalence in Chinese society; the fact that they held the biggest market share, regardless of its foreign status also suggests that the market in Republican China for BAT cigarettes was indeed unbeatable. The reason for this ubiquity was because BAT existed in China as the chief distributor for many other smaller Chinese cigarette brands. As such, while one might see different cigarette brands across various publications, such as Ruby Queen Cigarettes, or Three Castles Cigarettes, these various brands were operating under the central organization of the BAT. One reason for its ubiquity in Chinese society would be its marketing strategy demonstrated by its extensive use of print advertising in Chinese publications such as newspapers, or magazines.



Figure 21: Celebration of the tenth anniversary of Ho Shing Sheng, BAT’s co-distributor in Hekou District of Jiangxi.<sup>176</sup>

As noted earlier, Cochran discussed how the BAT gave a large share of responsibility to Chinese networks, as illustrated in Figure 21 as an example, led by Chinese businessmen to run a majority of the operations within China. One such individual that was put in charge to manage the networks was Wu Tingsheng who, while in charge was also custodian of their local marketing strategies, “tried to use advertising to achieve a popular appeal... [and] declined when BAT offered to give him the exclusive right to distribute its Ruby Queen brand because the cigarette’s Chinese brand name, Da Ying Pai (Great England), sounded pro-foreign and unpatriotic”.<sup>177</sup> Individuals like Wu were put in positions of authority to bridge the divide

<sup>176</sup> *British American Tobacco Magazine*, 1925, 9.

<sup>177</sup> Cochran, “British American Tobacco Company,” 54.

between the foreign corporation, and the local market. This is important to consider as we consider the next few advertisements.



Figure 22: Ruby Queen Cigarettes, 1924 Figure 23: Ruby Queen Cigarettes, 1932.<sup>178</sup>

For example, the difference in the naming of Ruby Queen Cigarettes, from a pro-foreign name like *Da Ying Pai*,<sup>179</sup> to a more neutral and local-leaning name like *Hong Xi Bao*, which also engages in cultural ideas of luck and prosperity.<sup>180</sup> In terms of the advertisement design, we can see that the general messaging has remained rather consistent. Figure 22 states how Ruby Queen Cigarettes are “the most fashionable cigarettes in China”, and that “it can be smoked by anyone in the country”.<sup>181</sup> Figure 23 is much simpler, opting for a short phrase stating that the cigarettes are something worth relishing. The foreign Ruby Queen Cigarette therefore transformed itself and adopted a local nomenclature for the sake of making its product

<sup>178</sup> “Ruby Queen cigarette advertisement,” *Shi Shi Xin Bao*, 3 May 1932.

<sup>179</sup> 大英牌

<sup>180</sup> 紅錫包

<sup>181</sup> “Ruby Queen cigarette advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 1 January 1924.

more marketable to the everyday consumer, thus greying the line between the local and foreign. This example of Ruby Queen cigarettes demonstrates how marketing and branding decisions from the company was shaped and affected by the everyday. It is plausible therefore to reinforce the idea here that advertisements were very much a dialectical production by businessmen in the elite, and opinions from the everyday.

In Tani Barlow's "Advertising Ephemera and the Angel of History", the New York Cigarettes from BAT were used as a baseline in showing how advertisements portrayed a form of society. The collection of advertisements from New York Cigarettes were consistent in its style: it always featured a tableau of everyday life in Republican China – which included images such as two men seated indoors enjoying a conversation (as seen in Figure 24). These advertisements, Barlow argues, "portray a society" which, Barlow adds, was trying to portray a "particularly neo-traditionalist way of social life".<sup>182</sup> Such a portrayal was, according to her, anachronistic for its time, given the context of Republican China, where she pointed to how "it became possible to contest what constitutes social life, what norms of social behavior ought to be...".<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Tani Barlow, "Advertising Ephemera and the Angel of History," 125.

<sup>183</sup> Tani Barlow, 126.



Figure 24: New York Cigarettes, 1919.<sup>184</sup>

However, I argue that while the advertisements might have been as Barlow argues, anachronistic, it does not diminish the importance of the advertisements within the broader landscape of cigarette advertisements; it is also important to consider the framing of these advertisements, such as the one above, which juxtaposes the supposed everyday of China with the foreignness of New York. Placed clearly on the box is a skyline of what is presumably Manhattan, and this acts as the primary symbol of the New York brand of cigarettes. There are two sets of couplets: one at the top and one at the right side of the advertisement which essentially encourages people to try and think freely, to open up their way of thinking, and while there are many different cigarettes available to choose from, it takes a person of discernment to pick a good brand.

<sup>184</sup> "New York Cigarettes Advertisement," *Shenbao*, 7 May 1919, 1.

Ultimately, the advertisement aims to associate the foreignness of New York Cigarettes with the everydayness of Chinese life – that the selection of this quality brand of foreign cigarettes is expected of in a respectable Chinese man. The local and the foreign are conflated in this advertisement, where on the one hand one is presented with an impressive foreign product, and on the other, the only fair thing to do for a Chinese man is to consume this foreign cigarette. Advertisements such as this manipulate the idea of the everyday by presenting this vision of society, as Barlow suggests, convincing the consumer that such a decision is something expected.

More than just the attempt to integrate foreignness into a local tableau, BAT's advertisements also engaged with local cultural icons and symbols. For example, Advertisements would therefore feature characters from classic novels, poetry, and plays, turning them into familiar signs that the consumer could associate with, therefore making the product itself something that is already familiar to the consumer. The below advertisement (Figure 25) is from the Three Castles Cigarettes brand and the subject of the advertisement features a classic Chinese literature: Dream of the Red Chamber. The Dream of the Red Chamber (honglou meng),<sup>185</sup> which in the advertisement is written as (honglou xiemeng),<sup>186</sup> tells the story of Jia Baoyu, born into the rich Jia household.<sup>187</sup> Not only is the household wealthy, they also hold a great influence in the city. The story is therefore set within the context of the success of the Jia household, and their subsequent decline from wealth and disfavour with the royal family. Parallel to this narrative is the story of a long triangle between the protagonist Jia, his cousin, Lin Daiyu whom he loves, and Xue Baochai whom he is betrothed to, but someone who he has no connection with. The novel was published in the mid-eighteenth

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<sup>185</sup> 红楼梦

<sup>186</sup> 紅樓諧夢

<sup>187</sup> It is uncertain why the advertisement references harmonious in the title.

century and is deemed as one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, alongside *Journey to the West*, *The Water Margin*, and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. It received a revival of interest in the nineteenth century when Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao criticized it as an “incitement to robbery and lust”.<sup>188</sup> The novel's key themes deal with the idea of Chinese culture, such as their literature, art, and their beliefs; nevertheless, the book is read as a love story, and features ideas on the expression of romantic love between a man and a woman.



Figure 25: “Three Castles Cigarettes: Red Dream”<sup>189</sup>

With that context in mind, we can return to the advertisement, where we see two characters within the space of the room, which we may assume to be both Jia Baoyu and Lin

<sup>188</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Literary Trends I: The Quest for Modernity, 1895-27,” in John k. Fairbank, ed., *Cambridge History of China Vol 12 Republican China 1912-49 Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 455.

<sup>189</sup> “Three Castles cigarette advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 1 April 1924.

Daiyu; the copy of the advertisement presents a conversation between the two characters, with Jia asking Lin, “why her sister was suddenly angry after feeling fine”, that there is a cigarette “more fragrant than the jade” and that ultimately, the “Three Castle Cigarettes are a great antidote to boredom”.<sup>190</sup> There is a play on the name of Jia Baoyu as well, seeing that his name means ‘fake jade’, and therefore the cigarette offers a ‘real’ fragrance that can replace that of this fake character. As such, the advertisement denotes how smoking Three Cigarettes is not only a cure for boredom, but it is also a real remedy to all the fake good around Chinese society. The evocation of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* in this advertisement might suggest a few points worth noting concerning the broader discussion of advertising in China. As mentioned, the plot of the story revolves around two wealthy families; to associate Three Castles to such wealth and power is to therefore suggest that smokers of Three Castles can also enjoy the same prestige and power as the families of the story. Understandably, the latter part of the novel details how the Jia family loses their wealth; nevertheless, the surface idea of wealth associated with the smoking of the cigarette would be adequate for audiences to think of Three Castles as a cigarette that, when smoked, would give them prestige and status. Also, the evocation of Jin Baoyu as a “fake” jade also alludes to how there were fake cigarette peddlers that might have sold recycled or imitation cigarettes. As such, smokers of Three Castles would have been part of a community that would be able to afford real and genuine products.

Looking broadly, while literature such as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* was deemed as classic Chinese literature, it was not uncommon for the illiterate population of China to be familiar with the plot or thematic devices of the story. According to advertiser Crow, “professional storytellers [were] found everywhere”.<sup>191</sup> This allowed classic stories to be retold

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<sup>190</sup> “Three Castles cigarette advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 1 April 1924.

<sup>191</sup> Carl Crow, *400 Million Customers*, (Hong Kong: China Economic Review Publishing, 2008; First published 1937), 138.

to an illiterate audience. Many classic stories, famous battles, or poems were part of the repertoire of these storytellers; as such, it was not uncommon to expect an illiterate person to be just as familiar with classic Chinese literature as his literate counterpart. While it is not certain how these stories might have resonated across different, especially illiterate, audiences, the bottom line is that these stories were indeed familiar, and it was something that could help narrow the gap between a foreign product and the local consumers.

I content that for cigarette advertisements such as New York and Three Castles, the Chinese everyday and Chinese culture was appropriated as the advertisers saw fit to draw attention to their product. The advertisements used the existing local-foreign trope – but carefully manipulated its parameters such that the line between the local and the foreign was greyed. As such, a consumer looking at the advertisements would consider the foreign as a natural constituent in the local. Unlike patent medicine advertisements, which attempted to draw positive aspects of foreign-ness such as foreign science and technology in the patent medicine, the cigarette advertisements from BAT utilized the local-foreign trope differently – through the conflating of both local and foreign into a grey space, in which both operate harmoniously in the everyday of Republican China.

### **Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company**

The next place to continue the analysis is with Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company. The Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company was one of China's largest tobacco companies during the Republic Era. As a local company, Nanyang Brothers represented China's response to the increasingly foreign tobacco industry within its soil. Formed in 1905, the Nanyang Brothers were argued by Cochran to be the BAT's first real threat, converting the “monopoly

to a duopoly”.<sup>192</sup> According to their published reports, the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company primarily operated out of Shanghai and Hong Kong, with branch offices in “Peking, Tientsin, Newchwang<sup>193</sup>, Tainan, Tsingtao, Hankow, Hanking, Chinkiang, Canton, Swatow, Amoy, Yunan, Singapore, Soerabaja, and Siam”.<sup>194</sup> It was clear therefore that its influence in China was as extensive as BAT’s was. Dealing exclusively with tobacco, the company boasted impressive business figures in the early twenties, reflected in their annual reports as having “profits still over four million dollars, even in facing of the unexpectedly high cost of labour and materials”.<sup>195</sup> The company operated with a rigid structure – with clear roles and responsibilities for the president, vice-president, directors, and supervisors of the firm. This established hierarchy which was on paper recognized and were responsible for the broad operation and management of the company. Furthermore, the firm also had shareholders who were able to vote and decide on business and financial decisions. Overall, Nanyang Brothers resembled a large modern company whose overall operation style was not entirely dissimilar to that of British American Tobacco.

Similar to the BAT’s advertising tactics, the Nanyang Brother’s also relied extensively on the newspapers to get their brand known in the Chinese market. This section will investigate some of the advertisements produced by the Nanyang Brother’s Tobacco Company which were published in newspapers such as the Shanghai Shenbao, or Minguo Ribao, during the Republic Era. The first noticeable feature about Nanyang Brothers cigarette advertisements is their general naming of their cigarette brands. Two of the more popular cigarette brands, Da Aiguo and Great Wall (Figures 26 and 27 respectively), were allusions towards the consumption of a

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<sup>192</sup> Sherman Cochran, “Big Business in China: Sino-American Rivalry: in the Tobacco Industry, 1890-30”, (PhD diss., Yale University, 1975), 109.

<sup>193</sup> Also known as Yingkou

<sup>194</sup> Registry of Companies, ROC 0437: “Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Co Ltd.,” ROC 752 – 03 (Defunct Company Files), 26/03/1917, 210.

<sup>195</sup> Registry of Companies, ROC 0437: “Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Co Ltd.,” ROC 752 – 03 (Defunct Company Files), 26/03/1917,

national product. Da Aiguo (da ai guo),<sup>196</sup> which translates to “great love for country”, denotes clearly the strong desire for patriotic consumption – that smoking Da Aiguo cigarettes would mean that the individual is demonstrating a love for their country. In addition, the idea of nationalism was also in the undercurrents of this advertisement, which as Gerth has highlighted, was an important discourse in the twenties and thirties of China.<sup>197</sup> Similarly, Great Wall Cigarettes (da chang cheng)<sup>198</sup> denotes the consumption of a national symbol – the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall of China was symbolically important for China, both as a physical manifestation of its rich history, but also as a symbol of its strength and resilience – against foreign forces. Historically, the history and significance of the ‘Wall’ vis-à-vis China has changed over time. In the interests of an explanation in this section, it would suffice to say that the “Great Wall of China” as reflected in the branding of the Nanyang Brother’s Tobacco brand is referent to the wall as a defense system to keep China’s foreign Northern enemies from invading China. As such, consuming the brand “Great Wall Cigarettes” was, in essence, a means in which the everyday Chinese could do their part to, using the analogy of the Great Wall here, keep the foreign forces – naturally foreign brands such as the BAT – from invading Chinese markets. While this might have been just a marketing strategy from Nanyang Brothers, it does not take away the fact that this strategy attempted to draw strict lines between its local products as good, and the foreign competitors as the enemy.

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<sup>196</sup> 大爱国

<sup>197</sup> For more information, please refer to Gerth’s *China Made*.

<sup>198</sup> 大长城



Figure 26: “Da Aiguo Cigarettes: National Produced Cigarettes”<sup>199</sup>

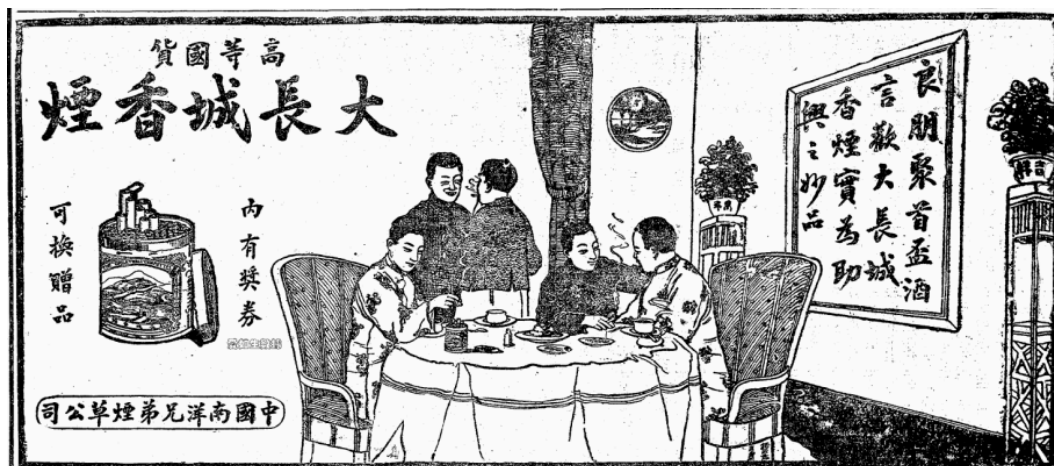
The above advertisement was for the Da Aiguo Cigarette which features the cigarette on an advertisement billboard. The advertisement features the outdoors with depictions of trees and birds, with a man is standing on the right side of the advertisement, smoking a cigarette, looking at the billboard. The most striking feature of the advertisement – the feature which draws immediate attention to the consumer – is the text in the center of the advertisement. The text details a conversation between a bird and a man, referred to as Gongye Chang. Gongye Chang was a Chinese lesser known Chinese philosopher who lived during the Spring and Autumn Era of the Early Zhou Dynasty; as the son-in-law of Confucius, various Chinese folklore have talked about his ability to communicate with animals – namely birds.<sup>200</sup> As such, this advertisement invokes two features - Chinese philosophy and Chinese folklore – to drive the advertisement. The dialogue itself drives one clear message: the idea of patriotism. The text mentions how (Love for Country) cigarettes are the best, Chang has smoked it, and the birds themselves have tasted it – everyone advocates for it. Furthermore, the advertisement

<sup>199</sup> “Da Aiguo cigarette advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 3 January 1924.

<sup>200</sup> Edward Slingerland, *Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2003), 39.

emphasizes once again the “patriotism of the generation is not as good” as it should be, and that one should “know what they are doing” in their consumption of cigarettes.<sup>201</sup> This points to the lack of support amongst the Chinese for national goods and urges them again to change their habits of consumption towards products such as Nanyang Brothers.

The invoking of Gongye Chang and birds in particular should also be considered in greater detail. Birds are a widely used imagery in Chinese culture and symbolism, with specific birds tied to specific significances. While the advertisement does not invoke a specific bird, it is in general used to connote a masculine idea, that patriotism itself might be a masculine responsibility to uphold. Returning to Gongye Chang, the invocation of traditional Chinese philosophy and folklore also suggests how classic Chinese culture was still relevant within Chinese society, and it could be seen as a way to position itself against new foreign ideas. Much like how cultural symbols were used in BAT advertisements to grey the line between the local and the foreign, such cultural symbols here were used to reinforce this difference. The effect of a cultural symbol such as Chang in the Da Aiguo advertisement further accentuates the localness of Nanyang Brothers Cigarettes, and it was therefore a tool to reinforce the narrative.



<sup>201</sup> “Da Aiguo cigarette advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 3 January 1924.

Figure 27: “Great Wall Cigarettes: Good friends gathering for a drink”.<sup>202</sup>

Beyond the advertisement itself, Nanyang Brothers also employed other forms of advertising techniques, as demonstrated in the advertisement for Great Wall Cigarettes above.<sup>203</sup> Sandwiching the image of the cigarette packets are the words: “Enclosed are coupons that you can exchange for gifts”.<sup>204</sup> Essentially, the Nanyang Brothers were making use of a common technique amongst businessmen, which was the physical product itself. The physical products spread buzz which enabled the illiterate non-readers to also be a part of the market of this cigarette.<sup>205</sup> This advertisement itself contains fewer words than the previous ones, and instead features a dining scene possibly in a restaurant or a teahouse. There are five men in the scene, loosely captioned with the words “good friends gathering for a drink” – of course, one did not need to be able to read to understand what the advertisement was trying to display: smoking the Great Wall Cigarettes was more than just a private, individual act; it was also a social activity that instantly placed the consumer in membership with the broader community of Chinese people who smoked the cigarette. This was a community of people who could enjoy meals and drinks outside with friends at lavish locations – people who dressed well, spoke well, and lived well. As such, this advertisement was trying to draw the average smoker of Great Wall cigarettes into something larger than just smoking – it was creating a community of Chinese people. While the smokers themselves might still have smoked alone, it was the idea that their smoking alone was nevertheless still making them part of a broader community. That was the ideology that the advertisement was trying to connote. This idea echoes much of what

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<sup>202</sup> “Great Wall Cigarette advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 1 April 1924.

<sup>203</sup> 大長城香煙

<sup>204</sup> 內有獎券 可換贈品

<sup>205</sup> The use of the coupons might have been only accessible to newspapers. However, illiterate people who did not read newspapers might still have had access to newspapers after the readers were done with their copy and while they might not be able to understand the words on the advertisement, they knew that the coupon would translate to a free packet of cigarettes. The illiterate reader would also be able to see the image on the advertisement and draw their own conclusion concerning the idea that was being transmitted.

Benedict has argued about smoking, where she argued that there was a contrast between the old “companionable way of smoking to “foreign style” cigarettes, which...are generally smoked alone”.<sup>206</sup> As such, this lends itself to suggest that while cigarettes were smoked alone, it was also trying to evoke an earlier practice of communal smoking, and suggest that one could feel the same community spirit as one did before with smoking pipes when you smoked Great Wall cigarettes. The rendering of this form of consumer culture in this Great Wall advertisement for example was a means for Nanyang Brothers to try and connect the community of local Chinese cigarette smokers, to the advertisement; from this, it would connect this community to the idea of patriotism, and the idea that being a participant of this community would lead to them demonstrating some form of support for locally produced goods.



Figure 28: Golden Horse Cigarettes Advertisement, 1922.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Benedict, “The Urban Cigarette and the Pastoral Pipe: Literary Representations of Smoking in Republican China,” 192.

<sup>207</sup> “Golden Horse Cigarettes Advertisement,” *Minguo Ri Bao*, 27 May 1922.

The advertisement for Golden Horse Cigarettes (Figure 28) from Nanyang Brothers similarly demonstrated this idea of a community. The advertisement features two men, possibly of different dressing, with one seen sporting what could be a traditional Chinese silk cap, and the other who is wearing spectacles, both smoking cigarettes in close proximity – which is most likely depicting the difference between traditional and modern China. In Chapter 2, it is mentioned how spectacles were used as a symbol of education and status, and this image might therefore suggest the coming together of two Chinas – one traditional and one modern, as they smoke the same Golden Horse Cigarette.

The copy of the advertisement is essentially a simulation of a conversation between two people, asking each other what brand of cigarettes they are smoking; both find out that they are smoking Golden Horse Cigarettes.<sup>208</sup> In addition to the conversation is the remark that heroes think alike. The idea of a “hero” here is interesting to consider as it suggests a sense of victory over something – the consumer becomes a hero in choosing Golden Horse Cigarettes.<sup>209</sup> Much like Great Wall Cigarettes, the advertisement above for Golden Horse Cigarettes attempted to portray a community of sorts of Chinese smokers in their advertisement. This consumer culture that was visualized in this advertisement can therefore be argued to be a part of the broader local-foreign narrative surrounding Republican China, as observed by scholars. In calling these people heroes, it imbued a sense of patriotism within consumers; it is therefore difficult to ignore the parallels this advertisement had with other more overtly patriotic, pro-Chinese cigarette advertisements.

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<sup>208</sup> 你吸的是什么烟？我吸的及是金马牌香烟。请问你呢？我吸的也是金马牌，英雄所见

<sup>209</sup> 英雄所见略同

## Huacheng Tobacco Company

Huacheng Tobacco Company's advertisements offer an interesting deviation from conventional advertisements by locally produced cigarette companies such as Nanyang Brothers. In the previous section, we study how Nanyang Brother's advertisements promoted a very local and Chinese brand of cigarettes in their advertisements through the invoking of various cultural signs, be it cultural icons, or through the use of ideas such as Great Wall. In the following two advertisements, we see another Chinese cigarette brand, Huacheng, which opted for a marketing strategy that had "played up the foreign aspects of their cigarettes in order to attract city dwellers for whom the cigarette represented a luxurious urban style of life that they regarded as distinctly Western-inspired".<sup>210</sup>

According to Benedict, Huacheng was arguably the third-largest cigarette firm operating in China during the Republican era.<sup>211</sup> Huacheng Tobacco Company was established in the 1920s, slightly later than the previous two companies studied, but nevertheless was able to establish itself strongly within Chinese markets. Similar to BAT and Nanyang Brothers, it had factories in Shanghai, and while they operated mainly out of Shanghai, Huacheng (as is with BAT and Nanyang Brothers) had "marketed their products inter-regionally" as well.<sup>212</sup> One of the most popular brands which "was heavily promoted, [was] My Dear [cigarettes]".<sup>213</sup> My Dear Cigarettes (also called meili pai xiangyan<sup>214</sup>) was a well-liked brand of cigarettes from Huacheng. On the cover of the cigarette box is the republican entertainer Lv Meiyu, which was supposedly "used on the new cigarette packaging in order to attract attention".<sup>215</sup> This is worth

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<sup>210</sup> Carol Benedict, 147.

<sup>211</sup> Benedict continually references products by "three leading firms of BAT, Nanyang, and Huacheng", on multiple occasions. Please see: Benedict, *Golden-Silk Smoke: A History of Tobacco in China, 1550-2010*, pp 154, 158, 162, for example.

<sup>212</sup> Carol Benedict, 158.

<sup>213</sup> Nan Estad, *Cigarettes Inc.: An Intimate history of Corporate Imperialism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 156

<sup>214</sup> 美麗牌香烟

<sup>215</sup> Ellen Johnston Laing, 204

noting because it is noted that “when this brand became so popular, many copies appeared on the market”.<sup>216</sup> This suggests that while My Dear itself might have been a brand that was relatively more expensive and catered to the middle-upper class of Republican Chinese, it did not stop imitations of My Dear, which could be purchased by the lower class, from appearing. And so, while original Huacheng cigarettes “were out of reach for most farmers, and labourers”, one could expect these farmers and labourers to be consuming the imitation My Dear cigarettes.<sup>217</sup>

Looking at the two advertisements below, we notice an immediate similarity in the proxemics of the subjects in the images with that of Nanyang Brother’s advertisement for Golden Horse Cigarettes. Both advertisements from Huacheng feature a duo, in Figure 29, two men dressed in a western suit with a Western-styled fedora; in Figure 30, we see a couple sharing a packet of My Dear cigarettes in a sport setting where they are seen to be holding tennis racquets. Both advertisements allude to the idea of some community, seen from the proxemics of the people in the images, where both advertisements feature people who are positioned very closely together,

In terms of the advertising copy, Figure 29 has a straight-forward and simpler piece: simply stating how both men enjoy smoking My Dear.<sup>218</sup> The latter advertisement’s copy alludes to the pleasure of smoking My Dear after a game of tennis.<sup>219</sup> While the content of the two copies differ, we can see how both advertisements are encouraging a certain Western lifestyle amongst its local smokers. The advertisers therefore alluded to a foreign motif to attempt to make their cigarettes more desirable. Whether this was a marketing move to

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<sup>216</sup> Laing, 204.

<sup>217</sup> Carol Benedict 162.

<sup>218</sup> 你也爱吸,我也爱吸

<sup>219</sup> 運動之後,體力衰疲,吸煙一枝,其樂

differentiate themselves from other local brands such as Nanyang Brothers is uncertain; nevertheless, this illustrates how differently the local-foreign trope can work across different cigarette brands. In this instance therefore, the idea of foreignness was invoked to sell the cigarettes, rather than the ideas of Chinese-ness. Such a move here can therefore be paralleled with that of patent medicine advertisements, where some Chinese patent medicines had played up foreign elements in order to make their products more appealing.



Figure 29: My Dear Cigarettes Advertisement,<sup>220</sup> 1931

<sup>220</sup> "My Dear Cigarettes Advertisement," *Minguo Ri Bao*, 25 May 1931.



Figure 30: My Dear Advertisement, 1932<sup>221</sup>

### Smaller Cigarette Company: Zheng Sheng Tobacco

Other smaller cigarette companies also advertised widely in the newspapers. These cigarette companies were smaller in the sense of scale of production, in which they would only market to the respective cities in which their factories operated out from. Despite their smaller market, advertisements from this supposed smaller firms were just as common. An early example of cigarette advertisements from smaller cigarette companies would be the below advertisements (Figure 31) from Shanghai Zheng Sheng Tobacco Company for the brands President and Conqueror Cigarettes. Very little is known of the company, except from what we can learn from its advertisements.

<sup>221</sup> "My Dear Cigarettes Advertisement," *Shenbao*, October 1 1932.

The advertisements do not have any other visual apart from the cigarette box, which in itself is worth commenting. The portrayal of both figures: the “soldier” and the “president” attest to some form of prestige in Chinese nationality. It is also interesting to consider how the term “Oriental Cigarette & Tobacco” was used to describe the kind of cigarettes Conqueror Brand were.<sup>222</sup> The advertising copy, while lengthy, is rather straightforward. It discusses how the cigarettes are popular all around the world, but interestingly also talks about how the cigarettes are good for one’s health. That smoking President and Conqueror Cigarettes would bring about health was certainly a bold claim to make, but given the immediate milieu of consumption, it was not uncommon for a product to promote its health benefits, considering how in the previous chapter, we learn how patent medicines were doing exactly that.

All these factors point to the fact that President and Conqueror Cigarettes were trying to appeal to a sense of local loyalty, and a pride in Chinese-produced products. The motif of the army and of the president figure suggests a sense of military superiority and legitimacy – over a possible ‘Other’, and in this context, one can think of this ‘Other’ as foreign products. In this example, we can see how the narrative of the local-foreign is ubiquitous in the sense that even small cigarette companies had utilized it to sell their cigarettes. Whether or not the company had genuinely believed in the narrative is not the point – they believed that the narrative worked in selling cigarettes, and it was certainly consistent with how other cigarette companies were advertising their brands.

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<sup>222</sup> The text for President Brand is not possible to distinguish due to the quality of the primary source.

### 烟香品上最種一又 牌統總大



閱有最上品最研究之製名曰大總統牌即日發行  
以享我同胞口福其品質之優美香味之濃郁有諸君  
自有真評無待本公司之多費也

本公司發行現軍牌香烟已蒙 各界諸公同聲贊美  
月餘以來內外各大埠已經一律暢銷幾有應接不暇  
之勢良以香味之可口衛生之有益價目之從廉實不  
見棄于大雅本公司實深感荷惟本公司之品目有十

售發品出第大將眾多之種款

### 烟香牌軍優 品美等優最



環球各界無不讚美之蓋其香名種齊美尤勝前多五至法  
界新北門外本公司接洽可也 上海新豐源公司發行

本公司經理各種紙烟名目繁多均以上等烟葉製成性  
性質溫和香味芬烈且吸之清爽時疫於衛生大有裨益  
較市上之香烟無不及實有譽過遠傳全真精良之品誠

Figure 31: Shanghai Zheng Sheng Brand of President and Conqueror Cigarettes<sup>223</sup>

## Narratives and the Everyday

It should first be noted that such a narrative that has been presented – the angle of this local-foreign dichotomy – is not sweeping and systematic of the entire cigarette industry. Not every advertisement that was published necessarily contained commentary on Republican China: some advertisements merely presented their cigarettes as popular, or tasty. For example, the below My Dear Cigarettes (Figure 32) dispels most of the visual, opting for a striking typography, and accompanied by their catchphrase (which is also seen in Figure 29) that might not make any attempt at drawing on existing socio-cultural commentary. In analyzing these

<sup>223</sup> “President and Conqueror Cigarettes Advertisement,” *Shenbao*, 30 January 1914.

advertisements from the lens of the local-foreign, this chapter has aimed to highlight how such narratives might operate amongst the everyday.



Figure 32: My Dear Cigarettes Advertisement, 1932

This point can be further developed in microcosm towards the local-foreign narrative itself. The usage or appropriation of cultural symbols was thus done both by local and foreign firms. The local firms used cultural symbols to solidify their Chinese-ness, to emphasize the aspects of themselves which made them Chinese. Foreign firms capitalized on Chinese cultural symbols to grey the line that separated themselves from the local. And while we can observe a local-foreign division just as well in the everyday, this division has manifested itself along

different terms: that is to say, that this narrative of the local-foreign divide was different at different levels of the everyday. While Gerth's narrative relating the local-foreign divide stemmed from an institutionally driven cause, our investigation of the local-foreign from the angle of everyday cigarette advertisements offers a different side of the story. BAT advertisements attempted to use the local-foreign trope in a way which greyed the line between the local and the foreign, presenting their products as more local than foreign; through the use of cultural symbols, icons and other motifs, their cigarettes were assimilated into the everyday of Republican China seamlessly.

On the other side of the same coin lies Nanyang Brothers Tobacco, whose advertisements utilized the local-foreign narrative to further divide the gap, enforcing the idea of local pride, nationalism, and patriotism to encourage people to consume their products. Other cigarette companies such as Huacheng ironically aimed to sell their cigarettes as more foreign than local. Under a single commodity such as cigarettes, one can see how a narrative of the local versus the foreign diverges differently based on how it can fit the actor. In some instances, it helps foreign companies draw closer to the Chinese markets, and in others, it helps Chinese products seem more attractive to the consumers. As such, framing history under a single narrative can often result in something more problematic than helpful. The suggestion of the everyday is not so much to present history as a single narrative, but to acknowledge the coexistence of multiple narratives.

To expand on this point more deeply, when one considers again the cigarettes by BAT, and their advertisements, it raises questions concerning the nature of the product: what does it mean for something to be a local product, and the corollary, what does it mean to be a foreign product? In the case of the everyday, it seems that the consumers do not actively discern between one over the other, and their selection is fluid; based on the market share of BAT, we know that these foreign products were well received, and were consumed just as much as

locally produced products. As the case of the BAT cigarette advertisements have shown, the line drawn between a local and foreign product was blurred. In his study on the National Products Movement, Karl Gerth presents the National Products Movement (henceforth NPM) in China during the Republican Years, where he argues that “consumerism played a fundamental role in defining nationalism, and nationalism in defining consumerism”.<sup>224</sup> The case is not as clear-cut with cigarette advertisements. Earlier, I mentioned that the BAT published an article discussing how the national-foreign competition was hurting locals more than it was foreigners. The BAT advertisements were also designed by Chinese artists, after BAT executives discovered that advertisements designed by Western admen were unable to gain the desired traction in the Chinese markets. Essentially, Cochran’s study has presented us a company that has almost Chinese from the top to the bottom – if one just focused on the Chinese branch: it was managed by Chinese businessmen, who used Chinese networks to run the business; the artists were Chinese, sellers of the cigarettes also Chinese; if one goes down to the raw materials, it was Chinese who were supervising the manufacturing of the Chinese grown and sourced tobacco. Apart from the name of the company, and the obvious point that the headquarters was Western in nature, it was difficult to say that BAT was a completely foreign product. This is further complicated by the fact that Nanyang Brothers themselves had operations that also resembled Western firms such as the BAT. The organization of the company was structured and hierarchized, with each position with a proper role and responsibility. It is evident therefore that Nanyang Brothers itself as a company did not resemble traditional Chinese firms.

As such, for a historian presented with such a case, where does one draw the marker that separates the local from the foreign product? Based on the above information, it might be

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<sup>224</sup> Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia, 2003), 3.

challenging. The existing literature usually draws strict dichotomies between foreign and local companies. However, I believe it might be reasonable to argue that in the case of instances such as the above, a prefix of semi-foreign, or semi-local company, might be appropriate. The possibilities of such a framework will be explored in the later chapter. In addition, the consumption patterns of the Chinese people also suggested that the Chinese did not actively choose a local product over a foreign one. Many would still choose to consume BAT cigarettes for their better quality, and only consume other cigarettes if they could not afford the “luxury” that BAT provided. There was therefore no ‘nationalist’ sentiment within the consumption of cigarettes. While a retrospective review of the advertising messages might suggest that nationalism was a pervasive topic in conversation, it did not necessarily reflect in the cigarette consumption.

## Chapter 5: Remarks on Historiography and Conclusive Thoughts

This study of the commercial advertising in the Republic of China era is very much purposed to question the broader movements within the writing of history, historiographical frameworks, and the actors that exist within these narratives. It is an attempt to unite the actors across multiple socio-economic backgrounds within a temporal moment into a single historical narrative. Believing that the frame of the everyday is most appropriate a conduit to achieve this, this thesis has attempted to imagine and reconstruct a Republican China that is both unified and vibrant. Advertisements act as the lowest common denominator in which one can begin to construct this unified historical narrative – reflecting the experiences of actors from the elite and non-elite group of society. However, this is possible only if one rethinks what the everyday means – to pick the parameters that define the everyday and use this framework to write history. The everyday life should therefore be understood not as the foil of the elite, or of modernity and progress – it is not in opposition against the elite, as some might argue, and I propose it be understood as an all-inclusive space. As Deuze further explains, “the stubbornness of everyday life, according to de Certeau, lies in its natural recalcitrance in the face of the ineluctable speed of progress and modernization”.<sup>225</sup> The everyday therefore becomes a space in which progress and modernization, two forces often driven from the elite, meet the other. Stubbornness and recalcitrance do not necessarily equate to it being immutable – the everyday can and does experience change – but it is change that is sometimes dictated along its own tempo. The everyday belongs to the poor just as much as it belongs to the rich.

Harry Harootunian in his book *History's Disquiet* defines it as “the experience of the lived reality that marks the appearance and expansion of industrial capitalism and its propensity

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<sup>225</sup> Ana Deuze, “Assemblage, Bricolage, and the Practice of Everyday Life,” *Art Journal* 67:1 (2008), 37.

to install similar conditions everywhere it is established”.<sup>226</sup> The idea of a “lived reality”, in this regard, is rather important to how we define the everyday. This paper has suggested to consider the everyday as a space in which every actor of society operates within, and with each other. The lived reality therefore is not just a reality for one individual, or individuals belonging to a specific socio-economic group – it is a totalizing reality, *the* lived reality, rather than *a* lived reality. Harootunian asks, “what kind of history, and for whom, is being promoted when one affirms historians whose local knowledge...is now being made to speak for the whole?”<sup>227</sup> This thesis, in encountering this problem in contemporary Republican Chinese historiography, has hoped that the most relevant response to Harootunian’s question is to consider the *whole* as much as possible, through the use of the everyday as a framework. The calling for a rethinking of the everyday, and in using the everyday as a lens both to view and to write history, is not to write a history of everything. Instead, I advocate for a historiography that can account for more subjectivity within its parameters: more than just a totality is to acknowledge that history is in itself chaotic, multivariate, and dynamic – and to attempt to reasonably account for this chaos within a historical narrative. To echo Yeh, “the everyday therefore defies the clear-cut interpretive readings of China versus the west, or old versus new”.<sup>228</sup> More work needs to be done on the everyday across disciplines in the humanities, but especially so in history, to advance the field.

To paraphrase Lefebvre, the everyday has to account for the “poverty and wealth which we know to be both infinitely rich and, at the same time, infinitely poor”.<sup>229</sup> To do that, I have argued that the everyday needs to be reconceptualized as a space in which both actors are

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<sup>226</sup> Harry Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life*, (Columbia University Press, 2000), 54.

<sup>227</sup> Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet*, 18.

<sup>228</sup> Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 76.

<sup>229</sup> Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, vol 131.

considered. Lefebvre argues that the “everyday constitutes a common ground that, in relating these specific experiences and practices to one another, enables us to conceive of lived reality as an organic whole”.<sup>230</sup> And so while the writing of an everyday history, in this case of Republican China and its advertisements, is on the surface an attempt to contribute to the histories of Republican China, it is on a deeper level also a lens in which one can reflect on the historiography and the way historians operate. History, as I hope for it to be used here, is both a mirror of the past, and as Kobayashi states, is also “a mirror of the self that constantly needs to be polished by the poet’s intuitive power”.<sup>231</sup> In this regard, a consideration of the resultant everyday historical narrative is informative of the trajectory in which our contemporary historiography is at, and suggestive of where it can potentially go.

As such, when we consider the broader strokes of history writing, and consider how dynamics are related, this study could possibly inform us that when we consider how the everyday operated, we realize that there is no fixed formulaic parameter to capture these dynamics, and that individuals accepted and omitted ideas based on personal tastes and preferences, just as possible as it was that these ideas were also driven down from the elites. Having considered this, it is important to recapitulate the broader idea of this thesis once again, and to affirm some of the loose theoretical aspects that this thesis is putting forward. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to address a few overarching points that might have been left open, particularly pertaining to the practice of historiography. There are two points that I would like to raise at this conclusionary juncture: first, the use of advertisements in history writing – observations pertaining to its current standing and where it should go, and second, the purposing of the everyday in relation to historiography.

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<sup>230</sup> Jen Hui Bon Hua, “Totality and The Common: Henri Lefebvre and Maurice Blanchot on Everyday Life,” *Cultural Critique* 88 (2014), 54.

<sup>231</sup> Harootunian, 155

## Advertisements as a Primary Source

The first issue is the historian's use of advertisements as a primary source – thinking about it not only in the historiography, but also in the existing archival and technological context. At the beginning of this thesis, I explained why advertisements were chosen, and it would be good at this juncture to run through the points again. Traditional works on the everyday have usually relied on photographs, or the use of theatre, or ethnographic accounts to reconstruct this landscape of everyday.<sup>232</sup> This thesis has chosen the medium of advertisements to illustrate the everyday because they have a wide reach, giving us an understanding on what people were thinking, without needing for them to explicitly tell the historian. Especially in the context of Republican China, where sources depicting the everyday or of it becomes extremely elusive, advertisements might offer some respite in this regard.

Returning to the use of advertisements as a primary source, it is indeed difficult first to ignore the fact that information is increasingly becoming digitized; for historians, their archives are not exempt. Kaur's study on the digitization of archives asks a simple question that has serious implications: "what will be left behind of the contemporary present in lieu of paper for the future historians?"<sup>233</sup> This question is asked in the context that with the digitization of many paper material, historians have to grapple with what becomes digitized, what is left behind in the physical form, and the exponential amount of information that is being created digitally already. Kaur ends with a quote from Koselleck, resigned to the fact that the past "is no longer static, but it is accumulating and perishing at an accelerated rate that he could have barely imagined".<sup>234</sup> It is under this context of a volatile archival process that I consider the position of advertisements – and in the context of my dissertation, advertisements that were found

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<sup>232</sup> Refer to Kracauer, Goffman, or Lefebvre as examples of academic literature detailing the everyday life, using photographs, theatre, and ethnography as examples.

<sup>233</sup> Ravinder Kaur, "Archives and Sources: Writing history in a Paperless World: Archives of the Future," *History Workshop Journal* 79 (2015), 243.

<sup>234</sup> Ravinder Kaur, "Archives and Sources: Writing history in a Paperless World: Archives of the Future," 252.

primarily in print form in newspapers and periodicals – although this problem is not necessarily exclusive to advertisements in those media.

In a recent study on nineteenth century advertisements in Anglo-Indian newspapers, Joshi references Latham and Scholes's term, a "hole in the archive," when describing how the archival process, especially in digitizing newspapers, periodicals, and other print material, leave out the ephemera: advertisements, miscellaneous notices, and other supposedly unimportant material. Written in 2006, the fact that Latham and Scholes's comments are still relevant in Joshi's 2016 study some ten years later is nothing that should be celebrated about. In choosing to focus on advertisements, Joshi believes that these are "rich and often neglected resources" that can "help develop a portrait of...the social and political dynamic".<sup>235</sup> If advertisements as a whole are indeed useful as a historical tool, it does not seem to be reflected in the broader movements in historiography. And as Joshi has argued, this is important to do so because while "at times the heterogeneity of such advertisements might seem cacophonous, but such dissonance replicates the experience of reading a newspaper in this period. We must approach such disparate materials with caution in order to tease out the complexities of readers' lived experience".<sup>236</sup> I believe there are a few levels that need to be contended with to understand why this is so.

The first is the fact that not all everyday material can survive its immediate environment: some newspapers that were produced in the twentieth century did not enjoy a similar widespread circulation as compared to the big names like *Shenbao* as a result of them having a smaller readership, or the fact that they were published in smaller cities with a generally smaller population. This point works on a very similar tangent to my next point, that everyday

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<sup>235</sup> Priti Joshi, "Audience Participation: Advertisements, Readers, and Anglo-Indian Newspapers," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 49:2 (2016), 249-250.

<sup>236</sup> Joshi, "Audience Participation: Advertisements, Readers, and Anglo-Indian Newspapers," 254.

events are simply too banal to be considered as worthy of archiving. Latham and Scholes point to practices in England during the rise of periodicals where advertisements would be featured in the individual issues of magazines, but “versions of the magazines in book form regularly dropped the advertising as ephemeral, keeping only the literary pages for posterity”.<sup>237</sup> This practice might have been followed in the process of archival where they discovered how there were the immense gaps within the collections of American periodicals such as *Scribner’s Magazine*, or *McClure’s Magazine*, where “advertising pages, numbered for discarding, were regularly tossed out when the issues were bound in volume form”.<sup>238</sup> The issue here is that the act of discarding a physical copy is often an irreversible process and decision, and there is very little that can be done to undo archival practices over the last century.

Paper, the most common material that makes up advertisements is, as mentioned in a previous chapter, a very delicate object, and unless special care is taken already to preserve such advertisements and newspapers, they will disintegrate over time. Because of reasons elucidated by the previous point, the state of preservation for such materials is problematic. If more attention is paid to the importance of advertisements in academic research, thereby translating in better efforts at archiving and preservation, accessibility and use of such material will become more commonplace. In a contemporary context, as society and with it the humanities becomes increasingly digitized (with digital newspapers, magazines), the materiality might become less of a problem; however, it is still important to be cogent that there exists expiring ephemera that could provide important perspectives into the lives of the everyday.

How then can we as historians fill this “hole in the archive”? As this dissertation has demonstrated, advertisements when used as the central focus for historical study allows us to

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<sup>237</sup> Latham and Scholes, “The Rise of Periodical Studies,” 520

<sup>238</sup> Latham and Scholes, “The Rise of Periodical Studies,” 520

better understand how ideas were communicated across different groups of people – across different actors within a single point in history. Advertisements are clearly not “perfect” historical sources – in Marchand’s *Advertising the American Dream*, what is poignant is that Marchand presents these advertisements as a social tableau – not as an accurate reflection of the reality; rather, he likens them to a crooked mirror – something that distorts reality than attempt to copy it. The imagery in advertisements therefore were a form of ‘folklore’, created by the ad-men to reflect the ideal American society. This is a rather important point and it is illustrative of how advertisements function within any given society. Because these advertisements were a distorted reality, it does not necessarily demonstrate the immediate social reality, but in depicting this ‘ideal’ life, we can get an understanding concerning what the average American, who consumed such advertisements, understood ideas such as ‘ideal’ and ‘modern’. As such, advertisements represent more than just a primary source in which one can reconstruct the past: they also form the basis of a methodology in which one can think about history and its surrounding historiography.

### **Towards a Flattened History**

Most works that concern themselves with the everyday are usually ethnographic in nature, with traditional ethnography in itself seeking “to capture the minute detail of ordinary life through extensive fieldwork involving participant observation and in-depth interviews”.<sup>239</sup> Typically, the ethnographer’s “main interest was in the symbolically charged practices which bridge the ordinary and the extraordinary”.<sup>240</sup> In other words, the ethnographer’s work is very much tethered to the writing of an everyday. For example, Lefebvre’s work on the everyday which dealt with the changes of the streets, architecture and life in the French countryside.

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<sup>239</sup> Joe Moran, *Reading the Everyday*, (New York: Routledge: 2005), 9.

<sup>240</sup> Nancy Ries, “Anthropology and the Everyday, from Comfort to Terror,” *New Literary History* 33:4 (2002), 732.

Another French academic, Auge, had “discussed the loss of local identity in French towns and villages since the Second World War”.<sup>241</sup> These works do try to chart out the lives of the people, spatially or temporally, in relation to the everyday. This work, unlike other ethnographic investigations, is less concerned with the day to day lived experiences of Republican China, than with the formulating of a category called “the everyday”. Through my examination of advertisements, I have tried to instead make sense of what an everyday means, and how this everyday can better illustrate a representation of history.

One objective that this thesis hopes to achieve is a shift in the future of our historiography concerning Republican China, with further potential to be applied to other areas in history as well. As touched on briefly in the introduction, often times, in historiographical fields such as intellectual, political, or national histories, the historian positions specific actors as key agents in their narrative. This usually assumes the form of an elite: an intellectual, the state leader, or an important government official. This was the history that Leopold von Ranke, nineteenth century German historian had had advocated for; it was “the history of the modern world [that] revealed the solidity of the political and social institutions”, which demonstrated “the centrality of the state in Ranke’s conception of history”.<sup>242</sup> It was this style and rigor that von Ranke established that became the standard for the profession of history. The opposite: a bottom-up approach, arrived in the twentieth century with the rise of a social centered history, attempted to write history that considered the people at the bottom. It was E P Thompson who famously hoped to “rescue the poor stockinger...the obsolete hand-loom weaver... from the enormous condescension of posterity”.<sup>243</sup> What Thompson was trying to do was to demonstrate how inadequate existing methods of history were at telling the story of the individual, to

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<sup>241</sup> Joe Moran, 116

<sup>242</sup> Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, (Connecticut: Wesleyan University, 2005), 26.

<sup>243</sup> E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 12.

“rescue the unknown from oblivion”.<sup>244</sup> This set the backdrop for subsequent changes in historiography which moved from epoch to epoch: the cultural, to the post-structural, to subaltern histories, all of which were attempts with a spirit similar to Thompson: to make known what history had previously made anonymous. This was therefore an emphasis on the individual, the “ordinary”, or the “Other”. However, this resultant history, in placing spotlight on the Other, renders the ‘elite’ in an awkward state of limbo: it is there but not there.

As history writing has shown, the top and bottom of society never simply operate in a linear manner as illustrated in the previous two modes of writing. The two share a common space, the history that is written with both the top and bottom in mind, as Harootunian states, is

“the place of everyday life [which] signified only one among many manifest possibilities and thus a moment in the network of social relationships and understanding. This meant that everydayness, as it was formed...included relationships that stretched far beyond the borders and experience of a singular locale, reaching a new kind of unboundedness, in which space was increasingly torn away from place by “fostering relations between absent’ others”.<sup>245</sup>

The studying of the everyday is instrumental in understanding the tempo and direction of the social, political, cultural, and economic context of any historical narrative. Everyone exists and operates in the everyday, regardless of social status, gender, or race; thinking about how these everyday occur concurrently together in history therefore allows for a writing of history that accounts for these interactions, across different strata in society, and to recognize that each stratum is bounded and shaped by the other strata around them.

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<sup>244</sup> Iggers, 103

<sup>245</sup> Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life*, (Columbia University Press, 2000), 64.

As much as this thesis has aimed to try and write an inclusive history of Republican China, a study of advertisements might still present a rather lop-sided version of history if one does not account for the perspective of the consumer itself. Given the parameters of this study, finding such voices might not be possible. This calls to question the inclusiveness and flattening of history that I have earlier proposed. Looking forward, I believe that there needs to be an accounting for the consumer's voice, their impression or opinions of advertisements. A closer examination of these consumers interaction with the advertisements can present the study with a better angle on how the everyday dealt with advertisements. While advertisements alone do provide an insight to the voiceless, the voice that we can get is merely a step away from the top-down history, and not the writing of an inclusive history in that regard. As such, a history that can genuinely lend a voice to the voiceless is one that can account for the everyday's perspectives – whether it is oral or written accounts of advertisements. However, as advertisements fall into the category of everyday ephemera, such accounts might be hard to come by as no one might have bothered to record these impressions.

In spite of these limitations however, I believe that this thesis is still a step towards that direction. Through the primary use and study of advertisements, and in contextualizing this study within the broader idea of the everyday, this thesis suggests that one can attempt to write a narrative that accounts for multiple stories – multiple everyday – within a single frame. Finally, I hope that this thesis can set the groundwork for future research to better consider the use of the ephemera as an integral facet in their study, and in doing so continue the move towards a flattening history. This study is therefore a means to encourage future historians to pay attention to such interactions and preserve such voices – to better bring a voice to the voiceless.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau talks about how the space of everyday practices “protects the weapons of the weak against the reality of the established order”.<sup>246</sup> This means that the weak has to be established in relation to the instituted order. To him, historiography “recounts in the past tense the strategies of instituted powers, these stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use”. Both strategies and tactics are two sides of the same historiographical coin, and they operate together along the same axis. These strategies and tactics surface throughout his book, with De Certeau mentioning how “methods practiced by the everyday art of war [may] never present themselves in such a clear form”, that is to say, that our understanding of the everyday and the writing of its histories is not necessarily structured along the strict lines that de Certeau has drawn out, but it is to understand that these power structures exist, and to reconstruct a history that properly maps out these lines. An additional point for illustration is the fact that within the discussion of spaces, strategies are “able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces”.<sup>247</sup> This illustrates how the actors who use strategies and the actors who use tactics, while coming from different positions in society, and possessing a different degree of power, are still acting simultaneously.

As such, the everyday or these multiple everydays presents with us the potential to tease out overlaps between the elite and non-elite in terms of issues surrounding class and gender, but it also allows us to explore various divisions that might have arisen in the lives of the everyday in Republican China, one that might not be possible otherwise if it does not satisfactorily account for these multiple everydays. The flattening of history, in Certeauian terms, is an attempt to write a history that accounts for the co-existence of both these strategies and tactics – to have multiple everydays within a single playing field, rather than to consider

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<sup>246</sup> De Certeau, 23.

<sup>247</sup> De Certeau, 30.

one without the other; to focus solely on strategies, or only tactics would be, in some sense, missing the forest for the trees.

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